universität wien

DISSERTATION / DOCTORAL THESIS

Titel der Dissertation /Title of the Doctoral Thesis

„Tense and aspect in Italian interlanguage. The influence of lexical aspect and discourse grounding on the development of tense and aspect marking“

verfasst von / submitted by

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angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doktorin der Philosophie (Dr. phil.)

Wien, 2018 / Vienna, 2018

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt / degree programme code as it appears on the student record sheet:	A 792 327
Dissertationsgebiet lt. Studienblatt / field of study as it appears on the student record sheet:	Sprachwissenschaft
Betreut von / Supervisor:	Univ. Prof. Mag. Dr. Eva Vetter Prof. Maria G. Lo Duca

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my profound gratitude to the supervisors of this thesis, Univ. Prof. Dr. Eva Vetter and Univ. Prof. Dr. Maria G. Lo Duca for their patience in reading and providing insightful and encouraging feedback throughout the course of this study.

I am most grateful to the members of the teaching staff of the Institute of Romance languages at the University of Vienna, who enabled the collection of data necessary for the present study, particularly Mag. Dr. Silvia Dalla Pietà, Mag. Benedetta Giordano, Mag. Dr. Stefano Lucchi, Mag. Dr. Mario Rossi, Mag. Alberto Sana. I am also deeply grateful to all the students who agreed to participate in this study.

Special thanks to the native speaker raters who helped me with the analysis of the data, particularly to Rino Bosso, Giuseppe Branciforti, Thomas Callegaro, Giulia Dal Ferro, Giovanna Lazzarin, Elisa Pini, Anna Sandrini and Ester Schmitt.

I would also like to thank my wonderful family for their patience and emotional support.

Table of contents

Introduction 1
1 Key concepts of language acquisition research 4
1.1 Second language *versus* third language 4
1.2 Second language acquisition 5
1.2.1 Empirical studies on acquisition sequences 6
1.2.1.1 Processability Theory 7
1.2.1.2 Functionally-oriented studies 9
1.2.2 Variability of the learning process 11
1.2.3 Variability versus idealisation 13
1.3 Third language acquisition 14
1.4 The acquisition of Italian from TLA and SLA perspectives 16
1.5 Summary 19

2 Tense, aspect and grounding 21
2.1 Tense and temporality 24
2.1.1 Present tense 27
2.1.2 Perfective past tenses 30
2.1.2.1 Passato Prossimo 31
2.1.2.2 Passato Remoto 33
2.1.2.3 Trapassato Prossimo 35
2.1.3. Imperfetto 36
2.2 Aspectuality 39
2.2.1 Grammatical aspect 44
2.2.1.1 Perfective aspect 45
2.2.1.2 Imperfective aspect 48
2.2.2 Lexical aspect 53
2.3 Discourse grounding 57
2.4 Tense and aspect in German 61
2.5 Summary 63

3 The acquisition of tense and aspect in Romance languages 65
3.1 Meaning-oriented studies 66
3.2 Form-oriented studies 68
3.2.1 The effect of lexical aspect on morphological marking of predicates 68
3.2.2 The Lexical Aspect Hypothesis 71
3.2.3 The conjunct influence of lexical aspect and discourse grounding 74
3.2.4 The Distributional Bias Hypothesis 76
3.2.5 Distribution of prototypical combinations in the interlanguage 76
3.2.6 The Default Tense Hypothesis 77
3.2.7 A comprehensive model of the acquisition of temporal-aspectual distinctions 79
3.2.8. Transfer of conceptual knowledge of tense and aspect 80
3.3 Summary 82

4 The acquisition of tense and aspect in Italian 85
4.1 Mode of language learning: tutored *versus* untutored learners 87
4.2 Lexical aspect as a triggering factor in tense/aspect acquisition 90
4.3 The role of lexical aspect across acquisition stages 95

4.4	The semantic value of past tense forms across acquisition stages	97
4.5	The effect of L1 on tense/aspect acquisition	99
4.6	Summary	103
5	Methodology	105
5.1	Research question	107
5.2	Participants	108
5.3	Data collection method	109
5.3.1	Personal and impersonal narratives	111
5.4	Methods of data analysis	112
5.4.1	Coding for grounding	114
5.4.1.1	Coding problematic cases	117
5.4.2	Obligatory occasion analysis	119
5.4.3	Frequency analysis	122
5.4.4	Coding for lexical aspect	123
5.4.4.1	The number of lexical aspectual categories	124
5.4.4.2	Within-category and across-category analysis	126
5.4.4.3	Operational tests to determine lexical aspect	128
5.4.4.4	Representation of lexical aspect in the interlanguage	130
5.4.4.5.	Type frequency versus token frequency	131
5.5	Summary	132
6	Results of the obligatory occasion analysis	134
6.1	Proficiency groups	135
6.1.1	Proficiency group and language class	137
6.1.2	Proficiency group and experience in language learning	138
6.2	Distribution of past tense marking across proficiency groups	140
6.2.1	Effect of text type	141
6.2.2	The low proficiency group	145
6.2.3	The intermediate proficiency group	148
6.2.4	The upper-intermediate proficiency group	151
6.2.5	The high proficiency group	154
6.3	Summary	155
7	Results of the frequency analysis	156
7.1	The low proficiency group	156
7.2	The intermediate proficiency group	161
7.3	The upper-intermediate proficiency group	166
7.4	The high proficiency group	171
7.5	Summary	174
8	The effect of lexical aspect on the distribution of past tense morphology	175
8.1	The low proficiency group	177
8.2	The intermediate proficiency group	180
8.3	The upper-intermediate proficiency group	187
8.4	The high proficiency group	192
8.5	Summary	194

9 Discussion 196
9.1 Identification of developmental stages in tense/aspect marking 196
9.2 The low proficiency group 198
9.2.1 Prominence of tense marking in low proficiency texts 199
9.3 The intermediate proficiency group 201
9.3.1 The foreground of intermediate proficiency narratives 202
9.3.2 The background of intermediate proficiency narratives 203
9.3.3 The influence of lexical aspect 204
9.3.4 Imperfective aspect as a scalar category 204
9.4 The upper-intermediate proficiency group 206
9.4.1 Spread of imperfective morphology to activities 207
9.5 The high proficiency group 211
9.6 Implications and further research 208
9.6.1 The influence of the student's linguistic background 212
9.6.2 The influence of the student's first language 213
9.6.3 The influence of input 214
9.7 Limitations 215
References 217
Appendix A: Worksheet used for the collection of impersonal narratives: Little Red Riding Hood 230
Appendix B: Worksheet used for the collection of personal narratives: The day of my school leaving examination 231
Appendix C: Abstract 232
Appendix D: Zusammenfassung 233
Appendix E: Frequency of predicates used in the low proficiency sub-corpus 234
Appendix F: Frequency of predicates used in the intermediate proficiency sub-corpus 237
Appendix G: Frequency of predicates used in the upper-intermediate proficiency sub-corpus 240
Appendix H: Frequency of predicates used in the high proficiency sub-corpus 245
Appendix I: Curriculum vitae 248

List of tables, graphs and charts

Table 3.1 Characteristics of acquisitional stages 67
Table 3.2 Lexical aspectual characteristics of verbal predicates 69
Table 5.1 Verb formations excluded from the analysis 1 19
Table 5.2 Non-target-like verb forms coded according to target-like categories 120
Table 5.3 Frequency analysis: Excerpt 4. 122
Table 5.4 Lexical aspectual characteristics of verbal predicates 123
Table 5.5 Distribution of tense-aspect morphology across lexical aspectual classes 127
Table 5.6 Distribution of tense-aspect morphology within lexical aspectual classes 127
Table 6.1 Threshold levels for the definition of proficiency groups 135
Table 6.2 Distribution of students across language class and proficiency levels 137
Table 6.3. Distribution of students across proficiency levels and linguistic repertoire 138
Table 6.4. Distribution of perfective and imperfective marking across levels of grounding and levels of proficiency 141
Table 6.5 Distribution of the participants across language classes and task assignments 142
Table 6.6 Distribution of text types across levels of proficiency 143
Table 6.7 Distribution of past tense forms across levels of grounding and text types in the low proficiency group 147
Table 6.8. Distribution of past tense forms across levels of grounding and text types in the intermediate proficiency group 151
Table 6.9. Distribution of past tense forms across levels of grounding and text types in the upper-intermediate proficiency group 154
Table 6.10. Distribution of past tense forms across levels of grounding and text types in the high proficiency group 156
Graph 7.1 FEA foreground low proficiency group 158
Graph 7.2 FEA background low proficiency group 158
Graph 7.3 FEA foreground intermediate proficiency group 164
Graph 7.4 FEA background intermediate proficiency group 164
Graph 7.5 FEA foreground upper-intermediate proficiency group 168
Graph 7.6 FEA background upper-intermediate proficiency group 168
Graph 7.7 FEA foreground high proficiency group 173
Graph 7.8 FEA background high proficiency group 173
Table 8.1 Distribution of verbal morphology within lexical aspectual classes in the low proficiency group 179
Table 8.2 Distribution of verbal morphology within lexical aspectual classes in the intermediate proficiency group 182
Table 8.3 Distribution of imperfective subdomains in BG 184
Table 8.4 Distribution of verbal morphology within lexical aspectual classes in the upper-intermediate proficiency group 188
Table 8.5 Distribution of verbal morphology within lexical aspectual classes in the high proficiency group 193

Table 9.1 Distribution of verbal morphology within lexical aspectual classes and across proficiency levels 198

Introduction

The expression of temporal relations assumes a central importance in communication. In fact, Klein (2009a, p. 35) points out that "The ability to talk about time is a fundamental trait of human communication, and all languages we know of have developed means to express time". Given the centrality of this conceptual domain, there is a great deal of research concerning the expression of time in different languages (e.g., Bertinetto, 1986, 1991; Klein & Li, 2009; Haßler, 2016), and the acquisition of temporal expression in both native and non-native languages (e.g., Andersen & Shirai, 1996; Andersen, 2002; Giacalone Ramat, 2003b; Salaberry & Ayoun, 2005).

The linguistic expression of time varies across languages. According to Klein (2009b, p. 39), there are six types of devices used to linguistically encode temporal relations: tense, [grammatical] aspect, lexical aspect, temporal adverbials, temporal particles and discourse principles. The present study focuses on the morphological marking of tense and aspect, and examines their interaction with lexical aspect and discourse principles, in the interlanguage of multilingual speakers acquiring Italian as a non-native language.

Both tense and aspect convey temporal relations, although in different ways. Tense is a deictic category, i.e. it locates events on the time axis, usually with respect to the moment of speech; while grammatical aspect concerns the internal temporal structuring of a situation, presenting it as temporarily unbounded or within its temporal boundaries (Comrie, 1976). Similar to grammatical aspect, lexical aspect is also concerned with the internal temporal constituency of a situation; however, it is encoded on the lexical level. These levels of temporal and aspectual representation interact with discourse grounding principles (Dry, 1983; Hopper, 1979). In narrative discourse, temporally bounded events are likely to mark the foreground, i.e. the main story line, presenting a series of events in chronological order, while temporally unbounded events are likely to form the background, presenting supporting material such as descriptions, events that chronologically overlap with the main story line, etc.

Two influential hypotheses about the development of tense and aspect marking in language acquisition concern the interaction of these levels of tense/aspect marking. The

Lexical Aspect Hypothesis (LAH) (Andersen & Shirai, 1994, 1996) claims that in early stages of language acquisition, morphological marking is chosen on the basis of its semantic congruence with lexical aspect. In languages that encode aspect morphologically, verbal predicates conveying temporal boundedness on the lexical level are more likely to be marked with perfective morphology and, vice versa, predicates encoding temporal unboundedness on the lexical level tend to be marked with imperfective morphology. The Discourse Hypothesis (Bardovi-Harlig, 1994a), on the other hand, predicts that morphological marking is influenced by discourse grounding principles, meaning that foreground events tend to be marked with perfective morphology, while imperfective morphology emerges in the background.

The interplay between levels of tempo/aspectual expressions is subject to cross-linguistic variation. In fact, as pointed out by van Hout, de Swart and Verkuyl (2004, p. 1), the "division of laborbetween tense and aspect" varies across languages. In Italian, for instance, tense and grammatical aspect are marked morphologically, and interact with the lexical aspectual properties of the predicates and the principles of discourse grounding. In contrast to Italian, German lacks morphological aspect marking (Hentschel & Vogel, 2009). The aspectual characterisation of a situation can be inferred from the lexical aspectual properties of a predicate, and from contextual information, for instance, chronologically ordered events are likely to be interpreted as perfective (Bohnemeyer & Swift, 2004). Such cross-linguistic differences in tense and aspect marking may cause acquisition challenges when acquiring a new language, because learners have to reconfigure form-meaning pairings present in their native language (McManus, 2013; Salaberry, 2011). For instance, native speakers of German acquiring Italian as a non-native language have to isolate aspectual meanings such as temporal boundedness conveyed by the perfective aspect and, vice versa, temporal unboundedness conveyed by imperfective morphology, and map them in Italian tense forms. In fact, several studies (e.g., Giacalone Ramat, 2002; Rosi, 2009a, 2010) suggest that morphological aspect marking in Italian is a challenging task for German speakers. On the contrary, Spanish speakers acquiring Italian as a non-native language rely on the form-meaning associations present in their first language, and are able to mark aspect morphologically, starting from early acquisition stages (Rosi, 2009a, 2009b, 2010).

Beyond cross linguistic differences in tense and aspect marking, experience in using multiple languages may enhance the learner's multilingual awareness, and have a facilitating effect on the establishment of new form-function relations (Jessner, 2006).

For instance, Salaberry (2005) shows that native speakers of English learning Portuguese are able to transfer the conceptual representation of tense and aspect acquired in Spanish. However, the transfer of conceptual knowledge from one language to another is not automatic, learners may need specific training to be able to benefit from their multilingualism (Müller-Lancé, 2003; Rosi, 2010; Jessner et al, 2016).

Given that the present study examines the development of tense and aspect marking in the interlanguage of multilingual learners, the introductory chapters will examine key concepts of language acquisition research relevant to the present study and its placement within current research (Chapter 1); and the domain of tense aspect marking, together with its complex interplay with the lexical aspectual properties of predicates and principles of discourse grounding (Chapter 2). The following chapters are dedicated to the discussion of findings about the acquisition of tense and aspect in Romance languages (Chapter 3) and in Italian (Chapter 4). The methodological approach used in the present study is described in Chapter 5, while the following three chapters present the results of the analyses conducted on the data presented in the methodological chapter. Chapter 9 is dedicated to the discussion of these findings.

Chapter 1
Key concepts of language acquisition research

Language acquisition is "a widespread, highly complex, uniquely human, cognitive process" (Doughty & Long, 2003, p. 5). The importance of this process in human experience stimulated great research interest in various disciplines such as psychology, cognitive sciences, neurosciences, linguistics, to name just a few. Research on language acquisition covers a wide range of phenomena, such as the acquisition of first, second and third languages; sign language acquisition, acquisition of heritage languages, the connection between language acquisition and various linguistic and extra-linguistic factors such as identity, motivation, typological distance between languages, mode of language learning, etc.

This chapter focuses on concepts of language acquisition research that are relevant to the present study. On the basis of the research questions, the methodology of data collection and analysis, the study can be located in the field of second language acquisition research. However, some of its implications may be applicable to further research on third language acquisition. The next sections will focus on these two research fields, with the aim of locating the present study in the current theoretical discussion on second and third language acquisition.

1.1 Second language *versus* third language

The term second language "can refer to any other language learned *after* learning the L1 [first language], regardless of whether it is the second, third, fourth, or fifth language" (Gass & Selinker, 2008, p. 7, italics in original). This definition introduces a two-level distinction between the first or native language, acquired in early infancy, and additional languages. It implies a dichotomous distinction, based on a chronological criterion, where all non-native languages are given the same status because they follow the native language chronologically. Thus, as pointed out by Hammarberg (2009, p. 1), the concept of second language covers "non-native languages generally", without taking into account the complexity of learners' linguistic backgrounds.

In contrast, studies within the field of third language acquisition differentiate learners according to the complexity of their linguistic repertoire. It is argued that, in the presence of more than two languages, the relationship between first, second and third language(s) may have a significant influence on the acquisition process. As pointed out by Hammarberg (2014, p. 7), "being already bi- or multilingual creates a different basis for acquiring a further language as compared to acquiring an NNL [non-native language] for the first time". Several studies (e.g., Cenoz & Jessner, 2000; Jessner 2008; 2014) showed that the acquisition of a third language involves a more complex process than second language acquisition, because "The development of the third system is dependent on the acquisition of the first two systems (…)" (Jessner, 2008, p. 272). Thus, within the field of third language acquisition, the two-level distinction characteristic for second language acquisition studies, is replaced by a three-level distinction (Hammarberg, 2014, p. 8), in order to differentiate between the native language, the first non-native language, and additional languages. Thus, third language can be defined as "(a) the chronologically third language (…), or (b) the next language encountered after the simultaneous acquisition of two languages in early infancy (…), or (c) any non-native language currently being acquired by a speaker who is already familiar with one or more other non-native languages (…)" (ibid., p. 3).

From the above definitions of second- and third language emerges that the acquisition of Italian, usually taking place after the acquisition of one or more first and second languages, can be studied from both a second language and a third language perspective. The difference between the two approaches goes far beyond the terminological disparity. The following sections will illustrate some of the methodological and theoretical orientations of the two research areas, focusing on the aspects relevant to the present study.

1.2 Second Language Acquisition

Second language acquisition (SLA) is a research field that focuses on the learner and the learning process, by investigating "how learners create a new language system with only limited exposure to a second language" and "what is learned of a second language and what is not learned" (Gass & Selinker, 2008, p. 1). Several scholars working in this field (e.g., Ellis, 1997; Gass & Selinker, 2008) agree that contemporary SLA has its roots in two publications from the 1960s and 1970s. Corder's (1967) paper on the significance of learner error introduced a new conceptualisation of non-target-like

linguistic behaviour as evidence for "transitional competence", resulting from learning in progress and language processing, and therefore a necessary step in the acquisition process. Corder's conceptualisation of error was connected to the idea of language acquisition based on a "built-in syllabus", that guides the development of a new linguistic system. Longitudinal analysis of errors was proposed as a tool to examine such development. This conceptualisation of error had a significant impact on language acquisition research, by changing the attitude toward errors (Van Patten & Williams, 2015, p. 22). While behaviourism treated error as a lack of learning, in Corder's analysis, it was considered an evidence of language acquisition and an important research tool.

Such a conceptual change led to the publication of another seminal work from early SLA, Selinker's (1972) paper introducing the construct of *interlanguage* (IL). IL was defined as an autonomous linguistic system, different from both the learner's L1 and the target language (TL), but linked to both, worth studying for its inherent characteristics and development. This construct has been central to the field of SLA and exerted a significant influence on both theory development and hypothesis testing. Interlanguage analyses implied focusing on the learner and the learning process, by examining the role of different factors in IL development, such as universal grammar, the role of the first language, the societal context, etc.

Following Corder's and Selinker's work, early SLA research was characterised by a cognitively- oriented view on language acquisition. As pointed out by Ellis (2015), a cognitive view on the acquisition process suggests that language acquisition takes place "inside the learner's head through the operation of specific cognitive mechanisms that govern how learners process the data available to them" (p. 182). Consequently, empirical research aimed to identify cognitive mechanisms involved in the acquisition process, and to reconstruct the process in terms of acquisition sequences, that is "developmental stages in the acquisition in a single grammatical domain" (Hulstijn, Ellis & Eskildsen, 2015, pp. 1-2).

1.2.1 Empirical studies on acquisition sequences

Hulstijn et al. (2015, p.2) point out that one of the established findings in SLA, "concerns the more or less fixed order in which learners acquire the morphosyntactic structures of their L2". Empirical studies on acquisition sequences were carried out within the framework of Processability Theory (e.g., Pienemann, 1998; 2005) and within the functionalist framework of the *European Science Foundation* project (Klein & Perdue,

1992). Both theoretical frameworks focus on IL development seen as a fundamentally predictable process, governed by cognitive principles and constraints.

1.2.1.1 Processability Theory

Pienemann's Processability Theory (PT) is based on the following principles: the incremental nature of language generation, the hierarchy of processing resources, and the exchange of grammatical information between sentence components. These principles can be exemplified by examining the generation of a sentence such as *a child gives a cat to the mother*. This requires the lemma "child" to be activated, which is categorised as a noun. The lemma calls the noun phrase procedure, and an indefinite article is attached to create a noun phrase (NP). At this point, the relationship between the NP and the rest of the message has to be established, and a syntactic function has to be assigned to the NP, in this case the function of subject. Since the NP has to be attached to a higher node, the S-procedure is activated, which stores the diacritic features deposited in the NP, i.e. the values for person and number. Meanwhile, the associated lemmata are activated, and the next conceptual fragment is carried out.

The incremental nature of language generation has an important implication for language learning. PT assumes that "processing devices will be acquired in their sequence of activation in the production process" (Pienemann, 2005, p. 13). For instance, as illustrated in the above example, the S-procedure, that is the assignment of a syntactic function to a higher node, is the fourth procedure to be activated in the production process. This implies that during the first three stages of language acquisition, this procedure is not available, and learners have to use a simplified procedure to build sentences. Thus, one of the key concepts introduced by this theory is that the development of morphosyntactic structures in the IL is "determined by the incremental development of processing resources" (Di Biase, 2007, p. 5).

PT was originally applied to the development of L2 German and L2 English. Di Biase (2007) applied PT to Italian, a language with very rich morphology, involving complex form-function relations. On one side, the same function may be fulfilled by several morphemes; while on the other side, the same morpheme may have a range of meanings. This is in contrast with the one-to-one principle (Andersen, 1984), that is the learner's tendency to associate one form with one meaning.

Di Biase (2007, pp. 26-27) exemplified the complexity of form-function relations on plural marking in Italian. This function can be carried out by four different word-

ending morphemes: *-i*, *-e*, *-a*, and zero morpheme, according to the word-ending vowel of the singular form. However, the morpheme *–e* does not only mark plural for words ending in *–a* in the singular form (e.g., *mamma/mamme*), but it also marks the singular of words ending in *–e*, which may be both masculine (e.g., *pesce*) and feminine (e.g., *opinione*). On the other hand, the morpheme *–i* consistently marks the plural, and represents a one-form/one-meaning association (except for some words ending in *–i* in the singular forms, e.g., *crisi*). In fact, the morpheme *-i* is the first plural marker to enter the IL. The whole paradigm of plural marking is acquired at a slower pace. Di Biase notes that rich morphology is problematic for the PT, because the theory only predicts the emergence of a morphosyntactic feature (e.g., plural marking with *–i*), which does not necessarily coincide with the full mastery of that feature (e.g., the acquisition of the whole plural paradigm). As pointed out by Di Biase (2007, p. 10-11)

> Once a stage has emerged, PT appears to have no further business to resolve but to look at the emergence of the next stage. The reality of languages such as Italian (…) is that there is a lot of further ground to cover within the same stage.

The same has been observed by Di Biase and Bettoni (2015, p. 120), who add that "teasing out different factors allowing progress from emergence to full mastery of the whole system is one of the directions in which future research can go".

PT presents further limitations when it comes to the semantic function of morphosyntactic structures in the interlanguage. For instance, if a learner pronounces a grammatically well-formed sentence, such as the above cited *a child gives a cat to the mother*, it may reflect that the processing devices up to the level of S-procedure have been acquired. However, this morphosyntactically well-formed sentence may be used in a context, where past tense marking is required. The use of the present tense in such a context would suggest that the function of expressing temporality has not been mapped into the IL verbal morphology, and PRES is being used as an unmarked tense. This eventuality is not taken into account by PT, because it does not cover the development of form-function mapping in the IL. In fact, as pointed out by Di Biase (2007, p. 27)

> In essence, the relationship between morphological forms and their functions exhibits different degrees of complexity. The complexity of form-function relations adds another dimension to the learning task which is separate and different from the task on which PT is focused, namely the exchange of grammatical information and the use of diacritic features.

1.2.1.2 Functionally-oriented studies

The relationship between morphosyntactic structures and their function in the IL is object of investigation in studies embedded in a functionalist framework. According to the functionalist view, the role of language is communication through the establishment of form-meaning relations. Since L2 learners already acquired semantic concepts underlying expressive devices in their L1, their task is to map them into target language forms. This theoretical framework implies an emphasis "on the expression of semantic concepts" (Bardovi-Harlig, 2000, p. 21), and the investigation of "how different forms are used to express different functions, in other words, how form and function relate to one another" (Gass & Selinker, 2008, p. 206). Mapping meanings into forms may be a relatively straightforward process, when the first language and the target language display similar form-meaning associations. The acquisition may be more challenging when form-meaning relations in L2 differ from those in L1. In fact, despite their focus on universal patterns emerging from the IL, functionally-oriented studies often take into account the learner's L1.

Given their focus on form-meaning relations, functionally-oriented studies may follow two approaches: meaning-oriented and form-oriented. As pointed out by Bardovi-Harlig (2000, p. 11) both approaches "take an interlanguage perspective, describing the interlanguage as a system independent of the target language". Meaning-oriented studies (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 1994b) focus on a semantic category, for instance the expression of relative anteriority, and investigate its emergence in a predefined semantic environment. This approach is often applied in the investigation of untutored language acquisition, where inflectional morphology enters the interlanguage at a slow pace, and semantic categories conveyed morphologically in the TL may be expressed lexically or pragmatically in the IL (Klein & Perdue, 1997). Thus, a meaning-oriented study "will investigate different types of linguistic devices, which not only cross grammatical categories, but which also mix grammatical devices with pragmatic ones" (Bardovi-Harlig, 2000, p. 12).

Form-oriented studies (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 2000, pp. 126-184), on the other hand, focus on a particular form (e.g., Past Simple in English) and follow its distribution in the IL, in order to examine when it is used by the learner, and its function in the IL. This approach is often chosen in studies investigating tutored language acquisition, where inflectional morphology appears early, but forms do not always fulfil the target language function. For instance, in a study reported by Bardovi-Harlig (2000, pp. 353-396) on the

acquisition of tense and aspect in L2 English, several learners displayed a good knowledge of verbal morphology, but showed unsystematic form-meaning associations in free production tasks.

Extensive research has been conducted within the functionally-oriented framework by the *European Science Foundation* (ESF) project. This longitudinal research examined the untutored acquisition of five target languages, namely English, German, Dutch, French and Swedish. Participants were acquiring the target language through interaction with the social environment, and spoke one of the following first languages: Punjabi, Italian, Turkish, Arabic, Spanish, Finnish (Perdue & Klein, 1992, p. 5). The selection of participants made it possible to confront speakers with different L1s learning the same TL, and, conversely, speakers with the same L1 learning different TLs. The research focused on the identification of universal patterns emerging from the IL, that is "regularities which are independent of individual language pairings" (Klein & Perdue, 1997, p. 309). On the other hand, it also aimed to identify patterns connected to L1 influence, and therefore valid only for a certain linguistic combination. Thus, the two major variables taken into account were the target language, and the influence of the first language (Perdue & Klein, 1992, p. 4).

This extensive body of research investigated the IL conceived as a linguistic system in its own right, as a manifestation of the human language capacity. In order to emphasise its status as a language, the studies refer to the linguistic system developed by language learners as *learner variety*. Observing the development of learner varieties reveals "how the human language capacity functions and which principles determine the acquisition process" (Klein & Perdue, 1997, p. 307).

Research conducted within the ESF project showed that learners follow three acquisition stages, which correspond to three different learner varieties, characterised by a progressive reorganisation of features, which brings the system "closer to the balance characteristic of the target language" (Perdue & Klein, 1992, p. 2). The first stage, labelled pre-basic variety, is characterised by the prevalence of pragmatic means to convey semantic concepts. For instance, in the absence of inflectional morphology, learners may rely on the principle of chronological order to convey temporality. Thus, the interpretation of utterances depends on contextual information. During the next stage, learners develop the basic variety (BV), characterised as a "well-structured, efficient and simple form of language", which represents the essential properties of human language capacity (Klein & Perdue, 1997, p. 301). Although inflectional morphology is not present in BV, the

utterances are structured according to the valency of a verb occurring in a morphologically unmarked form. This variety displays a "small set of organisation principles", however, their interaction makes the system versatile enough to encode a large variety of meanings. For instance, in order to compensate for the absence of verbal morphology, learners convey temporal and aspectual meanings by using a variety of adverbials and boundary markers. These linguistic devices, in combination with the lexical aspectual value of predicates, convey a variety of temporal and aspectual meanings (Klein & Perdue, 1997, p. 320). Inflectional morphology enters the IL during the third stage, called the post-basic variety, which leads to a profound reorganisation of the system. In fact, the development of the post-basic varieties is hardly predictable, and is heavily influenced by the target language input (Klein, 2000, p. 19).

Several studies on the acquisition of tense and aspect in Romance languages are embedded in the functionalist framework, and focus on the development of form-function associations in the IL. These studies will be described in detail in Chapters 3 and 4.

1.2.2 Variability of the learning process

The above described studies conducted within the field of SLA suggest that the acquisition process unfolds in predictable developmental stages. However, as pointed out by Ellis (2015), the traditional view on SLA, based on the predictability of the acquisition process, has been challenged by several alternative proposals. For instance, SLA studies that adopted Vygotsky's (1987) Sociocultural Theory of Mind (SCT) focus on the variability of linguistic development across learners, and the role of instruction in the learning process. Furthermore, studies embedded in the framework of dynamic or Complex System Theory (CST) present language acquisition as a complex process, characterised by the absence of straightforward cause-effect relationships, and limited predictability of emergent properties (Dörnyei, 2014).

The SCT conceptualises learning as a mediated developmental process that results from participation in social situations. A key construct of this theory, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) represents a model of development. It refers to the difference between an individual's current level of development and his or her developmental potential, achievable through assisted performance. The idea behind this construct is that "what an individual is capable of with mediation at one point in time, he or she will be able to do without mediation at a future point in time" (Lantolf, Thorne & Poehner, 2015, p. 214). Instruction guides development and, when projected according to

the principles of developmental education, it may modify the acquisition sequences predicated by PT. This is in contrast with Pienemann's Teachability Hypothesis (1984), which claims that, due to cognitive constraints influencing developmental readiness, instruction cannot alter the developmental sequences predicated by PT. However, SCT perspective emphasises the role of mediation, which may override cognitive constraints. Contrary to PT, it claims that learning is "mediated through social interaction and is not governed by developmental readiness on the part of the learner" (Ellis, 2015, p. 203).

The limited predictability of the learning process is also emphasised by studies embedded in the complex system framework. This approach views the interlanguage as a self-organising, complex system, emerging from the interaction of multiple factors, related to the learner, the linguistic input and the learning environment (de Bot 2008; Larsen-Freeman, 2013). As a complex process, IL development is characterised by the lack of "straightforward linear cause-effect relationships" because "the system's behavioural outcome depends on the overall constellation of the system components – how all the relevant factors work together" (Dörnyei, 2014, p. 82). This theoretical framework allows for the understanding of non-linear patterns observable in SLA, especially in longitudinal studies, focusing on individuals, rather than groups of learners. While traditional SLA studies tend to treat variability as noise, or to ascribe variability to the influence of external factors (de Bot, 2008, p. 173), CST treats variability as an inherent characteristic of the acquisition process, and a source of information.

Due to its focus on variability, the complexity framework may provide "important insights into the developmental dynamics that are traditionally ignored" (Verspoor, Lowie, van Dijk, 2008, p. 229). For instance, Verspoor et al. (2008) reanalysed the data from a study conducted by Cancino et al. (1978), which aimed to identify universal stages in L2 acquisition of English negative sentences. Cancino et al. (1987) found that learners went through a predicable sequence of acquisition stages, even though they followed different learning paths. Reanalysing the data, Verspoor et al. drew attention to the high degree of intra-subject and inter-subject variation. Investigating this variation allowed for a deeper understanding of the process. For instance, it showed that differences in learners' initial conditions, e.g., the variety of linguistic strategies used to express negation at the beginning of the study, influenced the whole acquisition process. Learners who already used a variety of strategies at the beginning of the observation were able to make quick progress towards target-like strategies. Conversely, those who had limited resources at the beginning, showed a slow development with possible fossilisation.

To summarise, the complexity framework provides the means to examine the interaction of multiple factors, and treat variability as a characteristic feature of IL. This makes it possible to "discover developmental patterns that otherwise would remain hidden" (Verspoor et al., 2008, p. 229) and to account for non-linearity attested in SLA research (Larsen-Freeman, 2013, p. 367). In order to emphasise the different views on the acquisition process, studies embedded in the complexity framework refer to the learning process as Second Language Development (SLD), instead of the more traditional SLA.

1.2.3 Variability *versus* idealisation

Traditional SLA studies focus on the predictability of the learning process, while SLD studies focus on its inherent variability. Although they seem to represent antithetical approaches, they may be treated as complementary rather than exclusionary. As pointed out by Ellis (2015, p. 200), the acquisition sequences predicted by SLA present an idealisation of IL development, and do not need to account for all the characteristics of this development. The view that acquisition unfolds in predictable stages does not exclude the presence of variation within developmental stages. Consistent with the DSL approach, SLA studies acknowledge that horizontal variation may serve as a "precursor of vertical variation" (Ellis, 2015, p. 185). In fact, in order to take IL variation into account, SLA studies underwent a progressive de-idealisation. In the 1970s, studies investigating the order of acquisition (e.g., Dulay & Burt, 1973) involved a high degree of idealisation, given that they operationalised acquisition in terms of target-like accuracy. They focused on instances when a linguistic variable was performed in a target-like manner, and did not account for the inherent variability of IL. Acquisition sequence studies (e.g., Cancino et al., 1978) lowered the degree of idealisation, describing acquisition stages in terms of linguistic resources used by learners to perform a linguistic variable, independently of their appropriateness with respect to the TL norm. Non-target-like structures were equally included in the characterisation of acquisition stages.

Form-function mapping studies (e.g., Giacalone Ramat, 2003b) further reduced the degree of idealisation. They acknowledged that the function of IL forms does not necessarily coincide with the function of corresponding forms in the target language, in the sense that form may precede function. According to Ellis (2015), usage-based approaches represent the least idealised account of L2 development. These studies (e.g., N. Ellis, 2003, 2013) claim that learners extract frequent patterns from the input, and learn them as formulaic chunks. As proficiency develops, chunks become a model for the

creative construction of utterances. Usage-based studies are embedded in the complexity framework and treat variability as a central characteristic of IL.

To summarise, studies conducted on IL development can be divided into two types, according to their theoretical orientation and their conceptualisation of IL development. Cognitively-oriented studies focus on the predictability of IL development, based on cognitive mechanisms that govern language processing and acquisition. Attention is focused on the identification and characterisation of acquisition stages, on generalisable patterns emerging from IL development regardless the influence of language-external and language-internal factors. Conversely, socially-oriented studies and those carried out within the complexity framework emphasise the inherent variability of the learning process, due to the interaction of multiple factors that influence acquisition, and its socially constructed and situated character. As pointed out by Larsen-Freeman (2013, p. 372), research from both areas may contribute to understanding "how to acknowledge the uniqueness of the individual learner and yet at the same time relate the uniqueness to more general patterns of behaviour and disposition among learners".

1.3 Third language acquisition

Third Language Acquisition (TLA) studies are characterised by a holistic approach to the learner's linguistic repertoire. They take into account all the languages forming the individual's linguistic background, and treat them as part of a multilingual system, where individual languages are not seen as autonomous entities, but as interdependent language systems (Jessner, 2008, p. 273). The focus on multilingual systems rather than autonomous languages is one of the properties that distinguishes TLA from SLA studies. The latter field often displays a monolingual bias, meaning that it focuses on one language defined as "second" with respect to a "unitary and singular "first" as a predecessor" (Block, 2014, p. 54). Thus, SLA studies tend to adopt an additive view on the linguistic competence, and treat IL development as separate from the L1, culminating in the complete command of two separate languages, that is a "dual monolingual competence" (Block, 2014, p. 55). When focusing on languages acquired after the first non-native language, SLA studies tend to disregard the effect of prior non-native languages on the acquisition process, and to take into account only the L1 from the learners' linguistic backgrounds (Hammarberg, 2009, p. 1). Thus, from an SLA perspective, multilingual learners tend to be treated as monolinguals, influenced by one linguistic system, their L1, which interacts with the linguistic systems being acquired.

This approach is based on the assumption that the role of previously learned non-native languages in the acquisition process is not significant (Hammarberg, 2001, p. 22).

TLA studies, on the contrary, emphasise the presence of qualitative differences between the acquisition of the first non-native language and additional languages (Jessner, 2008, p. 270). When acquiring the first non-native language, the learner develops "a metasystem that is based on a bilingual norm" (Jessner et al., 2016, p. 160). Given the presence of a bilingual norm, L3 acquisition is more complex than L2 acquisition, because multiple languages are involved in the acquisition process. Multilingual learners may be influenced both by their L1 and the other previously acquired languages. For instance, linguistic transfer may involve their L2, instead of their L1, especially when L2 and L3 are typologically related (Jessner, 2008, p. 271). Cross-linguistic influence may take place not only between L1 and L2, but also between L1 and L3, or L2 and L3. Furthermore, learning an L3 may lead to the attrition of L1 or L2. Thus, the emergent language system can be seen "as a whole, rather than as an interaction between separate language components" (Cook, 2003, p. 11). The multilingual speaker is therefore considered "a speaker of three or more languages with unique linguistic configurations, often depending on individual history" (De Angelis & Selinker, 2001, p. 45).

The complexity of L3 acquisition consists in the contact between several languages, which "causes a complete metamorphosis of all the (language) systems involved" (Jessner, 2016, p. 159). Due to its complexity, the investigation of a multilingual system requires a theoretical framework that captures its non-linearity and variability. Herdina and Jessner (2002) identify the dynamic or complex system theory as the appropriate theoretical framework for investigating such a complex development. The application of this theoretical framework to multilingualism gives origin to the Dynamic Model of Multilingualism (DMM). According to this model, "multilingual proficiency is defined as the dynamic interaction among the various psycholinguistic systems (LS_1, LS_2, LS_3, LS_n) in which the individual languages (L1, L2, L3, Ln) are embedded, cross-linguistic interaction, and what is called the M(ultilingualism) factor" (Jessner, 2008, p. 275). In this definition, cross-linguistic interaction is used as an umbrella term, referring to phenomena such as transfer, interference, code-switching, borrowing, and the cognitive effects of multilingual development. The M-factor is an emergent property of the multilingual system, and one of its key components is metalinguistic awareness. Multilingual learners display an enhanced metalinguistic awareness, which may have a

positive effect on further language acquisition, especially in the case of typologically related languages. This is not the case in monolingual L2 acquisition, where speakers make reference to a monolingual norm (Herdina & Jessner, 2002).

Given the complexity of multilingual systems, TLA studies do not conceptualise linguistic development in terms of approaching native speaker norm. Instead, they focus on cognitive development, and phenomena related to cross-linguistic interaction and metalinguistic awareness, such as the role of supporter languages as a compensatory strategy (e.g., Hammarberg, 2001; Jessner, 2006); interlanguage transfer (e.g., De Angelis & Selinker, 2001); the influence of multilingual education on multilingual awareness (e.g., Hofer, 2015); and the use of multilingual pedagogical practices in the classroom (e.g., Jessner et al., 2016) to name just a few. The studies show that contact between multiple languages, and explicit reflection on cross-linguistic differences and similarities foster multilingual awareness and promote language acquisition. Thus, in addition to linguistic skills, multilingual learners develop cognitive skills that should be taken into account when defining linguistic competence.

To summarise, a fundamental difference between SLA and TLA seems to lie in their approach to complexity in language acquisition. SLA focuses on common patterns emerging from the acquisition process, putting its complexity and variability in the background. Conversely, TLA focuses on the complexity and uniqueness of multilingual systems. As pointed out by Hammarberg (2009, p. 6), the perspective to be chosen is related to the object of inquiry:

> Clearly there are many topics within the established field of SLA where the complexity of the learner's language background is not a crucial aspect, and there is no need to oppose the conventional use of 'L2' in such cases. The notion of L3 is available when multilingualism is in focus.

1.4 The acquisition of Italian from TLA and SLA perspectives

Italian is usually not the first non-native language in the learner's linguistic repertoire. In instructional setting, it is typically introduced after several years of exposure to L2 English, as well as another Romance language (French or Spanish). L2 English is also likely to be present in the linguistic repertoire of untutored learners. Consequently, the acquisition process can be examined from both an SLA and a TLA perspective.

Studies investigating Italian from a third language perspective emphasise its potential in the development of multilingual communication in the form of receptive multilingualism (Vetter, 2012) and/or inter-comprehension (Bär, 2006; Vetter, 2011) in

Romance languages. The concept underlying multilingual communication is congruent with the recommendations contained in a key document of European language policy, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (2001), which encourages the development of a plurilingual competence "to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact" (Council of Europe, 2001, p.4). Thus, congruent with the TLA perspective, CEFR represents a holistic view on plurilingual competence, which includes the individual's linguistic knowledge as a whole. As pointed out by Vetter (2012, p. 352) "The entire language repertoire available to individuals is contained in this single multilingual and plurilingual competence". From this point of view, the main scope of language learning is the development of a "linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 5), rather than fostering the coexistence of several isolated languages. This conceptualisation of the linguistic competence implies that partial skills such as receptive multilingualism are "of special significance for expanding plurilingual and cultural competences, while near nativeness in individual languages is less central" (Vetter, 2012, p. 352). Bär (2006) points out that the development of partial skills in L3 Italian may exert a consolidation effect on linguistic skills in other Romance languages such as French or Spanish, and exemplifies this in the development of reading skills in L3 Italian. Bär shows that, when confronted with unstructured written input in L3 Italian, students are able to apply their knowledge of other Romance languages, and develop hypotheses by means of cross-linguistic comparisons. This process involves revision and consolidation of declarative and procedural knowledge about Romance languages, and enables learners to exploit their multilingual competence.

Studies conducted from an SLA perspective are based on interlanguage analyses, and focus on the predictability of developmental patterns, by taking into account the influence of the learner's L1 and the mode of language acquisition. The most extensive research on Italian SLA was carried out within the *Pavia Project,* embedded in a functionally-oriented framework (Giacalone Ramat, 2003b). As pointed out in 1.2.1.2, the idea behind these studies is that L2 learners, already familiar with a series of semantic categories from their L1, need to map semantic functions into target language forms. Therefore, the studies investigate the development of form-function relations in the IL.

The studies conducted with the *Pavia Project* focus on untutored acquisition of Italian by residents with migration backgrounds, adopting both form-oriented and meaning-oriented approaches. The principal developmental patterns are congruent with

the findings of the *European Science Foundation* project, in the sense that untutored learners of Italian follow the acquisition stages identified by Klein and Perdue (1992), confirming their universal character. As pointed out by Banfi and Bernini (2003, p. 85-89), the first stage of acquisition (pre-basic variety) is characterised by the prevalence of pragmatic means in the organisation of utterances, and a strong reliance on the communicative context. This stage is followed by the basic variety, where the utterances are composed of a verb in a basic form, and its arguments. The basic variety is characterised by the prevalence of lexical means, which are also used to convey information encoded by inflectional morphology in the target language, such as temporality, aspectuality and modality. Inflectional morphology enters the IL at the third acquisition stage, the post-basic variety.

Italian SLA has been further investigated within the project PRIN 2003. These studies, published in a collective volume edited by Bernini, Spreafico and Valentini (2008), focus on the acquisition of lexical and textual competence adopting an SLA perspective. To give a few examples, Giuliano (2008) investigates the acquisition of discourse cohesion elements in descriptive discourse, and shows that the use of discourse strategies is influenced by L1 patterns, even in advanced acquisition stages. Chini (2008) investigates referent introduction and tracking in a film-retelling task, comparing two groups of L2 Italian learners, one with L1 Spanish and another with and L1 German, against a native-speaker's benchmark. The results show that, consistent with Giuliano's observations, the acquisition of a textual competence is significantly influenced by a learner's L1. Such influence persists up to advanced learner varieties. Allora and Marello (2008) note that the acquisition of Italian adjectives is influenced both by the L1 and the presence of other Romance languages in the learners' repertoire. Jezek and Rastellli (2008) investigate the correlation between the selection of auxiliary verbs in the compound verb forms, and the semantic-aspectual properties of intransitive verbs, testing the hypothesis of unaccusative hierarchy advanced by Sorace (1995, p. 158). Bernini (2008) examines the untutored acquisition of verb-framed and satellite-framed motion verbs by learners with both Indo-European and non- Indo-European L1. The study conducted by Lo Duca e Duso (2008) concerns the morpho-lexical level, and investigates the acquisition of word-formation rules by L1 Spanish learners. Rosi (2008) investigates the influence of lexical aspect and discourse grounding on the acquisition of Italian tense/aspect morphology. Thus, the studies collected in the volume edited by Bernini et al. (2008) focus on interlanguage development conceived as a progressive acquisition of

native-like competences, while taking into account the effect of the L1 on the acquisition process. A similar tendency is observable in several studies dedicated to the acquisition of Italian tense/aspect morphology (e.g., Duso, 2002; Rocca, 2002, 2005; Rosi, 2009a; 2009b, 2011), presented in more detail in Chapter 4. These studies systematically take into account factors such as the learner's first language and the effect of instruction, maintaining the focus on universal tendencies and predictability of IL development.

1.5 Summary

This chapter has examined language acquisition research conducted on non-native languages, in order to locate the present study within the current theoretical discussion. Studies on non-native languages are classified into two major fields, SLA and TLA, according to their approach to the learner's linguistic repertoire and their conceptualisation of the acquisition process. Studies conducted within the field of SLA treat languages as autonomous entities, and conceptualise the acquisition process as IL development characterised by a progressive convergence towards native-speaker norm. This process unfolds in more or less predictable acquisition stages, connected to cognitive strategies and constraints. Thus, SLA studies focus on the predictability of IL development, taking into account the influence of factors such as the learner's L1 and mode of acquisition. TLA studies, on the contrary, adopt a holistic view on linguistic competence, seen as an individual system emerging from the constant interaction of all the languages present in a learner's linguistic repertoire. Due to its multifactorial character, the development of a multilingual competence displays high variability and limited predictability, directing attention to the dynamic interaction of languages, rather than the search for linearity in the development of a single language.

The present study focuses on the acquisition of a single non-native language, Italian. It is based on the analysis of interlanguage production, and restricts attention to the development of tense/aspect marking in interlanguage narratives. This research interest led to the adoption of a functionally-oriented SLA perspective, congruent with the majority of studies focusing on this topic, which will be presented in Chapters 3 and 4. Thus, the present study conceives the acquisition of tense and aspect as mapping of temporal and aspectual meanings into target language forms, and a progressive convergence of interlanguage form-function relations to the target language norm. The implications of this study, however, may be applicable to further research in TLA on the

exploitation of similarities between tense/aspect systems in multilingual acquisition of Romance languages.

Chapter 2

Tense, aspect and grounding

"The experience of time is fundamental to human cognition and action. Therefore, all languages we know of have developed a rich repertoire of means to encode time" (Klein, 2009b, p. 39). One of the linguistic means for encoding temporal relations in Romance languages is verbal morphology, characterised by formal richness and complexity of form-meaning relations. For instance, Italian simple verb forms merge the categories tense, aspect and mood into a single morpheme, followed by a morpheme expressing person and number. The structure of a simple verb form can be summarised as in (1), where TV stands for a semantically empty thematic vowel followed by two groups of features (Di Biase, 2007, p. 39):

(1) STEM + TV + (T/A/M) + P/N

As pointed out by Di Biase (ibid.), it is impossible to tease out tense from aspect and mood; or person from number, since both groups of features are merged into a single marker.

The relationship between form and meaning is equally complex in the compound verb forms, which contain an auxiliary verb carrying both groups of features (T/A/M and P/N), and a past participle which bears the lexical information (Andorno, 2003, p. 72).

The present study focuses on the expression of temporal relations conveyed by tense and aspect within the indicative paradigm. This choice is connected to the impossibility of examining the complex domain of modality in the present study[1]. While modality conveys the speaker's attitude towards the propositional content of the utterance (Andorno, 2003, p. 73), tense and aspect convey temporal relations, although in a different manner. Tense is a deictic category which refers to the location of a situation[2] on the time axis with respect to the deictic centre of the discourse, referred to as *moment of speech*, because it coincides with the moment when an utterance is produced

[1] Given that modality is not investigated in the present study, the modal value of past tense forms within the indicative paradigm (e.g., the modal uses of Imperfetto) will not be taken into account.

[2] Following Comrie (1976, p. 13) "situation" will be used as an umbrella term, referring to processes, events or states conveyed by verbs.

(Reichenbach, 1947). With reference to this moment, an event may be simultaneous, anterior or posterior. Thus, the moment of speech provides a temporal anchor and events are seen as present, past or future with respect to this anchor. This implies that verbal morphology allows for a relative location of events on the time axis. Lexical means such as temporal adverbials and connectives allow for a more accurate location of events and, as Klein (2009b, p. 41) notes, one might wonder "whether tense and aspect are not completely superfluous in view of what temporal adverbials allow us to do". However, adverbials are referentially bounded and underlie several restrictions in their use, while grammatical morphemes can be attached to virtually any verb and are therefore more efficient.

In contrast to tense, aspect is not a deictic category and it is not concerned with the location of events in time. As pointed out by Haßler (2016, p. 181): "Der Aspekt unterscheidet sich von der benachbarten Kategorie Tempus dadurch, dass ihm keine deiktische Qualität zukommt, er also kein Verhältnis einer betrachteten Zeit zur Sprechaktzeit ausdrückt". Aspect refers to the "internal temporal constituency" of events (Comrie, 1976, p. 3) and it characterises them along the dimension of completeness and boundedness. An event may be viewed as a single unanalysable whole, set within its temporal boundaries; or as unbounded, focusing on its internal structure, without referring to its temporal boundaries (ibid. 16). These two ways of visualisation correspond to the perfective and imperfective aspect. In Romance languages, the perfective/imperfective distinction is encoded by verbal morphology and is therefore referred to as grammatical aspect or viewpoint aspect. The latter expression, proposed by Smith (1991), emphasises that verbal morphology is chosen by the speaker in order to express his/her view on the event. In the present study, the term grammatical aspect will be adopted in order to stress that this type of distinction is encoded in verbal morphology, in contrast to lexical aspect or actionality, encoded in the lexical semantics of the verb phrase. As pointed out by Bertinetto and Delfitto (2000, p. 190) "While the notions of temporal reference and [grammatical] aspect (although ultimately of a semantic nature) are primarily anchored to the inflectional specifications available in each language, actionality is essentially rooted in the lexicon".

According to their lexical aspectual characteristics, verbs can be classified along dimensions such as dynamicity, telicity and punctuality (Vendler, 1957). Lexical aspect is a universal category and, in languages that mark aspect morphologically, it enters into a complex interaction with verbal morphology. For instance, telic and punctual predicates

are more likely to be visualised as bounded thereby inflected with perfective morphology, while atelic predicates are semantically congruent with unboundedness expressed by imperfective marking on the morphological level. In fact, the content-related homogeneity of lexical aspect and grammatical aspect led to their integration into a single category of aspectuality in the onomasiological model developed by Dessì Schmid (2014). In this model, lexical aspect and grammatical aspect are considered as two poles of a continuum of aspectual meaning, rather than two distinct categories. In contrast, Weinrich (2001 [1964]) suggests that aspect is not a relevant category for the description of Romance languages because aspectual phenomena are restricted to the sentence level and micro-syntax, and cannot account for text level phenomena. However, when analysing discourse grounding, Weinrich implicitly takes into account aspectual phenomena. In fact, discourse grounding interacts with both verbal morphology and lexical aspect, in the sense that foregrounded events are likely to be telic and marked with perfective morphology; while backgrounded events are often atelic and marked with imperfect morphology (Reinhart, 1984). As pointed out by Haßler (2016, p. 190), aspect in Romance languages is a multilevel phenomenon and its exclusion from the analysis may hamper our understanding of how events can be visualised in these languages: "[die] Ausklammerung des Aspekts als grammatischer Kategorie lässt sich für die romanischen Sprachen auf morphologischer Ebene rechtfertigen, wird jedoch dem Funktionieren dieser Sprachen beim Ausdruck von Situationen in ihrer Ganzheitlichkeit und in ihrem Verlauf nicht gerecht".

To sum up, tense and aspect in Romance languages convey temporal relations. Tense is a deictic category, which locates a situation on the timeline with reference to the moment of speech[3]; while the grammatical aspect is involved in viewing a situation as temporarily unbounded or within its temporal boundaries. Thus, the difference between tense and grammatical aspect can be seen as one between "situation-external time" and "situation-internal time" (Comrie, 1976, p. 5). Similar to grammatical aspect, lexical aspect is also concerned with the internal temporal structuring of a situation; however, it is encoded on the lexical level. Since the present study focuses on the expression of temporal and aspectual distinctions within a single language, it examines the categories of tense, grammatical aspect and lexical aspect separately, before turning attention to their complex interaction observable at both sentence and text level.

[3] The temporal reference of anaphoric tenses will be addressed in 2.1.

2.1. Tense and temporality

As pointed out by Haßler (2016, pp. 24-27), time is a real-world phenomenon that exists independently of its linguistic representation involving a variety of linguistic means such as verbal morphology, temporal adverbials, and discourse principles, which are pertinent to the functional-semantic category of temporality. Tense is the grammatical expression of temporality and conveys the speaker's mental representation of temporal relations (Haßler, 2016, p. 14).

According to its traditional definition, elaborated by Reichenbach (1947), tense allows for the location of events on the time axis in relation to the deictic centre of the discourse, the speech act. This deictic centre is referred to as *point of speech* (S), while the position of an event on the time axis is referred to as *point of event* (E). Thus, the concepts of anteriority, posteriority and simultaneity make reference to the location of E with respect to S, which constitutes a deictic anchor: "quando emettiamo un messaggio, noi fissiamo anche (esplicitamente o implicitamente) un punto di ancoraggio rispetto al quale possiamo calcolare un prima o un dopo" (Bertinetto, 1986, p. 23). For instance, the past tense used in (2) locates E before S, while its location is further clarified by the adverbial *a mezzogiorno* 'at noon'.

(2) Giovanni uscì a mezzogiorno

Some tenses cannot be located on the time axis with respect to the deictic centre, but require an additional temporal anchoring. For instance, the pluperfect, being a relative (or anaphoric) tense, is not located with reference to the deictic centre, but expresses anteriority with respect to a secondary reference point. If sentence (3) was produced in a conversation, the interlocutor would automatically look for an implicit anchoring in the past and locate the event [uscire a mezzogiorno] before that moment (from Bertinetto, 1986, p. 47):

(3) Giovanni era uscito a mezzogiorno

In (4), the additional temporal anchoring is conveyed linguistically by the expression [essere le due del pomeriggio], located in the past with respect to the deictic centre. This situation serves as a *point of reference* (R) and the event [uscire a mezzogiorno] is presented as anterior to R.

(4) Erano ormai le due del pomeriggio; Giovanni era uscito a mezzogiorno

In other words, the temporal relation expressed by anaphoric tenses "does not concern one event, but two events, whose positions are determined with respect to the point of speech" (Reichenbach, 1947, p. 287). The possibility of establishing secondary reference points on the time axis may lead to the emergence of highly complex temporal relations: "Die Verkettung sekundärer Referenzpunkte und Orientierung auf diese hat theoretisch keine Grenzen, es ist jedoch unschwer einzusehen, dass daraus hochkomplexe Systeme entstehen können" (Haßler, 2016, p. 89).

Thanks to its capacity for explaining complex temporal relations, Reichenbach's (1947) three-place model has been very influential in the analysis of temporal reference in different languages. However, the model presents some disadvantages pointed out by Klein (1994, 2009b), who claims that the analysis suffers from the fact that "point of reference" is not univocally defined and the model fails to capture temporal relations expressed in "elementary sentences" such as (5) to (7) (from Klein, 2009b, pp. 45-46).

(5) Eva is cheerful

(6) Eva was cheerful

(7) Eva's cat was dead

According to Reichenbach's model, in (5) E and S are simultaneous, while in both (6) and (7), E is located before S. However, Klein (ibid.) argues that this interpretation does not take into account the fact that (6) may still be valid, while (7) is certainly valid at the moment of speech. For this reason, Klein proposes distinguishing between topic time, which corresponds to the "time about which something is asserted (or asked)" and situation time, defined as "the time at which the situation obtains or occurs". In both (6) and (7) the topic time is a sub-interval of the situation time, hence it can be located in the past, even if the situation is still valid at the moment when the sentence is uttered. The introduction of the concepts of topic time and situation time allows for a re-elaboration of the traditional definition of both tense and grammatical aspect, in terms of relationship between time intervals.

Bertinetto (1986, pp. 27-28), who adopts Reichenbach's perspective on temporal relations, notes that tenses do not establish a univocal temporal reference and are likely to modify their default meaning, while in some cases their location on the time axis is based on pragmatic principles. For instance, both (8) and (9) contain a present tense and the interpretation of simultaneity in (8) and sequentiality in (9) is based on pragmatic factors.

(8) Quando dormo bene, russo fragorosamente

(9) Quando dormo bene, lavoro meglio

The examples from (5) to (9) suggest that in some cases it is difficult to establish a relationship between tense and representation of time. Bertinetto (1986, p. 29) and Haßler (2016, p. 90) point out that each tense has a prototypical meaning and, apart from that meaning, it may express a range of slightly different meanings. Shifts in meaning may be caused by the interaction between verbal morphology and lexical aspect. This may be the case in the examples (5), (6) and (7) reported by Klein (2009b), where the validity of the situation at the moment of speech is likely to be connected to the lexical aspectual characteristics of the predicates that denote states, i.e. continuous situations that are unlikely to change, unless an external factor intervenes. If the stative verbs in (6) and (7) are replaced by [+dynamic] predicates, E can be located before S, coherently with Reichenbach's explanation, as illustrated in (10) and (11):

(10) Eva behaved cheerfully

(11) Eva's cat died

Although Reichenbach's analysis of temporal relations has been criticised by several scholars (e.g., Klein, 1994, 2009b; Haßler, 2016), it offers the great advantage of explaining complex temporal relations within a simple and intuitively accessible framework. The present study adopts Reichenbach's perspective on time, in line with the most influential and detailed analysis of the Italian tense-aspect system proposed by Bertinetto (1986, 1991). Tense is seen as a fundamentally deictic category that allows the establishment of a relationship between a situation and the moment of speech or another reference moment, which is in turn located on the time axis with reference to the moment of speech.

Sections 2.1.1 to 2.1.4 will focus on the temporal characteristics of the following tenses within the indicative paradigm: present tense (Presente), compound past (Passato Prossimo), simple past (Passato Remoto), pluperfect (Trapassato Prossimo) and imperfect (Imperfetto). The following tenses are excluded from the analysis: Trapassato Remoto, because it is rarely used in standard Italian and occurs sporadically in the learner corpus analysed in the present study; Futuro and Futuro Anteriore because the expression of future reference falls outside the scope of the present study. Initially, the analysis will focus on the temporal value of the presented tenses. While focusing on temporal characteristics, limited attention will be dedicated to their aspectual value, which constitutes an essential part of their definition and cannot be completely separated from tense. However, a separate section (2.2.1) will be dedicated to the aspectual

characteristics of the examined tenses, in the attempt to analyse the tense and aspect separately, before examining their interaction. Marginal attention will be dedicated to the modal value of the tenses, beyond the focus of the present study.

In line with the studies on the acquisition of the Italian tense-aspect system (e.g., Banfi & Bernini, 2003; Giacalone Ramat, 2003b; Rocca, 2002, 2005; Rosi 2009a), the traditional tense-terminology is maintained throughout the study - instead of the terminology proposed by Bertinetto (1986)[4] - in order to facilitate the comparison of the present results with previous research.

2.1.1 Present tense

The present tense (PRES) is extensively used in both written and spoken language and conveys a large variety of meanings: "Das Präsens ist das in der gesprochenen Sprache am häufigsten verwendete Tempus, dessen Bedeutungspotenzial eine außerordentlich große Flexibilität ermöglicht" (Haßler, 2016, p. 91). Its prototypical, deictic meaning conveys simultaneity between S and E, thus in (12) the situation [Carlo dormire] is interpreted as simultaneous to the moment when the sentence is uttered (from Bertinetto, 1986, p. 325), while its conclusion is undetermined:

(12) In questo preciso istante, Carlo dorme

When E and S are simultaneous, the present tense may also refer to a habitual event, which is not necessarily in progress at S, however, it may occur any time, when the circumstances allow for it (13) (from Bertinetto, 1986, p. 333):

(13) In montagna mi sento un altro

The expression of simultaneity, intuitively perceived as the prototypical meaning of PRES, is only available with durative[5] verbs (Bertinetto, 1986, p. 325). In combination

[4] Bertinetto (1986, p. 18) notes that the traditional tense terminology in Italian is incongruent, meaning that in some cases it refers to temporal deixis (e.g., the terms Passato Prossimo and Passato Remoto refer to the relative distance of an event from the point of speech on the time axis), while in other cases it is based on aspectual criteria (e.g., Imperfetto). Bertinetto proposes a more consistent terminology, based on tempo/aspectual and formal criteria. Given that they convey similar aspectual meanings, but differ in their formal complexity, Passato Prossimo and Passato Remoto are referred to as Perfetto Composto and Perfetto Semplice respectively. This terminology emphasises the similarity in their aspectual meaning, and allows referring to both tenses contemporarily by using the term *Perfetti,* and contrapose them to the imperfective past tense Imperfetto. In fact, no terminological change is proposed for the latter tense. The present study maintains the traditional terminology, that is Passato Prossimo, Passato Remoto and Imperfetto.

[5] The term *durativity* makes reference to the lexical aspectual characterisation of predicates, presented in more detail in 2.2.2. As pointed out by Bertinetto (1986, p. 88), durative verbs refer to processes with an inherent duration, such as *dormire,* while non-durative predicates refer to processes that happen instantaneously and their starting point coincides with their endpoint (e.g., *esplodere*).

with non-durative verbs, it may appear in extemporaneous comments, for instance in a radio commentary. As pointed out by Bertinetto (1986, p. 325), "gli usi rigorosamente deittici del PRE [presente], benché non rari, non sono sempre facilmente accessibili, e sono anzi talvolta addirittura impossibili".

The prototypical meaning of simultaneity conveyed by PRES allows for the expression of generally accepted facts (14), with no reference to the length of the time interval under consideration:

(14) 3 più 3 fa 6

In (14) the statement does not have a specific time reference; its validity extends endlessly, it could be considered a case of extended simultaneity. In fact, PRES can be applied when referring to generally valid characteristics or conditions. For instance, statement (15) is not made for a specific muscle with respect to a determined time interval, but it has a general validity:

(15) Per generare movimento, il muscolo necessita di uno stimolo proveniente dal cervello

Besides statements of scientific validity, PRES may also refer to things experienced in everyday life as in (16) (from Bertinetto, 1986, p. 331):

(16) Dal colle della Maddalena si vede una vasta corona di Alpi

Haßler (2016, p. 92) points out that there is disagreement among scholars whether the use of PRES to denote facts of general validity refers to an unbounded situation that includes the S or it does not involve any temporal relation: "Es gibt keine Einigkeit unter den Grammatikern hinsichtlich der Frage, ob das generische Präsens als vollständig zeitlos zu betrachten ist oder ob es in einer kontinuierlichen unbegrenzten Situation, die den Sprechaktmoment beinhaltet, zu lokalisieren ist". According to Bertinetto (1986, pp. 328-331) PRES in generally valid assertions corresponds to a non-deictic use of this tense, because the situation it refers to does not have a temporal delimitation, thereby it cannot be located on the time axis.

In its deictic uses, PRES may also convey anteriority with reference to the deictic centre. This use is referred to as *historical present*, applied in narratives, in order to view events as still relevant at the S and to create the impression of psychological proximity: "L'effetto è quello di un avvicinamento prospettico e di un'attualizzazione degli eventi narrati, che pur appartenendo al passato vengono presentati come se fossero appunto contemporanei o prossimi all'enunciazione" (Roggia, 2011).

The historical present appears in texts where past tense morphology is prevalent, in order to obtain a dramatic effect by emphasising a sequence within a larger narrative unit or to indicate an important turning point in the story. This use is referred to as *dramatic present* and is observable in (17) (from Roggia, 2011):

(17) A qualche distanza giungemmo a una barriera, ove mi domandano una piccola somma pel mio passaggio. Metto la mano in tasca, e qual fu la mia sorpresa quando non trovai un soldo nel borsellino dov'io posi la mattina cinquanta zecchini, che l'impresario di Praga, Guardassoni, pagato m'avea per quell'opera! (Da Ponte 1918: 1°, p. 134)

On the other hand, the term *narrative present* denotes the cases when the historical present is the prevalent tense of a narrative, used to produce a vivid narration and create a sense of actuality. Both narrative present and dramatic present occur frequently in spontaneous narratives (cfr. Lo Duca & Solarino, 1992) but can also be found in written texts in order to produce stylistic effects.

However, PRES may also make reference to a future event. While reference to the past may be implied by the context as in (17), reference to a future event requires a temporal specification as in (18) (from Bertinetto, 1986, p. 337):

(18) Domani dormo da mia zia

The large variety of meanings conveyed by PRES has been observed in film-retelling narratives produced by Italian native speakers (Lo Duca & Solarino, 1992, pp. 47-8); and has induced some scholars to consider PRES as a semantically empty tense which gains its temporal and aspectual value from the context. However, Haßler (2016, p. 104) points out that the use of PRES in a text with prevalently past tense morphology may cause the shift of the deictic centre and originate a reorganisation of tenses around a reference point, instead of the speech point. For instance, in (19) (from Bertinetto, 1986, p. 335) the event [Enrico giungere], marked with PRES, assumes the role of the deictic centre. The events [parlare al capostazione] marked with past tense morphology; [dire] marked with PRES and [arrivare] marked with future morphology express anteriority, simultaneity and posteriority with respect to the deictic centre [Enrico giungere], and not with respect to the speech point.

(19) Stavamo aspettando il treno. All'improvviso *giunge* trafelato Enrico. *Ha* appena *parlato* al capostazione e *dice* che il rapido *arriverà* con molto ritardo. Fu così che decidemmo di prendere l'espresso.

If the event 'giungere' was marked with past tense morphology, the totality of the events would be organised around the speech point, as illustrated in (20). Rojo and Veiga (1999, p. 2892) consider the shift of the deictic centre caused by the use of PRES as an argument against its consideration as a neutral tense.

(20) Stavamo aspettando il treno. All'improvviso *giunse* trafelato Enrico. *Aveva* appena *parlato* al capostazione e *diceva* che il rapido *sarebbe arrivato* con molto ritardo. Fu così che decidemmo di prendere l'espresso.

To summarise, besides the expression of simultaneity, perceived as the prototypical meaning of PRES, this tense may also express anteriority, posteriority or refer to information of general validity. However, its potential to be the deictic centre of a narrative sequence challenges the opinion that it may be a semantically empty tense, which gains its interpretation from the context.

2.1.2 Perfective past tenses

Similar to other Romance languages (e.g., French, Spanish, Portuguese), Italian has two perfective past tenses: the compound past, called *Passato Prossimo* (PP), and the simple past, called *Passato Remoto* (PR). Both tenses convey anteriority with respect to the speech point and express the perfective aspect by viewing a situation "in its entirety, without regard to internal temporal constituency" (Comrie, 1976, p. 12).

Despite conspicuous similarities, the two tenses display some differences in their temporal and aspectual meaning. With respect to their temporal value, the terminology *Passato Prossimo* and *Passato Remoto* suggests that the difference between the two the tenses concerns the length of the time interval between E and S. *Passato Prossimo* alludes to proximity between E and S, suggesting reference to recent past events; while *Passato Remoto* would refer to remote past events. However, the criterion of temporal distance cannot account for phenomena observable in language use, characterised by diatopic differences between Southern and Northern varieties (Lo Duca & Solarino, 1992; Squartini & Bertinetto, 2000). Northern varieties of Italian display a tendency to generalise PP, while the opposite tendency is observable in Southern varieties. Bertinetto (1986, p. 410) in fact notes that starting from the Cinquecento, grammatical studies have been struggling to justify the existence of a morphological distinction which does not seem to be supported by language use: "dal Cinquecento in poi, dobbiamo riconoscere che esse [prescrizioni dei grammatici tradizionali] documentano innanzi tutto l'aperto

disagio dei letterati di fronte all'esistenza di un'opposizione morfologica che non appare più sorretta da coerenti e sistematiche motivazioni". Furthermore, the extensive use of PP in Northern varieties of Italian seems to have led to a neutralisation of the few existing differences between the two tenses. Coherently, Bertinetto (1986) refers to both tenses with the umbrella term *Perfetti* and concludes that both tenses display the following core characteristics:

1. Compatibility with adverbs that express a delimited duration
2. Impossibility to assume a modal value
3. Indication of sequentiality

Weinrich (1964, p. 87) proposes distinguishing between PP and PR in terms of psychological involvement, instead of temporal distance. PP refers to events that are psychologically relevant to the speaker, while PR describes events perceived as having no psychological impact at the moment of speech. This difference emerges in narratives, where the sequentially narrated events are marked with PR, while codas, expressing the speaker's point of view on events, are marked with PP. Thus, the selection between PP and PR expresses the degree of the speaker's psychological involvement on a morphological level.

However, Bertinetto (1986, p. 438-445) notes that the most systematic differences between PP and PR are connected to deixis and grammatical aspect. In this respect, PP displays a high degree of flexibility in meaning, which is not the case for PR. While the former can be subjected to deployment on the time axis and, in some contexts, may modify its aspectual value, the latter is always deictic and expresses the perfective aspect. As pointed out by Bertinetto (1986, p. 407), *Passato Remoto* "risulta essere la forma aspettualmente più pura […], in quanto rigorosamente e costantemente perfettivo".

The following sections will outline the features that distinguish the two PERF tenses by taking into account that these distinctions are not rigid, although their maintenance is considered prestigious, especially in literary language and formal register (Squartini & Bertinetto, 2000, p. 424).

2.1.2.1 Passato Prossimo

PP belongs to the domain of perfective aspect, which can be further divided into two subdomains: the perfect[6] aspect, referring to a "past situation which has present

[6] The term "perfect" makes reference to the terminology proposed by Comrie (1976, p. 11). The same aspectual value is referred to as "aspetto compiuto" in Bertinetto's studies written in Italian (e.g., Bertinetto 1986; 1991), while its counterpart in the English papers of the same author is "perfectal" (e.g., Squartini & Bertinetto 2000).

relevance" (Comrie, 1976, p. 11); and the aoristic aspect that refers to a single occurrence of a concluded situation with no present relevance (Grandi, 2010). One of the defining features of PP with respect to PR is that PP conveys the perfect aspect, while PR conveys the aoristic aspect (Wiberg, 2011a). However, similar to Weinrich's definition based on the speaker's psychological involvement, the concept of present relevance is also hard to operationalise (Klein, 1992). Thus, the various definitions of PP are based on ambiguous concepts such as proximity between E and S, psychological involvement and present relevance. Nevertheless, these definitions are congruent, in the sense that a situation located in the recent past is likely to have present relevance and consequently a psychological impact. In fact, when the three factors converge, the use of PP is nearly compulsory, as illustrated in (21) (from Bertinetto, 1986, p. 415), where the event of getting ill makes it impossible to participate at the celebration:

(21) Scusami, ma non posso venire alla tua festa: mi sono preso l'influenza

As pointed out in 2.1.2, PP displays a high degree of flexibility in meaning. For instance, the feature of current relevance conveyed by this tense can be extended to a level where not only the result, but also the situation itself can be considered valid at the speech point, which leads to an imperfective interpretation. This is the case in (22) where the event [portare gonne lunghissime] is still valid at S and could be paraphrased by means of an omnitemporal present *portano da sempre* (Bertinetto, 1986, p. 418):

(22) Le donne di questo luogo hanno sempre portato gonne lunghissime

As pointed out by Bertinetto (1986, p. 418), "Volendo, si può considerare questo fenomeno come una sorta di caso estremo di rilevanza attuale, in cui non solo il risultato, ma l'evento stesso perdura al ME [momento dell'enunciazione, i.e. speech point]".

While PP can extend its perfect meaning (i.e. present relevance) to such a high degree that it gains an imperfective interpretation, the exact opposite is also possible. In (23) PP assumes an aoristic meaning, presenting a situation with no present relevance (from Wiberg, 2011a). In this sentence, PP is in fact replaceable by PR. Squartini and Bertinetto (2000, pp. 403-404) refer to this phenomenon as *aoristic drift* and claim that Passato Prossimo "started out as a true perfect, but underwent a process of gradual aoristicisation (i.e. of transformation into a purely perfective past)".

(23) nel 2000 Maria si è sposata / si sposò con Giovanni: oggi è separata

The flexibility in meaning allows for the use of PP as a non-deictic tense. In these circumstances, the situation it denotes is not located with respect to the deictic centre, but with respect to a reference point which does not coincide with S. The reference point may

be anterior or posterior to S. In the latter case, PP assumes a future value as in (24). Conversely, when the reference point is anterior to S, PP assumes a meaning similar to a pluperfect (25) (Bertinetto, 1986, p. 420-421):

(24) Quando vedrai Giovanni, gli dirai che sei venuto per prendere la tua roba

(25) La casa è crollata dopo che sei uscito

Finally, when used in a non-deictic meaning, PP can supress its temporal value and assume an omnitemporal interpretation, referring to a situation of general validity as in (26) (Bertinetto, 1986, p. 423):

(26) Una persona che ha studiato non deve comportarsi così

To sum up, PP is characterised by flexibility in meaning, in the sense that its core meaning as a perfective tense referring to a complete event with current relevance is feasible to split into two opposite directions. It may be extended far enough to gain an imperfective reading, or faded so that the tense gains an aoristic value. Furthermore, PP may lose its deictic value and be used as an anaphoric tense or gain an omnitemporal interpretation.

2.1.2.2 Passato Remoto

Flexibility is the feature that distinguishes PP from PR, which in turn is rigorously deictic and perfective (Bertinetto 1986, pp. 428-9). PR expresses the aoristic aspect, i.e. it refers to a process concluded before S that does not have persisting effects at S: "il passato remoto è un tempo perfettivo di tipo aoristico, designante cioè un processo interamente concluso, le conseguenze del quale non si possono considerare attuali" (Wiberg, 2011b). The absence of persisting effects at S seems to capture the semantics of PR better than the concept of psychological relevance proposed by Weinrich (1964), especially when analysing the Southern varieties of Italian, where PR often refers to the recent past, as exemplified in (27) (from Bertinetto, 1986, p. 428):

(27) Venendo qui, vidi Gennaro che andava alla stazione: sarà stato cinque minuti fa

As pointed out by Wiberg (2011b), the feature of conclusion without persisting effects connected to the aoristic aspect prevents an inclusive interpretation of PR which is instead possible in the presence of PP. While the use of PP in (28) admits the continuation of the situation at the moment of speech (i.e., it is possible that Chiara still lives in Rome), such an interpretation is not possible with the sentence (29), where it is automatically assumed that Chiara no longer lives in Rome:

(28) Chiara ha vissuto a lungo a Roma

(29) Chiara visse a lungo a Roma

This implies that the temporal reference of PR is highly specific, as further exemplified in (30). Similar to (28), the use of PP in (30) allows for the inclusion of S, i.e. the situation [abitare in questa casa / to live in this house] may be still valid at S. This is not possible in the presence of PR (31) which views the situation as necessarily concluded at the S (Bertinetto, 1986, p. 440):

(30) Ho abitato in questa casa per dieci anni di fila; comincio a non poterne più

(31) Abitai in questa casa per dieci anni di fila, finché non ne potei più

For the same reason, adverbials that refer to S are compatible with PP but not with PR (Bertinetto, 1991, p. 100):

(32) Adesso finalmente ho appagato / *appagai il mio desiderio

The examples (27) to (32) show that, when PR is applied, the time interval between E and S does not necessarily have to be long, i.e. PR does not necessarily refer to a situation that is far away in the past. However, in the case of PR, S can never include E, while in the case of PP this possibility exists.

The rigorously deictic nature of PR can be observed in examples (33) and (34) (from Bertinetto 1986, p. 429) which illustrate that PR, contrary to PP, cannot be deployed along the time axis to be located with respect to a reference point. PR always refers to a concluded event located with reference to S, the deictic centre. For this reason, sentences (33) and (34) are ungrammatical with PR, but possible with PP:

(33) Ti raggiungerò quando ho finito / *finii

(34) Vengo dopo che ho mangiato / *mangiai

To sum up, the main differences between PP and PR can be outlined in three points (Bertinetto, 1986, pp. 438-445):

1. PP conveys the perfect aspect, viewing a situation in its entirety, with persisting effects at the S; while PR conveys the aoristic aspect, viewing a situation in its singular manifestation, without persisting effects at S;
2. the temporal reference of PP is not always deictic, it admits deployment along the time axis in the sense that it can be located with respect to a reference point anterior or posterior to the S; while PR is rigorously deictic in nature;
3. PP leaves the conclusion of the process undetermined, admitting its continuation or resumption at the S; while PR refers to concluded events in the past and does not leave any space for the continuation of the event at S.

However, these distinctions between PP and PR are not rigid and, as emphasised by Bertinetto (1986, p. 441), "Abbiamo quindi a che fare (…) con una semplice indicazione di tendenza, piuttosto che con una rigida regolarità di comportamento (…)".

2.1.2.3 Trapassato Prossimo

The pluperfect *Trapassato Prossimo* (TRAP) can be characterised as a relative or anaphoric tense, in the sense that it is located on the time axis with respect to a reference point, instead of the deictic centre (Lo Duca & Solarino, 2006, p. 55). Thus, in (35) the event [nascondere la torta nella dispensa] is anterior to the event [mangiare la torta] that constitutes the reference point and in turn is anterior to S (ibid. 53).

(35) Il gatto ha mangiato la torta che avevo nascosto nella dispensa

In fact, TRAP often appears in subordinate clauses, while the event in the main clause constitutes the reference point (R), as observable in both (35) and (36) (from Wiberg, 2011c). However, TRAP can also appear in main clauses (37) (from Bertinetto, 1986, p. 455).

(36) dopo che si era fatta la doccia, Luisa prendeva sempre un'aranciata

(37) Alle 3 venne / è venuto il momento di lasciarci. Gli altri erano partiti in precedenza

Its aspectual characterisation is fundamentally perfective, i.e. it presents events in their globality and conveys a perfect meaning (Bertinetto, 1986, p. 450; Wiberg, 2011c). However, it shares with PP the possibility of gaining an inclusive meaning, leading to an imperfective interpretation as in (38) (from Bertinetto, 1986, p. 460), where the event point includes R.

(38) Quando incontrai Antonio, egli si era già da tempo dedicato allo studio del problema che lo avrebbe reso famoso

In these cases, TRAP may assume a progressive meaning (cfr. Wiberg, 2011c), and may be replaced by a progressive periphrasis (38'):

(38') Quando incontrai Antonio, egli si stava già da tempo dedicando allo studio del problema che lo avrebbe reso famoso

To recap, TRAP is an anaphoric tense located on the time axis with respect to a reference point and conveys the perfect aspect. However, similar to PP, it is feasible to shift its meaning and gain an inclusive interpretation which, on the basis of the context, may lead to an imperfective reading. According to Bertinetto (1986, p. 464), the imperfective meaning of TRAP is more pronounced than in the case of PP: "pur nella sua dominante tonalità perfettiva (tipica del resto delle forme Composte), [TRAP] può

manifestare talvolta una chiara coloratura imperfettiva; assai più marcata di quella che caratterizza (a tratti) il Perfetto Composto [Passato Prossimo]".

The perfective past tenses analysed in 2.1.2 can be classified into two categories, according to their aspectual meaning. The compound past tenses PP and TRAP convey the perfect aspect, the simple past tense PR conveys the aoristic aspect. While the former are susceptible to temporal and aspectual modification, the latter does not admit contextual modification.

2.1.3 Imperfetto

According to Haßler (2016, p. 107) the semantic potential of Imperfetto (IMP) is primarily comprised of aspectual meanings. With regard to its temporal meaning, its prototypical function is the expression of simultaneity with respect to a temporal anchor provided by a perfective situation, as exemplified in (39), where the event [suonare il violino] is simultaneous to the event [entrare nella stanza]:

(39) Ieri Anna suonava il violino quando Luca è entrato nella stanza

In this sentence, IMP not only expresses simultaneity, but, due to its aspectual value, it views the event of playing the violin as on-going, focusing on its internal constituency and without taking into account its temporal boundaries; while the perfective event of entering the room is visualised as complete and provides the temporal anchoring. In the absence of temporal anchoring (40) the grammaticality of the sentence would be questionable (cfr. Bertinetto, 1991, p. 73):

(40)? Ieri Anna suonava il violino

However, the temporal anchoring is not necessarily provided by another event, it can also be provided by adverbials, as in (41):

(41) Ieri a QUEST'ORA Anna suonava il violino

To summarise, the defining features of IMP are twofold: 1) the visualisation of situations as on-going, focusing on their internal constituency; and 2) unfeasibility of establishing a temporal anchoring and the consequent necessity of a temporal anchoring provided by a perfective tense or an adverbial (Haßler, 2016, p. 110).

In (42), the lack of temporal anchoring compromises the acceptability of the sentence uttered by speaker A and, by creating a sense of suspense, would probably bring speaker B to formulate a question about what happened (cfr. Bertinetto, 1986, p. 353):

(42) SPEAKER A: L'anno scorso facevo un viaggio
SPEAKER B: Ebbene, cos'è successo?

The expression of simultaneity, a temporal relation that can hardly be conveyed by the other past tenses, is a characteristic feature of IMP. This is particularly evident in the case of the juxtaposition of events. In (43) the juxtaposed events marked with PERF morphology generate an incoherent sequence of sentences, while the same events with IMP in (44) produce a descriptive value and can be seen as background information (Bertinetto, 1986, p. 356):

(43) ? Fuori piovve. Gina indossò un abito grigio. La stanza fu in disordine.

(44) Fuori pioveva. Gina indossava un abito grigio. La stanza era in disordine.

If sequence (44) was the beginning of a narration, it would assume the function of scene setting and offer a background to the main story line, marked with PERF morphology[7].

To sum up, Haßler (2016, p. 113) defines IMP as a relative tense which lacks an absolute temporal value and necessitates a temporal anchoring to convey its prototypical meaning of simultaneity: "Das Imperfekt als duratives und Gleichzeitigkeit mit einem Bezugsmoment in der Vergangenheit ausdrückendes Tempus tritt vorzugsweise mit adverbialen Verankerungen in der Vergangenheit oder mit eindeutigen perfektiven Vergangenheitstempora auf". Similarly, Wiberg (2010) describes IMP as a relative tense that conveys simultaneity with another event in the past and cannot establish a temporal anchoring: "L'imperfetto indicativo indica la simultaneità nel passato rispetto a un momento nel passato (per questo nella tradizione grammaticale è considerato tempo relativo per eccellenza). Ciò significa che un enunciato con l'imperfetto raramente può star da solo senza riferirsi a un ancoraggio temporale (…)" (Wiberg, 2010).

However, both Bertinetto (1986, p. 354) and Haßler (2016, p. 113) agree that temporal anchoring is not necessarily explicit. It may arise from the communicative situation (45) or from the lexical semantics of the predicates (46).

(45) Giovanni passeggiava avanti e indietro

(45') [In quel momento] Giovanni passeggiava avanti e indietro

(45'') [Mentre la sua amica sosteneva l'esame], Giovanni passeggiava avanti e indietro

(46) L'uomo di cui parli si chiamava Alberto

Sentence (45) presupposes an implicit anchoring such as *in quel momento* or *mentre la sua amica sosteneva l'esame,* etc. The type of implicit anchoring further specifies its

[7] In texts such as journalistic prose, juxtaposed events with IMP marking may be part of a narrative sequence assuming a function usually reserved for PERF tenses. However, Bertinetto (1986, p. 382) notes that this use of IMP is almost absent in everyday use of language: "questa forma, almeno nelle sue manifestazioni più vistose, è praticamente assente dal linguaggio parlato, salvo che il parlante non voglia intenzionalmente caricare il proprio discorso di connotazioni parodiche".

aspectual value. It assumes a progressive meaning in (45'), and a continuous meaning in (45''). The temporal anchor in (46) arises from the lexical aspectual value of the predicate, which denotes a permanent property of the referent and fulfils a descriptive function, indirectly connected to the expression of simultaneity (cfr. Haßler, 2016, pp. 113-4). This is further exemplified in (47) (from Bertinetto, 1991, p. 75), where IMP refers to a general truth with unlimited temporal extension. Bertinetto and Lenci (2012) label the use of IMP in (46) and (47) with the term *gnomic imperfect,* in order to stress that it expresses a "law-like generalisation", or a characteristic feature of individuals or a group of individuals.

(47) Fin dai tempi di Copernico e Galilei ci si accorse che la Terra girava in torno al Sole

The temporal value of IMP in reported speech clauses has generated some disagreement among scholars. Bertinetto (1991, p. 75) observes that Italian displays a generalised tendency to use IMP in reported speech clauses, when the matrix clause contains past marking. In these cases, IMP assumes the function of "present in the past" (Bertinetto, 1986, p. 363) and, similarly to the present tense, it may convey simultaneity (48) or posteriority (49) with respect to the matrix clause. In (48) the situation marked with IMP is simultaneous to the temporal anchor established by the matrix clause and may be still valid at the moment of speech. In (49) IMP conveys posteriority and could be replaced by a compound conditional (cfr. Bertinetto, 1991, pp. 75-78). However, according to Wiberg's (2010) analysis, IMP in (48) does not convey simultaneity in the past. Instead, its use is necessary because the matrix clause contains past marking: "Il tempo passato della frase reggente attrae un altro tempo al passato, in questo caso l'imperfetto, ma questo non va interpretato come esprimente una simultaneità nel passato".

(48) Gigi mi ha detto ieri che Adriana era malata

(49) Ha promesso che tornava il giorno dopo

The prospective meaning that IMP assumes in (49) is particularly evident with modal verbs *volere* 'to want to' and *potere* 'to be able to' because the willingness and prospect encoded on the lexical level imply future realisation (50) (from Bertinetto, 1986, p. 366):

(50) L'estate scorsa Annette diceva che voleva ritornare

To sum up, the expression of simultaneity seems to be the most stable characteristic of IMP. The relation of simultaneity concerns events in the past, but may be extended to the present or the near future (Haßler, 2016, p. 118). As pointed out by, Bertinetto (1986, p. 345), IMP displays the highest degree of flexibility in meaning among

the tenses of the indicative paradigm and may occur in a great variety of contexts: "Tra i Tempi dell'Indicativo, l'Imperfetto (…) è certo quello che presenta la maggior duttilità di significato e la più ampia varietà di impiego".

2.2 Aspectuality

According to McManus' definition (2013, p. 300), "Aspect deals with two types of universal semantic information: (1) the inherent semantics of verbs/predicates/sentences (situation aspect, or lexical aspect) and (2) the particular perspective from which situations are presented (viewpoint aspect, or grammatical aspect)". This definition illustrates the terminological variability observable in the description of aspectual phenomena. Comrie (1976, p. 41) refers to the inherent semantics of the verb with the terms *inherent aspect* and *semantic aspect*. Klein (2009b) considers the terms *Aktionsart, event type* and *lexical aspect* synonyms referring to the "subdivision of verb types according to the temporal properties of the situations which they describe" (p. 40). On the other hand, Salaberry and Ayoun (2005, p. 3) claim that the terms *lexical aspect* and *Aktionsart* cannot be treated as synonyms because they refer to different phenomena. While the former refers to the inherent temporal characteristics of a predicate encoded on the semantic level, the latter refers to "secondary modifications of basic verb meanings", obtained by means of derivational morphology, e.g. *blühen* 'flowering' versus *erblühen* 'to start flowering' in German (Klein, 1994, p. 17). However, Haßler (2016, pp. 219-229) uses the term *Aktionsarten* when referring to Vendler's classification of predicates, while the same distinction is often referred to as lexical aspect, especially in studies on second language acquisition of tense and aspect (e.g. Comajoan, 2005, 2006; Salaberry, 2011; Shirai, 2013). Filip (2012) in turn, claims that lexical aspect refers to the intrinsic semantic properties of the verb as a lexical item, and should not be used when referring to properties of verb phrases and sentences. For the latter phenomenon, Filip (2012, p. 725) proposes the term *aspectual class.* Furthermore, the authors of studies conducted in Italy often prefer the term *actionality* over lexical aspect or Aktionsart, following a tradition introduced by Bertinetto (1986).

In the present study, the term *lexical aspect* will be used in line with the majority of the studies in the field of second language acquisition of tense and aspect, where the concept is defined as "the temporal features intrinsic in the semantics of the verbal predicate, including the semantic contribution of internal and external arguments" (Salaberry & Ayoun, 2005, p. 3). However, when citing authors from Italy, the term

actionality may sometimes appear as a synonym of lexical aspect. On the other hand, the aspectual distinction encoded by verbal morphology is referred to as *grammatical aspect*. This terminological choice aims to emphasise that both grammatical aspect and lexical aspect encode aspectual distinctions, i.e. information related to the internal temporal structuring of situations, although on a different linguistic level.

The affinity of the meanings conveyed by the two categories induced some scholars to reconsider the necessity to differentiate between grammatical aspect and lexical aspect in Romance languages. When analysing the French verbal system, Referovskaja (1984) describes aspectual distinctions in terms of temporal delimitation encoded on both semantic and morphological levels. The two representations of temporal delimitation may harmonise or collide, in both cases the aspectual characterisation of the predicate emerges from their concurrence. An advantage of this model is that it takes into account the contribution of both lexical semantics and verbal morphology in the representation of temporal delimitation. However, it attributes limited importance to verbal morphology, which contributes to the temporal delimitation of a situation, but it does not determine it. As pointed out by Haßler (2016, p. 204): "Das Vorhandensein eines Aspekts im Französischen wird von Referovskaja (1984, p. 109) somit verneint. Der Aspekt stellt eine Art Mitbedeutung der Verbformen dar."

Bondarko (1984) and Schwall (1991) conceptualise aspectuality as a universal, functional-semantic category expressed by a variety of linguistic means on morphological, syntactic, semantic and contextual levels. The core of this functional-semantic category is the grammatical manifestation of aspect such as the systematic aspectual distinctions present in Slavic languages. However, there are other linguistic means that may contribute to the expression of aspectual meanings such as lexical semantic characterisation of predicates, adverbials, verbal periphrases etc. As pointed out by Haßler (2016, pp. 190-191), these linguistic means may be more or less specialised in the expression of aspectual meaning and, in some cases, their aspectual value may emerge from the context. The totality of the linguistic means that contribute to the expression of aspectual distinctions is included in the functional-semantic category of *aspectuality*.

According to Haßler (2016, p. 191), aspectuality does not have a grammatical core in Romance languages, because there are no morphological means specialised in the expression of aspectual meanings. However, the core can be replaced by verb forms that express aspectual oppositions, such as *Imperfetto* versus *Passato Remoto* or *Passato*

Prossimo in Italian (ibid. 192), because the expression of aspectuality is compulsory with these forms, in the sense that they are never aspectually neutral.

This model, proposed by Haßler (2016), is based on Bondarko's (1984) conceptualisation of aspectuality as a universal, functional-semantic category and Verkuyl's (1972) compositional model of aspect. It takes into account a large variety of linguistic means that contribute to aspectual expression, and incorporates different levels of linguistic analysis, from morphology, to textuality and pragmatics. At the same time, the contribution of individual linguistic means for aspectual expression is taken into account and analysed separately. The model is therefore seen as multidimensional (Haßler, 2016, p. 215):

> Insofern könnte man unseren Ansatz *multidimensional* nennen, da wir nicht wie in bidimensionalen Theorien von zwei die Aspektualität ausmachenden Phänomenen, einerseits dem Aspekt oder den aspektuell-temporal markierten Verbformen und anderseits den Aktionsarten, ausgehen, sondern alle zum Ausdruck der Aspektualität beitragenden sprachlichen Mittel in Betracht ziehen und ihren Beitrag als unterschiedlich analysieren.

Haßler's multidimensional model displays several similarities with Dessì Schmid's (2014) frame-based, monodimensional model, where aspectuality is seen as a universal category of meanings that conveys information related to the internal structuring of an event or a situation (Dessì Schmid, 2014, p. 79):

> Aspektualität ist die universale Inhaltskategorie, durch die die Sprecher die Art des Ablaufs und der Distribution eines Sachverhalts in der Zeit sprachlich strukturieren; sie beinhaltet jenen Komplex von Informationen, die sich auf einem betrachteten Sachverhalt eigene, also vom Bezug zum Sprachzeitpunkt unabhängige, zeitliche Strukturierung beziehen.

From this point of view, lexical aspect and grammatical aspect convey homogeneous meanings related to the internal temporal structuring of situations, encoded at two different linguistic levels: lexical semantic and morphological. However, the aspectual value of a sentence is not entirely determined by the interaction of these two levels of aspectual meaning, but by the interaction between all the components of a sentence. This can be illustrated on the following examples[8] (cfr. Dessì Schmid, 2014, p. 95):

(51) La neve è caduta durante la notte

(52) La neve è caduta dal tetto durante la notte

In (51) the situation *cadere* 'to fall down' is interpreted as an iterated action. This interpretation results from the speaker's world knowledge concerning the fact that snow does not fall down in one piece, but in countless individual snowflakes. Similarly, the interpretation of (52) as a non-iterated action results from the speaker's knowledge that

[8] The original examples in Dessì Schmid (2014, p. 95) have been translated from French into Italian

the snow accumulates on the roof and falls down in one piece and not in snowflakes. Dessì Schmid (2014, p. 96) concludes that in this case an expression such as *dal tetto* 'from the roof' influences the aspectual interpretation of the situation, suggesting that aspectual meanings are conveyed by a plurality of linguistic means.

To summarise, both Dessì Schmidt (2014) and Haßler (2016) adopt an onomasiological point of view on aspectuality and conceptualise it as a universal, functional-semantic category. The linguistic means that convey aspectuality are considered a formal realisation of this semantic category, a connection between form and meaning (Dessì Schmid, 2014, p. 65). However, as pointed out by Haßler (2016, p. 214), the two models differ in two aspects. First, the multidimensional model attributes a central importance to grammatical means of aspectual expression, i.e. past tense forms in Romance languages, because the expression of aspectuality with past tense forms is compulsory and systematic. Second, the multidimensional model acknowledges that the speaker's subjectivity in choosing aspect marking is limited by the obligatory and systematic character of aspect marking on past tense forms. For instance, as pointed out in 2.1.4 (examples [43] and [44]), the expression of sequentiality requires perfective marking, while the expression of simultaneity requires imperfective marking. If the speaker's intention is to set the scene by describing the circumstances of an event, imperfect marking is required. If perfect marking is applied in the same context, the sequence loses its descriptive character and it is perceived as an incoherent juxtaposition of sentences (for the reader's convenience examples (43) and (44) from 2.1.5. [from Bertientto, 1986, p. 356] are reproduced here):

(43) ? Fuori piovve. Gina indossò un abito grigio. La stanza fu in disordine.

(44) Fuori pioveva. Gina indossava un abito grigio. La stanza era in disordine.

The different interpretation of (43) and (44) indicates that the selection of aspect marking is not completely subjective: "Die obligatorische Verwendung entsprechender aspektuell-temporaler Verbformen zur Darstellung bestimmter Situationen beruht auf objektiven Kriterien und lässt dem Sprecher häufig keine Wahl für subjektive Nuancen" (Haßler, 2016, p. 218). The obligatory and systematic character of aspect marking induced Haßler to attribute a central importance in the expression of aspectuality to past tenses.

In contrast to Dessì Schmid and Haßler, Bertinetto (1986) and Smith (1991) propose bi-dimensional models that assume the existence of two independent components contributing to the expression of aspectual information. Smith (1991) distinguishes between viewpoint type, which corresponds to grammatical aspect, and situation type,

encoded on the lexical level. According to Smith (1991, pp. 5-6), the two levels of aspectual meaning are independent:

> Sentences present aspectual information about situation type and viewpoint. Although they co-occur, the two types of information are independent […] situation type is signalled by the verb and its arguments, viewpoint signalled by a grammatical morpheme, usually part of the verb or verb phrase.

This observation is congruent with Bertinetto (1986, pp. 75-83) who distinguishes between [grammatical] aspect, encoded on the morphological level, and actionality, connected to the lexical semantic level. In order to test the independence of these two categories, Bertinetto and Delfitto (2000) developed a series of grammatical tests, based on compatibility of temporal adverbials with lexical aspectual and morphological features. The tests showed that "aspectual and actional values are independent entities", in the sense that "the various adverbials behave quite differently with respect to these two semantic categories" (Bertinetto & Delfitto, 2000, p. 206). For instance, adverbs of graduality "treat actional and aspectual properties as two independent parameters". They are compatible only with telic[9] predicates, while being indifferent to grammatical aspect, as exemplified in (53) (ibid. 205).

(53) a. *Mary danced gradually
b. *Mary was dancing gradually
c. Mary painted the wall gradually
d. Mary was painting the wall gradually

Bertinetto (1994) acknowledges that in several cases the aspectual value of a situation results from the interaction of lexical aspect and grammatical aspect. A well-known example is the *imperfective paradox*, i.e. cases when the combination of progressive aspect and telicity leads to the detelicisation of a predicate. For instance, in (54) the main clause visualises a single moment of Luca's crossing the road, but it does not imply the fulfilment of the event. In fact, the temporal clause suggests that the event of crossing the road has never reached its inherent endpoint. According to Bertinetto (1994, p. 394), this is a case of "contextually-induced detelicisation", which demonstrates the interaction of aspectual values encoded on morphological and lexical levels.

(54) Luca attraversava la strada quando è stato investito da una macchina

[9] The term telicity refers to the lexical aspectual characterisation of predicates, introduced in more details in 2.2.2. As pointed out by Shirai (2013, p. 272), telic predicates refer to situations with "a natural endpoint after which the particular action cannot continue".

Nevertheless, Bertinetto and Delfitto (2000, p. 191) claim that lexical aspect and morphological aspect are independent: "we do not believe that linguistic categories need to act independently on all occasions in order to be treated as autonomous entities. According to the functional perspective that we are assuming, it is enough that they do so in a number of relevant cases".

To recap, information concerning the internal temporal structuring of events is conveyed by a variety of linguistic means, pertinent to different levels of linguistic analysis, from the morphological to the textual. Bi-dimensional models (e.g. Bertinetto, 1986; Smith, 1991) focus on two levels of aspectual representation: morphological and lexical-semantic. Dessì Schmid's (2014) monodimensional model treats the various linguistic means of aspectual expression as elements belonging to a common semantic frame, involved in a complex interaction. Haßler's (2016) multidimensional model emphasises the centrality of grammatical means of aspectual expression, while taking into account the linguistic means pertinent to the lexical, syntactic and textual level.

The approach adopted in the present study is influenced by Haßler's (2016) multidimensional view on the expression of aspectuality. The study focuses on the distribution of verbal morphology in the interlanguage, by taking into account the lexical aspectual characteristics of the predicates and the discourse function of the clauses. Thus, several means of aspectual expression are analysed separately before examining their interaction. For this reason, the following sections (2.2.1 and 2.2.2) analyse grammatical aspect and lexical aspect separately and subsequently examine their interaction on a textual level (2.3).

2.2.1 Grammatical aspect

Grammatical aspect expresses the speaker's point of view on the internal structuring of a situation. As pointed out by Bertinetto (1986, pp. 77-78)

> L'Aspetto è indifferente a qualunque problema di localizzazione o di ordinamento reciproco degli eventi, e consente piuttosto di portare alla luce certe specifiche valenze semantiche che ineriscono ai Tempi verbali in relazione alla diversa visualizzazione del processo adottato di volta in volta dal locutore.

The terminology used to characterise the internal temporal structuring of a situation, in particular its temporal boundedness, varies across studies conducted on Romance languages. For instance, Dessì Schmidt (2014) talks about "zeitliche Delimitation", Haßler (2016) uses the term "Begrenzung", while Bertinetto (1986) prefers talking about

"determinatezza". All these expressions refer to the internal temporal structuring of situations as exemplified in (47) and (48), reproduced here for the reader's convenience (from Bertinetto, 1991, p. 24).

(47) Quel mattino, Giovanni andava a scuola

(48) Quel mattino, Giovanni andò a scuola

In (47) the situation [Giovanni andare a scuola] is described from an internal point of view, focusing on a single time interval within a temporally unbounded event. Following Bertinetto (1986), this moment shall be called the focalisation moment (t_f). Conversely, in (48) the same situation is presented as a single, non-analysable whole, set within its temporal boundaries, which makes it impossible to focalise on a single moment t_f within the event.

To sum up, "perfectivity indicates the view of a situation as a single whole, without distinction of the various separate phases that make up that situation; while the imperfective pays essential attention to the internal structure of the situation" (Comrie, 1976, p. 16). These fundamental aspectual values may assume different connotations and be further classified into subdomains, described in the following sections.

2.2.1.1 Perfective aspect

This section examines the meanings conveyed by the perfective aspect, focusing on the grammatical behaviour of the compound past tenses PP and TARP, and the simple past tense PR, as the prototypical manifestations of the perfective aspect. Other verb forms that convey similar aspectual meanings will not be taken into account, given that they are not part of the target structures examined in the present study.

The perfective aspect implies a global view on a situation, and "involves lack of explicit reference to the internal temporal constituency of a situation" (Comrie, 1976, p. 21). The lack of reference to the internal duration of a situation creates the effect of reducing it to a single point. However, it does not imply that PERF tenses refer to situations with limited complexity or duration, as exemplified in

(55) L'imperatore regnò per 68 anni.

Testing the combinability of PERF tenses with temporal adverbials, Bertinetto (1986, pp. 193-197) identifies three salient characteristics of the PERF aspect: 1) compatibility with adverbials that indicate a fixed number of iterations (56); 2) compatibility with adverbials that indicate a delimited duration (57); 3) adverbials that refer to the beginning or the end of a situation trigger different interpretations in

combination with the perfective and imperfective aspect, as exemplified in (58) and (59). In (58) the time adverbial refers to the length of the time interval between the end of the event and a reference point, while in (59) the same time adverbial refers to the time interval between the beginning of the event and the focalised moment (cfr. Bertinetto, 1986, pp. 193-197).

(56) Ottavia venne a trovarci il primo del mese per cinque volte di seguito

(57) Melinda ha consumato il pasto in dieci minuti

(58) Domenico era arrivato da due ore

(59) Siamo arrivati alle cinque: Anna ci aspettava da due ore

These observations are valid for the perfective aspect generally. However, the perfective aspect covers a broad category of meanings which can be further divided into the following subdomains: the aoristic aspect, encoded by the simple verb form PR; and the perfect aspect, encoded by the compound verb forms PP and TRAP (Bertinetto, 1986, p. 196).

Compound verb forms refer to a complete situation with persisting effects at a reference point (R), which often (but not necessarily) coincides with the speech point (S). Thus, compound tenses postulate the existence of a moment R, when the effects of the event are psychologically relevant. In (60) R coincides with S, while in (61) it is anterior to S (Bertinetto, 1986, p. 203). In the latter case the speaker chooses the nightfall as the psychologically relevant moment to observe the effects of the event [Elina arrivare]

(60) Marco è arrivato da almeno due ore

(61) Giungemmo verso l'imbrunire: Elina era arrivata da almeno due ore

According to Squartini and Bertinetto (2000, p. 423), typically perfect contexts fulfil semantic functions such as "inclusivity (…), experientiality, hot news, and persistent results". For instance, in (62) PP denotes a situation experienced by the subject over an extended time interval, which may include S, thus it admits the continuation of the event at the moment of speech:

(62) Ho vissuto a lungo in questo posto

On the other hand, the simple past PR does not include a moment R in its temporal reference because it refers to completed events with no persisting effect. In (63) the use of PR suggests that the situation is definitely completed and cannot be resumed, in Bertinetto's (1986, p. 428) words it is "irrimediabilmente trascorso e non più riattualizzabile".

(63) Vissi a lungo in questo posto

For this reason, PR is not compatible with adverbials that indicate a time interval between the conclusion of the process and R, such as "da X tempo" in (64) (Bertinetto, 1986, p. 203):

(64) *Mario arrivò da almeno due ore

The distinction between the perfect aspect and the aoristic aspect may become more evident when examining the ingressive aspect, which can only emerge from the combination of durative and non-resultative predicates or non-permanent states with the aoristic aspect. In (65) PR assumes an ingressive meaning, indicating a moment in the past when Gianna started eating, while in (66) the same event is seen as just completed, with persisting effects at R, that in this case coincides with S.

(65) Finalmente Gianna mangiò

(66) Finalmente Gianna ha mangiato

To sum up, the perfect aspect denotes situations with persisting effects, while the two defining features of PR, the aoristic aspect and the deictic nature, produce the perception of a concluded process that cannot be resumed and does not have persisting effects. The feature of conclusion, resulting from the combination of deictic nature and aoristic aspect is different from the perfect value conveyed by the compound past tenses (Bertinetto, 1986, pp. 430-431):

> La somma dei due tratti di perfettività (da intendersi, specificamente, in senso 'aoristico') e di deitticità, che sono sempre inerenti al PFS [perfetto semplice, i.e. Passato Remoto], produce come inevitabile conseguenza un'implicazione pragmatica di conclusione (ossia, non-prosecuzione) del processo; che non va confuso, come si è già detto, con il tratto prettamente aspettuale di compiutezza.

Since PR refers to concluded events in the past, it is suitable for the narration of chronologically ordered events, especially in combination with telic predicates (Wiberg, 2011b). However, Lo Duca and Solarino (1992) note that the distribution of PP and PR in native speakers' oral narratives underlies diatopic variation. Northern speakers tend to generalise the use of PP extending it to aoristic contexts, while in similar contexts Southern speakers show a clear preference for PR. This tendency has been confirmed in the study conducted by Squartini and Bertinetto (2000). However, the latter paper points out that territorial differences are not observable in typically perfect contexts (e.g., inclusivity, experientiality), where both Northern and Southern speakers prefer PP. Furthermore, the difference between Northern and Southern varieties becomes less prominent when it comes to impersonal and historical narrations, where the complementary distribution of PP and PR is observable in both areas. Since PR refers to

events with no connection to the situation when the text is produced, it is particularly suitable as a narrative tense, used to depict events of a fictional or psychologically distant world. PP in turn is used in those parts of the narratives that describe the speaker's view on events such as abstracts and codas (Bertinetto, 1986, pp. 443-445). Centineo (1991) analysed oral narratives collected from "native speakers of Italian spoken in Sicily" (p. 58). Her data confirm that the distinction between PP and PR is aspectual in nature, explicable in terms of present relevance, which implies psychological relevance. The alternation of PP and PR within the same narrative may therefore assume a modal value, reflecting the "speaker's attitude toward the propositional content of an utterance" (ibid. 67), in the sense that "the PP represents an act of stepping into the self, into subjectivity, while the usage of the PR is a stepping outside the self, into objectivity" (ibid. 82).

2.2.1.2 Imperfective aspect

This section examines the fundamental meanings conveyed by the imperfective aspect. Since *Imperfetto* (IMP) is considered to be a fundamentally imperfective tense (Bertinetto, 1986, p. 345), an analysis of the imperfective aspect implies further examination of the meanings conveyed by IMP. While in 2.1.5 the focus was set on the temporal characteristics of this tense, the present section is concerned with its aspectual characterisation. However, other linguistic means that convey the imperfective aspect such as the present tense, the progressive periphrasis and gerund will also be taken into account.

As pointed out in 2.2, the imperfective aspect may focus on a single moment (or time interval) t_f within an unfolding event, as illustrated in (67) (from Bertinetto, 1986, p. 347):

(67) Quando arrivò la notizia, Andrea faceva tranquillamente colazione come ogni mattina

In this case, the grammatical aspect characterises the event *fare colazione* as 1) on-going with a focalised moment t_f; 2) unbounded, in the sense that its right boundary is opened up and no reference is made to the conclusion of the process; 3) semelfactive in the sense that it refers to one single occasion when the event took place. The concurrence of these three aspectual characteristics shall be referred to as the progressive aspect, one of the subdomains of imperfective aspect. In fact, the predicate marked with IMP in (67) could be easily replaced by a progressive periphrasis, observable in (68):

(68) Quando arrivò la notizia, Andrea stava facendo colazione tranquillamente come ogni mattina

However, progressive is not the only meaning conveyed by imperfective aspect. A different meaning of imperfective aspect emerges when the event is visualised within a broader temporal framework. For instance, in (69) IMP does not focalise a moment within a single event, instead it refers to a series of events. In the absence of t_f, the progressive periphrasis does not seem to be suitable to replace IMP (70):

(69) Ogni sera Enrico dormiva profondamente

(70) *Ogni sera Enrico stava dormendo profondamente

Sentence (69) demonstrates that IMP does not always refer to on-going events. It may as well refer to a series of complete events, as further exemplified in (71) (from Bertinetto, 1986, p. 154), where the temporal delimitation of the single events is emphasised by the adverbial *per quattro ore* expressing delimited duration. Thus, a series of events is presented in their completeness and we cannot isolate a focalised moment within a single event.

(71) Orazio si allenava ogni giorno per quattro ore

This meaning of IMP shall be called the habitual aspect, which views a situation as "characteristic of an extended period of time" (Comrie, 1976, pp. 27-8). The feature that links habitual aspect to progressive aspect is indeterminateness (Bertinetto, 1986, p. 162). In the case of progressive aspect, indeterminateness concerns the continuation of a situation beyond the focused moment, while in the case of habitual aspect the indeterminateness concerns the number of iterations or the length of the time interval for which a situation was characteristic. In (71) the time interval for which the situation was characteristic could be further specified by an expression that locates the event within a time frame, such as *quando era giovane* or *l'anno scorso* (Bertinetto, 1986, pp. 152-162). To summarise, "a habitual situation consists of a nonterminative[10] [non-perfective] macroevent composed of a series of terminative [perfective] microevents" (Bertinetto & Delfitto, 2000, p. 197).

However, Bertinetto and Lenci (2012, p. 876), who further elaborated the classification proposed by Bertinetto (1986), note that the habitual aspect is a subdomain of gnomic imperfectivity. Gnomic imperfectivity has the function of characterising a referent, it involves some degree of generalisation, but does not necessarily involve

[10] In the study of Bertinetto and Delfitto (2000) the expression terminative/nonterminative refers to the opposition perfective/nonperfective on the morphological level (cfr. Bertinetto & Delfitto, 2000, p. 193).

repetition. For instance, in sentence (72) (from Bertinetto, 1986, p. 105) the situation [rompere la simmetria della piazza] is seen as a property of the referent, valid for an undetermined period of time, without involving iteration:

(72) La casa rompeva la simmetria della piazza

Furthermore, sentence (73) refers to a constant disposition of the referent to be involved in an activity, while (74) indicates a quality of the engine rather than an actual occurrence of the situation.

(73) Anna parlava francese

(74) La macchina di Gaetano andava a metano

The domain of the gnomic imperfective aspect can be further divided into sub-classes, on the basis of lexical-semantic and pragmatic inferences as well as the degree of generalisation involved. For instance, *attitudinal aspect* (Bertinetto, 1986, pp. 143-144; Bertinetto, 1994; Bertinetto & Lenci, 2012, p. 860) involves dynamic[11] predicates expressing a permanent characterisation of individuals. This use of dynamic predicates generates a stative reading, in the sense that "eventive predicates (specifically activities, in Vendlerian terms) […] are contextually turned into permanent statives, although they are non-stative in their default meaning" (Bertinetto, 1994, p. 406). For instance, in (75) the verb *governare* does not refer to a specific act of ruling but rather to a series of actions more or less related to the permanent condition of governing.

(75) Il re governava il suo popolo con saggezza

Bertinetto's analysis is congruent with Vendler's (1957, p. 151) proposal to classify "habit-forming" dynamic predicates as states. Thus, attitudinal aspect forms a point of convergence of lexical aspect and verbal morphology, in the sense that it constitutes a subset of gnomic imperfectives as well as a subset of statives (cfr. Bertinetto, 1994, p. 409; Bertinetto & Lenci, 2012). This phenomenon is also referred to as "second-order stativisation" (Bertinetto & Lenci, 2012, p. 862).

According to the classification proposed by Bertinetto (1986), the main features of the progressive aspect and the habitual aspect can be summarised in two points: 1) the progressive aspect refers to a single event, while the habitual aspect refers to a series of events; 2) the progressive aspect focuses on a single moment within a semelfactive

[11] The distinction between dynamic and stative predicates concerns their lexical aspectual characterisation. Dynamic predicates, as will be examined in 2.2.2, imply a change of state (Filip, 2012, p. 727), while stative predicates do not imply any change, and "last without any input of energy" (Shirai, 2013, p. 299).

situation and makes no reference to its conclusion, while the habitual aspect involves a series of concluded situations and leaves the number of occurrences or the extension of the time interval for which the event was characteristic, undetermined. Further elaborations of this classification (e.g., Bertinetto, 1994; Bertinetto & Lenci, 2012) showed that habitual aspect is a subclass belonging to the domain of gnomic imperfectivity, a sub-type of imperfective aspect that indicates a generalisation or a characteristic feature of a referent.

The third type of imperfective aspect, the continuous aspect, is defined in negative terms by both Comrie (1976, p. 33) and Bertinetto (1986, pp. 162-172). For Comrie (ibid.), continuous aspect is "imperfectivity that is not occasioned by habituality". Sentence (76) (from Bertinetto, 1986, p. 162) in fact refers to a single occurrence of a situation. However, in contrast to the progressive aspect, the conclusion of the process is undetermined, with no focalised moment t_f.

(76) Per tutta la durata dell'incontro, Pier Marco guardava davanti a sé con aria desolata

Although (77) involves iteration, the event represents itself on the same occasion, it is located within a single temporal framework and belongs therefore to the continuous aspect.

(77) Fabrizio entrava e usciva ogni momento, tanto che finì per seccare tutti

As illustrated in examples from (70) to (77), Imperfetto is a tense with a predominantly imperfective character. Its imperfectiveness is observable in terms of indeterminateness that characterises the events encoded with IMP. As pointed out by Bertinetto (1986, p. 346), the indeterminateness may concern the conclusion of a situation (progressive aspect), its duration (continuous aspect), the number of iterations or length of the time interval for which the situation is characteristic (habitual aspect or, according to more recent classification, gnomic imperfective).

However, IMP does not represent the only possibility of conveying the imperfective aspect. The following paragraphs focus on other linguistic means that may express imperfective aspect and are relevant to the analysis of the data presented in this study, namely the present tense, the progressive periphrasis and gerund.

As pointed out in 2.1.1 and 2.1.4, PRES and IMP share part of their temporal characteristics. Further similarities emerge from the analysis of their aspectual value. Similar to IMP, PRES may encode the imperfective aspect assuming a progressive or a gnomic meaning. The gnomic meaning of PRES emerges in cases when the event is not necessarily simultaneous to S, but covers a broad time interval, which includes S, and

expresses a characterisation of a referent. Sentence (78) exemplifies the attitudinal aspect, a subclass of gnomic imperfectives, and indicates a qualification of the subject to be a smoker, rather than an actual act of smoking. Another subclass of gnomic imperfectives, the potential aspect, is exemplified in (79) (adapted from Bertinetto & Lenci, 2012), where an ability and a constant disposition of the subject to be involved in an activity is indicated. The situation is valid even if there is no single occasion when Anna actually speaks French.

(78) Luca fuma

(79) Anna parla francese

Thus, similar to IMP, PRES may also assume a gnomic value. In fact, in the examples (69) to (77) IMP could be replaced by PRES without modifying the aspectual interpretation of the sentences.

The progressive meaning of PRES emerges in its deictic uses, when E coincides with S, usually involving durative verbs. Sentences containing PRES with progressive meaning are in fact compatible with adverbials *attualmente, in questo momento,* that require the presence of durative predicates, as illustrated in (80) (Bertinetto, 1986, p. 332).

(80) [In questo momento] Anna dorme / sta dormendo

Squartini (1998) notes that PRES, when assuming a progressive meaning, can be replaced by the progressive periphrasis *stare*+ GERUND, as observable in (80). This is consistent with Böhm's (2016, p. 19) analysis, who claims that Spanish estar+GERUND belongs to the most significant linguistic means of aspect marking. In Italian, the periphrasis *stare*+GERUND is more specialised in aspect marking than its Spanish counterpart, since the finite verb can only be inflected with imperfect morphology, as illustrated in (81) and (82) (from Squartini, 1998). According to both Bertinetto (1995) and Squartini (1998, p. 35-151), this suggests that the construction is a grammaticalised marker of imperfectivity, compatible with most of the Italian predicates.

(81) Ieri Giulio stava parlando con Marco, quando arrivò Giacomo

(82) *Ieri Giulio stette parlando con Marco, quando arrivò Giacomo

As pointed out by Haßler (2016, p. 256), the imperfective character of the progressive periphrasis is particularly evident in combination with telic predicates. In (83) the telic predicate *finire* 'to complete' and the presence of a direct object *una lettera* 'a mail' emphasise the aspectual boundedness (*aspektuelle Begrenzung*) of the situation. However, the progressive periphrasis views the situation as on-going:

(83) Francesca stava giusto finendo di scrivere una lettera, quando ha telefonato Giulia

In addition, Haßler (2016, pp. 243-6) points out that imperfective aspect may be conveyed by gerund, a non-finite verb form which conveys simultaneity and views situations as imperfective, without an internal boundary. Schwarze (1988, p. 190) notes that constructions with gerund may as well convey a consecutive (84) or causal (85) meaning, which are in turn connected to the expression of simultaneity:

(84) L'albero cadde, trascinando con sé arbusti e alberi più piccoli

(85) Non avendo la chiave, non poté aprire

To recap, the distinguishing feature of the imperfective aspect is temporal unboundedness or, in Bertinetto's terminology, indeterminateness. This feature has different manifestations that correspond to subdomains of the imperfective aspect. Indeterminateness may concern the continuation of a situation beyond the focalised moment (progressive aspect); the extent of the time interval for which a situation constitutes a defining property or a characteristic feature of individuals (gnomic imperfectives); or the duration of a situation (continuous aspect). The imperfective aspect is typically conveyed by IMP, as well as morphological and syntactic means such as the present tense, the progressive periphrasis and gerund.

2.2.2 Lexical aspect

As pointed out in 2.2, the term lexical aspect refers to the inherent temporal features of the predicates, encoded on the lexical level. The number and distribution of lexical aspectual categories underlies cross-linguistic variation that led to a lack of systematicity in the elaboration of different classifications (Haßler, 2016, p. 221). The most influential classification, elaborated by Vendler (1957), is based on the "time schemata presupposed by various verbs" (ibid. 143). Vendler identifies four types of time schemata implied by English verbs. The first distinction is made between verbs that possess continuous tenses (e.g. to run); and verbs that are not compatible with such tenses (e.g. to love). For instance, a question such as "What are you doing?" may be answered with "I am running" but not with "*I am loving". The former "consist of successive phrases following one another", while the latter cannot be segmented into phrases. The second distinction is operated between verbs that are compatible with continuous tenses and imply the presence of an inherent endpoint. For instance, 'to run' refers to a process that goes on in time "in a homogeneous way, any part of the process is the same nature as the whole" (ibid. 146). These verbs are referred to as *activities.* On the other hand, verbs such as 'to run a mile' imply an inherent endpoint which affects the nature of the process. If a runner has run a

mile in four minutes, it does not mean that in any time interval during the run, he/she was running a mile, i.e. the process is no longer homogeneous. As observed by Vendler (1957, p. 146), the inherent endpoint "casts its shadow backward, giving a new color to all that went before". Such verbs with an inherent endpoint are referred to as *accomplishments*. The third type of distinction is made in terms of temporal extent, among the verbs that lack continuous tenses. These verbs can be divided into two categories: *achievement* verbs, that refer to a single moment (e.g. to reach the hilltop); and *stative* verbs that refer to shorter or longer period of time (e.g., to love). Although the classification is based on *time schemata* activated by different verb types, it is acknowledged that the distinctions made "cannot be explained in terms of time alone: other factors, like the presence or absence of an object, conditions, intended states of affairs also enter the picture" (ibid. 143). In fact, Comrie (1976), who further elaborated Vendler's classification, claims that, when analysing telicity, it is more appropriate to talk about telic situations rather than telic verbs, because telic predicates often have a direct object specifying their endpoint. By comparing verb pairs such as 'to sing' [-telic], 'to sing a song' [+telic] he comes to the conclusion that "situations are not described by verbs alone, but rather by the verb together with its arguments (subject and objects)" (Comrie, 1976, p. 45).

Comrie (1976, pp. 48-51) further specifies the description of states, characterised as identical in all phases of the situation they refer to, and sustainable without any input of energy. This is not true for dynamic situations, which require effort to sustain. For instance, if one stops putting effort into running, he/she will eventually come to stop running. Conversely, if *John knows where I live* (Comrie, 1976, p. 50), no further effort is required to sustain this situation and the statement will be equally valid in the case John falls asleep or does not intentionally think about where I live.

Filip (2012, p. 729) notes that this classification presents three problematic issues. First, both achievements and states are to a certain degree compatible with progressive marking and their degree of compatibility varies across languages. While Italian is more restrictive (cfr. Bertinetto, 1994), English often admits the combination of states with progressive marking, as exemplified in (86) and (87) (from Bertinetto, 1994, p. 398-401).

(86) John is being silly

(87) The statue is standing in the park

Second, Vendler's classification distinguishes between states and achievement only in terms of temporal extent, not in terms of dynamicity. Thus, it fails to capture the difference between stative verbs on one side, and the three dynamic classes (activities,

accomplishments and achievements) on the other. Third, the Vendlerian classification fails to capture the similarity in terms of telicity between accomplishments and achievements. In both Comrie's and Vendler's analysis, only accomplishments are considered to be [+telic]. Although achievements (e.g. to fall, to drop, to die) make reference to the endpoint of a process, they are considered atelic because they do not make reference to the process leading to their endpoint (Comrie, 1976, p. 47). The similarity between accomplishments and achievements was pointed out by Dowty (1979). Dowty integrated the concept of change into Vendler's systematisation and showed that activities entail indefinite change, while accomplishments and achievements, leading to an inherent endpoint, entail definite change. This similarity between accomplishments and achievements is widely acknowledged in second language tense-aspect research and most of the studies adopting Vendler's classifications consider both classes to be [+telic]. For instance, Shirai and Andersen (1995, p. 744) claim that "accomplishment and achievement are both telic, but only achievement is punctual". This characterisation of achievements is coherently maintained in Shirai's studies (e.g. 2002, 2013) and is followed by other scholars (e.g., Wiberg, 1996; Salaberry, 1998, 1999; Comajoan, 2006, etc.).

Bertinetto (1986) proposes a classification centred on syntactical tests of compatibility with different types of adverbials. Although the lexical aspect belongs to the domain of lexical-semantics, Bertinetto claims that the defining criterion of lexical aspectual categories is syntactic: "Quello dell'Azione è un concetto eminentemente semantico (anzi, come si è detto, semantico lessicale); ma il criterio di verifica è sintattico, in quanto discende dalla possibilità di, o impossibilità, di usare un dato verbo in un dato contesto" (ibid. 86). Bertinetto (1986, pp. 246-273) identifies three principal lexical aspectual oppositions: 1) durative vs. non-durative; 2) stative vs. non-stative; 3) telic vs. non-telic, with the first opposition being the most important. A test to determine durativity consists of examining the compatibility of verbs with time adverbials indicating duration. Durative verbs are compatible with such adverbials (88), while non-durative verbs are not (89) (from Bertinetto, 1986, p. 246).

(88) *La nave esplose finché durò l'attacco

(89) L'aereo volò finché ci fu una goccia di carburante

With respect to the feature of stativity, the two tests elaborated by Bertinetto (ibid. 250-264) concern the compatibility with the imperative and with the progressive periphrasis. However, as pointed out by the author himself, statives versus non-statives can be seen

as two poles of a continuum. Along this continuum, there are several intermediate cases which fulfil only one of the two requirements of incompatibility. Verbs incompatible with the imperative lack any sense of agency. For instance, the verb *vedere* 'to see' may refer to a punctual situation, in the sense that something entered our visual field, but it can also be interpreted as a state, when it refers to the ability to perceive the world around us with our eyes. In both cases, it indicates an involuntary action and is therefore incompatible with the imperative. However, it is compatible with the progressive periphrasis (90).

(90) Il cronista descrive ciò che sta vedendo

On the other hand, verbs that are compatible with the imperative, but incompatible with progressive marking lack any sense of dynamicity, e.g., *rimanere seduto* 'to remain seated'.

In Bertinetto's classification, telicity is the feature that bridges the fundamental lexical aspectual opposition between durative and non-durative predicates, given that both durative and non-durative verbs may have an inherent endpoint. Verbs that are non-durative and telic are called *transformative* because they refer to the endpoint of a process, at which the subject is in a different condition to what it was before the process, e.g. *svegliarsi*, *trovare* (Bertinetto, 1986, p. 90). Verbs that are durative and telic are called *resultative* because they denote a process of reaching a goal, e.g. *disegnare un ritratto*, *elaborare una strategia* (Bertinetto, 1986, p. 91). The syntactic criteria proposed by Bertinetto (1986, pp. 274-8) to identify these verbs are based on the compatibility with the adverbial "in X tempo / in X time". This expression is only compatible with resultative (91) or transformative (92) situations, while it is incompatible with continuative situations. Its combination with punctual verbs results in a reinterpretation of the time adverbial; i.e. its suitability depends on pragmatic factors.

(91) Giovanni ha disegnato il ritratto di sua zia in due giorni

(92) Anna ha trovato l'indirizzo in due minuti

In conclusion, despite the presence of different classifications connected to cross-linguistic variation of lexical aspectual features, studies examining the interlanguage tense-aspect system show a clear tendency to adopt the four-class model based on Vendler's (1957) classification, by taking into account the integrations proposed by Comrie (1976) and Dowty (1979). Thus, the majority of the studies classify predicates into four classes.

2.3 Discourse grounding

According to Hopper (1979, p. 219), "Aspect considered from a discourse perspective is a device or set of devices which exist in order to guide the language user through a text" by making a distinction between the main story line and the supportive material. The main story line is referred to as foreground, the supportive material as background, while the distinction itself is called discourse grounding (ibid. 213).

Hopper claims that grounding is a universal of narrative discourse and is conveyed in a variety of ways across languages. In Romance languages, it is accomplished by means of verbal morphology, in the sense that the aspectual distinctions examined in 2.2.1 originate from the discourse: "I view aspectual distinctions such as that of French as DERIVING FROM discourse, rather than as ready-made devices "deployed" in discourse because they already happen to exist" (ibid. 217, emphasis in original).

Several scholars (e.g., Hopper, 1979; Dry, 1983; Reinhart, 1984) agree that the defining feature of foreground (FG) is sequentiality, in the sense that events forming the narrative skeleton are presented in chronological order. As pointed out by Reinhart (1984, p. 801), "Only narrative units, i.e. textual units whose order matches the order of events they report, can serve as foreground". The requirement of chronological order implies that foreground events are presented in their globality because the completion of an event is a necessary prerequisite to the beginning of the subsequent event (Hopper, 1979, p. 216). For this reason, both Reinhart and Hopper agree that punctual events serve more easily as foreground than durative ones. Lexical aspect also plays a role in Dry's (1983) analysis which is fairly consistent with Hopper's and Reinhart's. According to Dry (1983, p. 19), the distinction between foreground and background is "intimately bound" with the perception of temporal movement. Sentences that trigger the perception of temporal movement, "in which the action of the narrative takes up and time begins to move forward", are considered foreground sentences. In order to trigger a perception of time movement, reference has to be made to "temporal points, rather than spans of time, and (…) these points are usually the endpoints of situations". Thus, telic situations marked with perfective morphology are highly likely to trigger perception of time movement, because they imply an endpoint on both a lexical and a morphological level. This is fairly consistent with Vet's (1991) analysis, which claims that foreground is connected to the concept of change, caused by [+transitional] situations, which "sooner or later have to arrive at a final point" (p. 15) and perfective aspect. Transitional situations imply at least two different settings. They presuppose a setting preceding the event, and imply a setting

posterior to the event. Thus, example (93) presupposes a setting when the cigarette is not burning, and a setting when the cigarette is burning. The description of settings is connected to imperfective aspect and background.

(93) Luca accese una sigaretta

Activities and states in turn refer to time spans rather than temporal points, and are more likely to convey simultaneity, the defining property of background (BG), according to both Hopper and Reinhart. Background events are simultaneous or chronologically overlapping with the events presented in the main story line and the completion of a situation in the background is not necessary for the subsequent events to take place (Hopper, 1979, p. 215). This may lead to the establishment of complex temporal relations in the background: "Because the sequentiality constraint is lifted, backgrounded clauses may be located at any point along the time axis or indeed may not be located on the time axis at all. Consequently, the relationships among backgrounded clauses are often quite loose" (ibid.).

This can be illustrated in the example (94) (from Hopper, 1979, p. 214), translated from Swahili, a language that morphologically marks grounding, independently from grammatical aspect.

(94) We returned to the camp, and ran away during the night, and we travelled for several days, we passed through several villages, and in all of them we did not have to pay tribute.

In the original text, the events [return to the camp], [run away] and [travel for several days] are foregrounded, while [pass through several villages] carries a background marking. This information is in fact not in chronological order with [travel for several days]. On the contrary, the information about passing through several villages without having to pay tribute seems to be an amplification, a more detailed description of the foregrounded event of travelling for several days.

Since FG reports chronologically ordered, completed events, in languages that morphologically mark aspect, it is associated with perfective morphology. On the other hand, BG provides additional information to the main storyline: description of the scenery or mental states, the circumstances or the prehistory of the main events, etc. It is therefore connected to imperfect morphology and anaphoric tenses such as the pluperfect. To sum up, there is a correlation between "the lexical, intrinsic AKTIONSART of the verb and the discourse-conditioned ASPECT. One finds, in other words, a tendency for punctual verbs to have perfective aspect (i.e., to occur in foregrounded sentences) and conversely for

verbs of the durative/stative/iterative type to occur in imperfective, i.e. backgrounded, clauses" (Hopper, 1979, p. 215, emphasis in original). However, punctuality in the foreground and durativity or stativity in the background are tendencies, not requirements. A stative or durative verb marked with perfective morphology may appear in the foreground and vice versa; punctual predicates are not excluded from the background, as long as they carry imperfective marking or present a departure from the main storyline, being encoded by the pluperfect.

Reinhart (1984) and Dry (1983) agree that, when defining foreground and background, a distinction between content criteria and sentence level criteria is necessary. These two criteria often overlap, in the sense that the most prominent information appears in the foreground, while additional information is presented in the background. In other words, "the set of sentences that critics have intuitively identified as "important", "essential", and "propelling" is actually equivalent to the set that triggers the illusion of temporal movement" (Dry, 1983, p. 49). However, grounding is dependent on the subjectivity of the narrator and, "Given a sequence of events, ordered temporally, the narrator can choose to present some of them as background rather than foreground, using the linguistic means for this purpose" (Reinhart, 1984, p. 798). In example (95) (from Reinhart, 1984, p. 798) the event presented in the first clause is in chronological order with the subsequent events (marked with italics), their inversion is in fact not possible. However, the information in the first clause is presented as background, by means of syntactic embedding. Thus, chronologically ordered events are "all equal candidates to be reported as foreground" but the narrator is free to present some of them as background.

(95) Having left our bags at the 'Chequers', Lamberley, *we drove through the Sussex clay of a long winding lane, and finally reached the isolated and ancient farm-house* in which Ferguson dwelt (*The Complete Sherlock Holmes,* p. 1039)

Bazzanella and Calleri (1991) claim that the association between discourse grounding and grammatical aspect is not categorical and imperfect morphology may appear in the foreground. For instance, in the example (96) cited from a child's narrative, "the Imperfect, to which background function is canonically ascribed – and which actually carries it out – assumes (…) a foreground function" (Bazzanella & Calleri, 1991, p. 177).

(96) e quando cappuccetto rosso è anda:ta/e dopo ha sentito dei rumori/e dopo cappuccetto rosso ha guardato era il lupo (2)

However, in this case the situation [essere il lupo] does not seem to be in chronological order with the previous events and, even if the continuation of the narrative is not reported, it is reasonable to assume that it does not end before the next event starts. On the contrary, the presence of the wolf seems to chronologically overlap with the foregrounded events [andare], [sentire dei rumori] and [guardare]. It may therefore be considered background information. A speaker may have chosen to foreground the information about the wolf's presence by stating that *Cappuccetto Rosso ha notato il lupo* or *è comparso il lupo*. The present study shares Reinhart's and Dry's vision, who claim that the distinctions between foreground and background are not determined "by the inherent prominence of the content" (Dry, 1983, p. 49), but by the presence of the linguistic means employed to mark foreground and background in a given language.

To sum up, FG events move the narrative forward and trigger a perception of time movement by referring to the endpoint of situations. Therefore, telic predicates which imply an inherent endpoint on the lexical level, marked with perfective morphology that views events as reduced to a single point on the time axis, are prototypically suitable to appear in FG. Conversely, BG is the place for descriptions, reflections, narration of events that overlap with the main storyline or occur on a different timeline. For this reason, BG is associated with relative tenses and imperfective aspect, that conveys progressivity (progressive aspect), characterisation of individuals (gnomic imperfectives) or undetermined duration (continuous aspect). On the lexical level, BG is prototypically associated with predicates that do not imply an inherent endpoint, i.e. activities and states. While the correlation between lexical aspect and discourse grounding is not categorical, (atelic situations may appear in the background and vice versa), the correlation between verbal morphology and discourse grounding seems to be categorical, in the sense that only perfective tenses allow for a chronologically ordered presentation of events and can therefore appear in the foreground. Conversely, background admits a variety of tenses, since the sequentiality constraint is lifted. In light of this, Vet (1991, p. 7) notes that "The backgrounding/foregrounding approach runs the risk of circularity: very often the only formal clue for deciding whether a state of affairs belongs to the foreground or background of the story is precisely the presence in the sentence of one of two aspect markers or tense forms". However, the necessity to take into account tense and aspect marking when analysing grounding is connected to the assumption that "F [foreground] and B [background] are discourse-pragmatic phenomena, not real-world phenomena, and

they do not exist independently of their marking in language (including their morphosyntactic marking)" (Comajoan, 2013, p. 331).

2.4 Tense and aspect in German

Similar to Italian, temporality is overtly marked in German, by means of tense forms expressing a deictic relationship to the point of speech, or an anaphoric relationship a contextually given reference point. As pointed out by Klein (2009b, p. 44), there is disagreement about the number of German tenses in the literature. Hentschel (2011, p. 360) points out that "Traditionell unterscheidet man sechs Tempora, wobei Präsens und Präteritum synthetisch, Perfekt, Plusquamperfekt, Futur (…) und Futur II analytisch gebildet werden […]". On the other hand, according to Bartsch (1995), "German has two morphologically expressed tenses, Present Tense and Past Tense" (p. 137). Klein (2009b, pp. 44-45) notes that the reason for the disagreement about the number of tenses is the lack of a univocal definition of what is considered to be a tense. For instance, in German "the so-called future tense is ambiguous between a temporal reading and a modal reading" (ibid.), since a sentence such as (97) can be interpreted as referring to a time span posterior to the moment of speech, but also as an expression of epistemic modality.

(97) Hans wird schlafen

Among German past tenses, Plusquamperfekt has an anaphoric interpretation, meaning that is located on the time axis with respect to a reference point. Perfekt und Präteritum, on the other hand, have a deictic interpretation, in the sense that they are located on the time axis with respect to the point of speech. Hentschel (2011, p. 362) notes that Perfekt, in addition to the expression of past reference, conveys the present relevance of a past event, similar to English Present Perfect. However, she emphasises that the tense form shows a strong tendency to lose its aspectual meaning (Hentschel, 2011, p. 362):

> Im Deutschen sind die Verhältnisse jedoch komplizierter, da das Perfekt das Präteritum zu verdrängen begonnen hat, das in weiten Teilen des Sprachgebiets in der mündlichen Sprache gar nicht mehr erhalten ist. Dadurch wandelt sich das deutsche Perfekt zu einem einfachen Vergangenheitstempus.

In fact, while there is a disagreement among researchers about the number of German tenses, several scholars agree on the absence of morphological aspect marking in German. As pointed out by von Stutterheim, Caroll and Klein (2009, p. 205), one of the most salient differences among West Germanic languages concerns "the degree to

which aspect is grammaticalized". For instance, they note that contrary to English, where the distinction between progressive and non-progressive aspect is obligatory, German does not encode such distinction overtly. Hentschel and Vogel (2009) claim that „Im Deutschen ist das indoeuropäische Aspektpaar perfektiv/imperfektiv verloren gegangen" (pp. 53-54). However, this does not mean that aspect is not represented in German. Bertinetto (2008) argues that German verb forms are aspectually underspecified, and require contextual specification. Dessì Schmid (2014, p. 14) points out that the aspectual meanings conveyed by verbal morphology in Romance languages are expressed by lexical, periphrastic or other syntactic means in German. Thus, the lack of a morphologically expressed aspectual opposition does not mean that aspect marking is absent in German. Consistent with Dessì Schmid (2014, p. 18), Bohnemeyer and Swift (2004) agree that aspectual meanings in German can be inferred from the lexical aspectual characterisation of events, in the sense that atelic predicates are likely to be interpreted imperfectively, while telic predicates induce a perfective interpretation. For instance, in example (98), the event [das Büro betreten] triggers a perfective interpretation, while the event [an einem Brief schreiben] "cannot be understood any other way than that the writing event was ongoing during the entering event, so in semantic terms, it is presented imperfectively" (ibid., p. 269).

(98) Als ich Marys Büro betrat, schrieb sie an einem Brief

In (98), the imperfective interpretation is triggered by the partitive construction [an einem Brief]. If the partitive construction is replaced by an undetermined noun phrase, the event would induce a perfective interpretation (99) (from Bohnemeyer & Swift, 2004, p. 269).

(99) Als ich Marys Büro betrat, schrieb sie einen Brief

However, an imperfective interpretation of the same event can be triggered by the context, as observable in (100), where, similar to the imperfective paradox illustrated in the example (54) above, the context cancels the telic meaning the predicates (from Bohnemeyer & Swift, 2004, p. 269).

(100) Als ich Marys Büro betrat, schrieb sie einen Brief. Überrascht blickte sie auf, legte den Stift zur Seite und lächelte mich an.

The three examples (from 98 to 100) suggest that the perfective/imperfective interpretation in German depends on the lexical aspectual value of the predicate, more precisely on the feature of telicity. According to Bohnemeyer & Swift (2004, p. 270), a

discourse-pragmatic implication of telicity-dependent interpretation of aspect is that telic predicates are likely to trigger a sequential interpretation, as observable in (99), while atelic predicates are likely to be interpreted as overlapping, observable in (98).

2.5 Summary

The present chapter examined the expression of temporal and aspectual meanings in Italian on different levels of linguistic analysis such as morphology, lexical semantics, textuality and pragmatics. A primary distinction was made between two functional-semantic categories: temporality, concerned with the location of events on the time axis; and aspectuality, which focuses on the internal temporal constituency of situations. With respect to temporality, the focus was set on its grammatical expression, i.e. tense, acknowledging that Italian tense forms merge aspectual and temporal values, therefore the domain of temporality cannot be completely isolated from aspectuality. Aspectuality, on the other hand, was examined from two angles: grammatical aspect, encoded on the morphological level; and lexical aspect, rooted in the lexical semantic characterisation of the predicates. Finally, the interaction of temporal and aspectual information was examined on a discourse-pragmatic level. This showed that the distribution of tenses in narratives is influenced by the interaction of temporal and aspectual features. Foregrounded events tend to make reference to situations viewed within their temporal boundaries, present on both a lexical and a morphological level, in terms of telicity and perfectivity. Backgrounded events often represent situations without temporal delimitation, neither on an aspectual, nor on a morphological level.

The complexity of tense/aspect phenomena illustrated in this chapter, together with the variety of temporal information conveyed through the interaction between tense and different levels of aspectual representation suggest that the acquisition of these linguistic features may be a challenging task for the learner. This may be especially true if tempo-aspectual meanings in the learner's L1 are encoded differently from the L2. For instance, as pointed out in 2.4, German does not mark aspect morphologically, and information about temporal boundedness has to be inferred from the context and the lexical aspectual value of the predicate. Therefore, L1 German learners learning Italian as a non-native language have to isolate aspectual meanings encoded morphologically in the target language, and map them into target language tense forms. On the other hand, especially in early acquisition stages, leaners may rely on the conceptualisation of time in their L1, and attribute target language forms a different function to those served in the target

language. For instance, L1 German speakers may use Italian verbal morphology to mark tense, rather than aspect, and convey aspectual information on the lexical level. The form-function associations may change as proficiency develops, as will be shown the next chapters. The complex relationship between form and meaning, and its development throughout the acquisition process, has to be taken into account when coding the data in the present study.

Chapter 3
The acquisition of tense and aspect in Romance languages

While Chapter 1 focused on the development of linguistic competence and on theories of language acquisition and processing, the present chapter narrows down the focus to the acquisition of a specific subcomponent of linguistic competence, namely grammatical competence, defined as "knowledge of, and ability to use, the grammatical resources of a language" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 112). The acquisition of temporal and aspectual distinctions in Romance languages will be examined as part of the learner's grammatical competence.

The complexity of the temporal and aspectual system in Romance languages derives from the morphological richness of their verbal paradigms and the variety of meanings that each verbal form conveys. This is particularly true for the past tense forms which carry temporal and aspectual meanings, i.e. they not only locate an event on the time axis but also convey information about its "internal temporal constituency" (Comrie, 1976, p. 5). In the following example (from Comrie, 1976, p. 4), the two past tense forms express the same temporal information, i.e. they locate the event of *reading* on the time axis before the moment of speech, but they differ in their aspectual meaning:

(1) *John read that book yesterday; while he was reading it, the postman came*

In the first clause, the past simple expresses the perfective aspect, meaning that the event is presented as concluded and a "single unanalysable whole" (ibid. 3); while in the second clause, the same event is opened up and "reference is made to an internal portion of John's reading" (ibid. 4). Thus, the second verb form conveys the progressive aspect, one of the aspectual meanings that can be expressed by imperfective forms in the Romance languages. In fact, if we translate the sentence into Italian, the verb *to read* in the second clause will be marked with an imperfective tense conveying the progressive meaning:

(2) *Gianni ha letto quel libro ieri; mentre lo leggeva, è arrivato il postino*

In contrast to the progressive form in English, imperfect forms in the Romance languages convey several aspectual meanings such as progressivity, habituality, etc. (Ayoun & Salaberry, 2005, p. 255). Additionally, the forms of verbal paradigms interact with syntactic, semantic and pragmatic factors such as the lexical aspectual value of the predicates, the principles of discourse grounding and the syntactic functions of utterances. This makes the

mapping of meanings into forms a difficult task for learners acquiring a Romance language. As pointed out by Ayoun and Salaberry (2005, p. 281), the conceptualisation of tense-aspect information requires learners to "engage in a multi-level analysis of semantic-discursive and pragmatic meanings".

Consequently, the conceptualisation of tense-aspect distinctions by the learner is affected by multiple factors such as semantic congruence between the lexical aspectual value of the predicates and verbal morphology, principles of discourse grounding, distributional biases in the input and L1 tense-aspect system. The following sections review studies on L2/L3 acquisition of tense-aspect distinctions that investigate how these factors shape the acquisition process, referring to hypotheses such as the Lexical Aspect Hypothesis (LAH), the Discourse Hypothesis (DH) and the Default Tense Hypothesis. Finally, a comprehensive model proposed by Ayoun and Salaberry (2005) will be presented, which integrates the main claims of these hypotheses, treating them as complementary, rather than exclusionary.

3.1 Meaning-oriented studies

As anticipated in Chapter 1, meaning-oriented studies focus on the semantic concepts of temporality and aspectuality. They assume that adult learners acquiring an L2, in contrast to children acquiring an L1, have access to semantic concepts of tense and aspect, and do not have to develop a conceptual framework of these distinctions. Instead they, need to learn how to express semantic concepts in the target language, in other words to map semantic concepts into target language forms (Bardovi-Harlig, 2000, pp. 21-22).

Temporal concepts are primarily expressed by verbal morphology, however, meaning-oriented studies acknowledge the existence of pragmatic and semantic devices of temporal expression, such as the principle of natural order, temporal and locative adverbials and connectives. Therefore, meaning-oriented studies do not focus exclusively on verbal morphology, but take into account a variety of morphosyntactic and pragmatic means that might be used to express temporality. They explore how temporality is expressed at a given acquisitional stage and how its expression changes over time (ibid).

As pointed out in 1.2.1.2, the most extensive body of research within the meaning-oriented framework are the studies carried out within the *European Science Foundation* (ESF) project, which investigated the acquisition of five target languages: English, German, Dutch, French and Swedish (Klein & Perdue, 1997). Italian, as well as English, have also been investigated from a meaning-oriented perspective, independently from the ESF studies (see Bardovi-Harlig, 1992; Giacalone Ramat, 1992; Giacalone Ramat, 2003b). These studies

showed that untutored learners, who acquire a language in the host environment, go through three developmental stages, from the pragmatic, to the lexical, to the grammatical stage. The main characteristics of these developmental stages are summarised in Table 3.1 (based on Banfi & Bernini, 2003, p. 84; Klein & Perdue, 1997).

Table 3.1 Characteristics of acquisitional stages (Banfi & Bernini, 2003, p. 84; Klein & Perdue, 1997)

	Acquisitional stage		
	Pre-basic variety	**Basic variety**	**Post-basic variety**
Grammatical structures	Ø	Predicate and arguments	Nouns, Verbs
Morphology	Ø	Verbs in the basis form	Nominal and verbal inflection
Organisation of utterances	Pragmatic	Semantic-syntactic	Syntactic
Dependence on the context	High	Medium	Low

The pre-basic variety is characterised by the absence of verbal morphology and the presence of pragmatic principles in the organisation of utterances. At this stage, the learner expresses temporality by pragmatic means, such as scaffolding (i.e., reliance on the support of fellow speakers), implicit references, event contrasting and the principle of chronological order. In the basic variety, verbs appear in a "morphologically unmarked form" (Bardovi-Harlig, 2000, p. 39). Utterances are constructed around the verb and its arguments, and temporal relations are expressed by means of adverbials, connectives, nouns and verbs, which are probably easier to process than morphological cues.

Despite their functional capacity, establishing temporal references by means of adverbials may cause miscommunication, if the learner's repertoire of adverbials is not fully developed, or the adverbials are not supported by "additional temporal references provided by verbal morphology" (Bardovi-Harlig, 2000, p. 44). Although interlanguage development of untutored learners frequently stops at the basic variety, communicative needs may spur learners to the next stage: the post-basic variety.

When verbal morphology appears in the post-basic variety, verb forms are not used systematically. Although morphological devices enhance learners' resources in establishing time references, it does not mean that pragmatic and lexical devices are no longer adopted. However, as the use of verbal morphology becomes more systematic, the reliance on pragmatic and lexical devices decreases (Klein & Perdue, 1997).

To sum up, meaning-oriented studies show that "learners develop a functional, and often rich means of temporal expression before the acquisition of verbal morphology" (Bardovi-Harlig, 2000, p. 88), and the forms of the verbal paradigm are integrated into an "established

semantic environment" (ibid.). Form-oriented studies, which focus on the distribution of the verbal paradigm in the interlanguage would not be able to capture this type of development.

3.2 Form-oriented studies

In contrast to naturalistic acquisition, verbal morphology appears early in instructed acquisition and is extensively used by learners (Ayoun & Salaberry, 2005, p. 279). However, the forms of the verbal paradigm do not always appear in the target-like context, which leads to the assumption that "form precedes function" (Klein, 1994, p. 244). Studies on instructed SLA therefore adopt a form-oriented approach, meaning that they investigate the distribution of a specific verbal form in the interlanguage and ask "where it is used by the learners, thus determining what it means in the system" (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999, p. 345). As pointed out by Bardovi-Harlig (ibid.), "If we compare the form-oriented studies to the concept-oriented studies, we find that the form-oriented studies are essentially concerned with the third stage identified in the expression of temporality – namely, morphology" (p. 353).

Although tense-aspect phenomena require a multilevel definition, several studies on the development of L2 tense-aspect system emphasise the level of semantics as an explanatory factor and claim that the lexical aspectual properties of predicates guide the development of their morphological marking (Salaberry, 2005, p. 184). However, as pointed out in 2.2.2, lexical aspectual features vary across languages and within languages. The lexical aspectual properties of verbs referring to the same process may vary across languages, while the same verb can assume various lexical aspectual meanings within a language. This variability leads to differences in the classification of verbal predicates across studies, limiting their comparability. For this reason, before discussing the results of studies focusing on the effect of lexical aspect on the development of verbal morphology, the next section will outline some differences in the classification techniques used by these studies.

3.2.1 The effect of lexical aspect on morphological marking of predicates

As pointed out in 2.2.2, Vendler's model (1957) has been the most influential classification both in linguistic and acquisition research. According to this model, further elaborated by Comrie (1976) and Dowty (1979), verbal predicates can be characterised along three dimensions (dynamicity, telicity and punctuality), and classified into four lexical aspectual classes. These distinctions are represented in Table 3.2 (from Shirai & Andersen 1995, p. 744 modified):

Table 3.2. Lexical aspectual characteristics of verbal predicates

Situation	**Dynamic**	**Punctual**	**Telic**
State	[-]	[-]	[-]
Activity	[+]	[-]	[-]
Accomplishment	[+]	[-]	[+]
Achievement	[+]	[+]	[+]

Although Vendler's classification has generally been adopted in the majority of studies on tense and aspect, there are a number of different classifications. For Italian, Bertinetto (1986, pp. 88-89) proposes a binary distinction based on duration and claims that "La principale caratterizzazione azionale è quella che oppone i verbi non-durativi ai durativi". According to this classification, durative verbs refer to processes that have an inherent duration (e.g., *sleep*), while non-durative verbs evoke fast-paced processes that capture the initial and the final moment of a process (e.g., *arrive*). In this classification, telicity is a feature that works as a bridge between the two main categories, since both durative and non-durative events may have an inherent endpoint. For instance, the verb *giungere* is characterised as [-durative; +telic], while the verb *disegnare un ritratto* carries the features [+durative; +telic].

Another type of binary classification is made in terms of telicity. Several studies (e.g., McManus, 2013; Salaberry, 2005) condense activities and states into a single category of atelic verbs as opposed to the category of telic verbs, which includes accomplishments and achievements. This approach can be motivated by the stability of the distinction based on telicity observed in several studies (see Salaberry & Ayoun, 2005, p. 9). While researchers often have difficulty in differentiating between [-dynamic] and [+dynamic] verbs[12], telicity is considered an "essential property" because it is "not open to aspectual choices" (Smith, 1991, p. 19).

However, several studies on L2 tense-aspect acquisition (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig & Bergström, 1996) argue that binary classifications lead to excessively broad categories that differ by more than one semantic feature (e.g., durative verbs may be [+/-dynamic] and [+/-telic]). Broad categories do not allow the capture of developmental effects, because the spread of verbal morphology involves "one semantic feature at a time" (Bardovi-Harlig & Bergström, 1996).

[12] As pointed out by Chung & Timberlake (1985, p. 214-8) a shift of lexical aspectual class from [+dynamic] to [-dynamic] and vice versa can be caused, among other things, by the presence or absence of the sense of change in the sentence (e.g., *John is opening the window* [+dynamic] vs. *The window opens to the garden* [-dynamic]).

On the other hand, some studies on the acquisition of tense and aspect question the necessity to differentiate predicates along the dimension of punctuality (i.e., to distinguish between accomplishments and achievements), while maintaining the distinction along the dimensions of dynamicity and telicity. Accomplishments and achievements share two important features, dynamicity and telicity, and several studies show that their acquisition follows a very similar pattern (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 1998, 2002). This similarity leads researchers to condense them into a single category of telic verbs, by adopting a distinction in terms of telicity and dynamicity (see Salaberry, 2011 [L2 Spanish]; Salaberry, 2005 [L3 Portuguese]; Wiberg, 1996 [L2 Italian]). This methodological approach is referred to as a three-way classification, as opposed to Vendler's four-way classification.

A considerable piece of evidence in favour of the three-way classification is the finding that statives pattern differently to [+dynamic] categories (see Rocca, 2005 [L2 Italian], Salaberry, 2005 [L3 Portuguese]), while telic verbs pattern similarly (Bardovi-Harlig & Bergström, 1996 [L2 English, L2 French]; Bardovi-Harlig, 1998 [L2 English]). Thus, the three-way classification based on the features of telicity and dynamicity seems to be the most appropriate methodological choice to adapt.

Finally, an important methodological problem in the classification of predicates into lexical aspectual classes concerns the lack of a universally accepted set of criteria and operational tests to determine telicity and dynamicity. This is due to the variety of features that influence the lexical aspectual value of a verb which is partially encoded in the verb phrase, and partially in components behind the head of the verb phrase. In fact, Salaberry and Ayoun (2005, pp. 6-7) claim that an accurate classification needs to take into account the combined effects of each of the elements that constitute the temporal framework of a predicate. The following example (3) (from Salaberry & Ayoun, 2005, p. 6) shows that according to the type of internal arguments a verb can be seen as telic or atelic:

(3) Mary smoked cigarettes [- count noun; atelic]

b. Mary smoked a cigarette [+ count noun; telic]

Similar importance is attributed to adverbial phrases which can change the lexical aspectual class of the verb, as example (4) shows (from Salaberry & Ayoun, 2005, p. 7):

(4) En ese momento Juan supo la verdad

at that moment Juan knew-PERF the truth

'At that moment Juan found out the truth'

b. Juan sabìa la verdad

Juan knew-IMP the truth

'Juan knew the truth'

According to Salaberry & Ayoun (2005, p. 9), in the sentence 3b. the verb *to know* is a stative, while in 3a. it is an achievement, in fact it could be translated as *to find out.* The authors emphasise that "the classification of lexical aspectual classes was not based on morphological marking (*supo* versus *sabìa*), but rather on the adjunct phrase that qualifies the basic form of the verbal predicate". Conversely, Schwarze (1996, p. 721) claims that statives are semantically coherent with imperfective morphology and their combination with perfective morphology results in their reinterpretation. Thus, it is not clear, whether the shift of meaning is caused by the adverbial phrase (Salaberry & Ayoun) or by the use of verbal morphology (Schwarze).

To sum up, the lack of universally accepted criteria in the classification of predicates into lexical aspectual classes, together with the shift of aspectual meanings according to the context, entails methodological challenges in studies investigating the effect of lexical aspect on interlanguage verbal morphology. This issue will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 5, describing the methodological choices in the present study.

3.2.2 The Lexical Aspect Hypothesis

Aspectual distinctions "can be marked overtly (grammatical aspect) or covertly (inherent lexical aspect)" (Salaberry, 2002, p. 398). According to several researchers (e.g., Andersen, 1991; Andersen & Shirai, 1994; 1996), there is a direct relationship between inherent lexical aspect and morphological aspect in the interlanguage, in the sense that semantically congruent combinations of lexical aspect and verbal morphology emerge before non-prototypical combinations.

According to Shirai and Andersen (1995, p. 759), the prototype of the category past is characterised by the features [+telic] [+punctual] [+result], while the prototypical perfective aspect refers to a punctual event in the past with a clear endpoint (Dahl, 1985, p. 78). Thus, "the prototypes of past (tense) and perfective (aspect) are very similar", and both are semantically congruent with telic predicates that evoke processes with a clear endpoint. This means that perfective past tense morphology and telic predicates form a prototypical combination of lexical aspect and verbal morphology. The same applies to imperfective morphology and atelic predicates.

Prototypicality is a central concept of the Lexical Aspect Hypothesis which was developed on the basis of studies on temporal and aspectual distinction in L1 acquisition (see Antinucci & Miller, 1976 [L1 Italian and L1 English]; Bronckart & Sinclair, 1973 [L1 French]). These studies show that children are sensitive to the lexical aspectual value of predicates and

such sensitivity is observable in their use of verbal morphology. Past tense marking initially appears with telic predicates, to be later extended to activities and statives; while progressive marking occurs first with activities.

Andersen (1991) was among the first researchers to adopt the classification of verbs into lexical aspectual classes as part of the theoretical framework for the analysis of L2 data. His longitudinal research was based on naturalistic acquisition of L2 Spanish and showed that during the first stage of acquisition, 50% of the verbs used in contexts requiring perfective past tense marking were correctly marked with Preterite, while verbs occurring in imperfective contexts did not carry aspectual marking. During the second stage of acquisition (represented by data collected two years later), learners used Preterite in 88% of the perfective contexts and Imperfect in 43% of imperfective contexts. Additionally, there was a correlation between morphological marking and lexical aspect. The above results led to the formulation of the Lexical Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1996), which is based on two principles: the relevance principle (i.e., lexical aspect is more relevant to the meaning of the verbs than morphological categories such as tense and aspect) and the congruence principle (i.e., the morphological marking is congruent with the lexical aspectual characteristics of the verb). The LAH can be broken down into four separate hypotheses (from Bardovi-Harlig, 2002, p. 130):

1. Learners first use (perfective) past marking on achievements and accomplishments, eventually extending use to activities and statives.
2. In languages that encode the perfective/imperfective distinction, imperfective past appears later than perfective past, and imperfective past marking begins with statives, extending next to activities, then to accomplishments, and finally to achievements.
3. In languages that have progressive aspect, progressive marking begins with activities, then extends to accomplishments and achievements.
4. Progressive markings are not incorrectly overextended to statives.

These hypotheses have been widely tested in studies on L2 tense-aspect development, which share two characteristics: they use large corpora and quantified data. However, they differ in the analytical techniques used to evaluate the data (Bardovi-Harlig, 2002). For instance, within-category analyses investigate the distribution of several morphemes within a lexical aspectual category, while across-category analyses investigate the distribution of a single morpheme across lexical aspectual categories. As pointed out by Bardovi-Harlig (2002, p. 129), these substantial differences in the analytical techniques led to the elaboration of "multiple non-equivalent analyses" which are hardly comparable. The differences in the analytical techniques influence the research outcome, and this "could lead us to support or reject the aspect hypothesis on the basis of the very same data" (ibid.). For instance, if we look at the

data presented by Bardovi-Harlig (1998) from an across-category perspective, we conclude that in the less proficient group, past marking is associated with achievements, because 62% of past marking occur on achievement predicates and only 26% of past tense morphology occur on accomplishment predicates. However, this result is influenced by the imbalance between achievements and accomplishments in the data, in the sense that achievements (N=74) outnumber accomplishments (N=32). In fact, looking at the same data from a within-category perspective leads to the conclusion that 32% of achievements and 31% of accomplishments are used with past marking; thus, achievements and accomplishments pattern similarly. These differences in conclusion are due to the fact that "within-category analysis is not sensitive to the imbalance between tokens in the aspectual categories" (ibid. 140).

In the following sections, the most relevant results of the studies conducted within the LAH framework will be reviewed by taking into consideration the fact that the differences in their outcome might be attributed to the methodological approach adapted in the single studies.

The effect of lexical aspect on the emergence and spread of perfective morphology is attested in several studies on Romance languages, such as L2 French (Salaberry, 1998), L2 Spanish (Camps, 2002; Cadierno, 2000), L2 Italian (Banfi & Bernini, 2003; Giacalone-Ramat, 2002; Rocca, 2005; Rosi, 2009a; Wiberg, 2009). These studies confirm that perfective morphology appears before imperfective morphology and it spreads from telic predicates to atelic predicates. Salaberry's (2005) data collected from L3 learners of Portuguese show that telic verbs are categorically marked with perfective morphology across proficiency groups, while Rocca (2005) draws a similar conclusion from L2 Italian learners' data. Thus, the above studies substantiate the relevance of telicity in the acquisition of perfective marking.

However, there is a lack of evidence for the spread of imperfective morphology from atelic to telic predicates. Giacalone Ramat (2002) observes that L1 German speakers learning L2 Italian tend to use atelic verbs (i.e., states and activities) with imperfective marking, regardless of their proficiency level. Only one out of four participants extends imperfective marking to telic predicates. Rocca (2005) points out that the data from L2 Italian learners contradict the predictions of the LAH in respect to statives since the association of statives with imperfect marking decreases with increasing proficiency. Salaberry (2005) comes to similar conclusions studying the acquisition of L3 Portuguese, despite the differences in the target language, and learners' ages and learning environment in the two studies. Furthermore, Giacalone Ramat (2002) and Comajoan (2006 [L2 Catalan]) note that learners tend to apply imperfective morphology to a limited number of high-frequency statives. These studies

substantiate the relevance of dynamicity in the acquisition process since they suggest that statives might be processed differently than [+dynamic] predicates.

Salaberry (2005) accounts for this phenomenon in terms of rule-based and association-based processing. Since the lexical aspectual class of stative verbs is composed of a limited number of high frequency items, their morphological marking tends to be association-based. Due to distributional biases in the input (prototypical combinations of states with imperfective morphology are widely represented in the input), states tend to be consistently marked with imperfective morphology. This is not the case for [+dynamic] verbs because they "constitute a much more open-ended class of verbs, thus is would be less efficient, cognitively speaking, to rely on associations rather than some form of rule-like generative system" (Salaberry, 2005, p. 208). It can therefore be assumed that learners will build a rule-oriented system, necessary for the processing of a large variety of [+ dynamic] predicates; and a sub-system, that relies on associations of stative verbs with imperfective morphology. "In essence, the marking of [+dynamic] verbs will be likely rule-governed (or rule-like), whereas the marking of [-dynamic] verbs will be associationistic" (ibid. p 208).

To summarise, the above examined studies substantiate the effect of lexical aspect on the development of verbal morphology in the interlanguage. However, they do not provide univocal evidence for the developmental pattern of the LAH, especially concerning the spread of imperfective morphology from statives to activities and telic predicate.

3.2.3 The conjunct influence of lexical aspect and discourse grounding

Discourse grounding is another factor that potentially affects the distribution of verbal morphology in the interlanguage. Hopper (1979) points out that aspectual distinctions cannot be characterised purely by semantic factors; the discursive function of utterances should also to be taken into account. In fact, according to cross-linguistic studies, the distinction between foreground and background is a universal of narrative discourse and competent language users "mark out a main route through the narrative and divert in some way those parts of the narrative which are not strictly relevant to this route" (Hopper, 1979, p. 239). In Romance languages, grounding is accomplished through linguistic devices such as tense-aspect morphology: perfective tenses mark the foreground, while imperfective tenses mark the background.

The most influential hypothesis about the role of discourse grounding in the development of interlanguage is the Interactional Discourse Hypothesis (IDH) which states that "learners use emerging verbal morphology to distinguish foreground from background in narratives" (Bardovi-Harlig, 1994a, p. 43). Several studies on Romance languages provide

empirical evidence for the effects of grounding. Güell's (1998) research based on cloze passages showed that the tendency to use Preterite in the foreground and imperfect in the background increased with increasing proficiency, while the opposite tendency decreased. Giacalone Ramat (2002) reported that L1 English learners studying L2 Italian used Passato Prossimo mostly in the foreground (70%), and *Imperfetto* in the background (50%). Rocca's (2005) research on L2 Italian and Comajoan (2005) on L2 Catalan also found effects of grounding in the distribution of verbal morphology.

However, as Comajoan (2005, p. 257) points out, it is quite hard to "tease out effects of discourse grounding on morphology and vice versa". The predictions of the LAH and DH overlap, because the criteria used to distinguish foreground from background overlap with those used to determine the lexical aspectual class of the predicates (Salaberry, 201, p. 189-190). As pointed out in 2.3, foreground is associated with punctuality and completeness, in the sense that punctual and completed events tend to appear in the foreground, while background is associated with descriptions, motivation, and evaluation. For this reason, telic predicates tend to appear in the foreground, while atelic predicates (especially statives) tend to appear in the background. To synthesise, both hypotheses predict that "learners START OUT marking past tense with the inflectional endings that are semantically associated with lexical aspect or grounding (i.e., prototypical choices), and that they gradually incorporate non-prototypical choices as their experience with the L2 increases" (Salaberry, 2011, p. 184, emphasis in original). Thus, the effects of lexical aspect and discourse grounding can be seen as "two manifestations of a single construct: a continuum of aspectual meanings", and we can conclude that (Salaberry, 2011, p. 188):

> […] whenever the aspectual meaning conveyed by lexical aspect and grounding coincide (e.g., telic verbs in the foreground), we obtain a prototypical selection of grammatical marking (i.e., Preterit). In contrast, when the aspectual meaning conveyed by narrative grounding does not match the aspectual semantic features of lexical aspect (e.g., non-dynamic verbs in foreground), we obtain a non-prototypical choice of grammatical marking (i.e., Preterit).

Studies on the acquisition of L2 Italian (Rosi, 2008) and L2 English (Bardovi-Harlig, 1998) propose integration of the two hypotheses, claiming that initial learners are influenced by the lexical aspectual class of the predicates but as their proficiency increases, they are able to go "beyond the most basic predicate-level pairing" and to include the criteria of discourse grounding in the selection of verbal morphology. This is consistent with Salaberry's (2011, p. 199) account, which claims that grounding is "the more challenging of the two levels of representation of aspectual meanings".

3.2.4 The Distributional Bias Hypothesis

The Distributional Bias Hypothesis is connected to both LAH and DH. It claims that the preference for prototypical combinations in the interlanguage is due to distributional biases in the input. Competent native speakers prefer prototypical pairings and they "exhibit in relative quantitative terms the same distributional bias found in more nearly absolute terms in the acquisitional data" (Shirai & Andersen, 1995, p. 747).

Salaberry and Ayoun (2005, p. 18) point out that there are a limited number of studies on distributional biases, even though it could be stated that any study that analyses the effect of lexical aspect and discourse grounding implicitly takes into consideration distributional biases. The available studies (e.g., Andersen, 1994; Salaberry, 1998), suggest that there are clear differences connected to the learning environment. Naturalistic learners seem to be more sensitive to distributional biases than classroom students, who have a limited access to naturally occurring input (Salaberry & Ayoun, 2005, p. 20).

On the other hand, some studies show the presence of distributional biases in classroom talk. Swain (1991, p. 243) reports that classroom talk in a sixth-grade immersion class (L2 French) was highly biased towards perfective morphology, while imperfective morphology was restricted to a limited number of high-frequency statives such as *to have, to be, to do* and *to want.*

3.2.5 Distribution of prototypical combinations in the interlanguage

The LAH predicts that during the acquisition of verbal morphology, learners move from prototypical combinations of lexical aspect and verbal morphology, that is perfective marking on telic verbs and imperfective marking on atelic predicates, towards non-prototypical combinations. However, the LAH does not take into account the appropriateness of use, i.e. whether perfective/imperfective morphology is used in the appropriate context. Comajoan (2006, pp. 210-211) observes that incorporating this criterion can add another perspective to the LAH by shedding light on the relationship between preferential combinations of lexical aspect and verbal morphology, and their appropriate use. His study shows that the appropriate use of verbal morphology follows an aspectual pattern, in the sense that prototypical combinations of verbal morphology and aspectuality are used more appropriately and with greater frequency than non-prototypical combinations (ibid. 251).

While most of the studies agree that lexical aspect has an influence on the acquisition process, there is some disagreement about the developmental component of the hypothesis, namely the spread of non-prototypical combinations in the IL. Some studies (e.g., Bardovi-

Harlig & Bergström, 1996) show that interlanguage development is consistent with the predictions of the LAH, and proceeds from the preference for prototypical pairing towards the integration of non-prototypical pairing of lexical aspect and verbal morphology.

On the other hand, a number of studies (McManus, 2013; Salaberry, 2000; Salaberry 2011) show a developmental pattern in the opposite direction and claim that "increased use of prototypical pairings goes in hand with increased L2 proficiency" (McManus, 2013, p. 299). In order to be able to use prototypical combinations, learners have to map perfective/imperfective distinction into verbal morphology and "This appears to be an essential condition for semantically prototypical combinations to be made, which is overlooked by the AH [aspect hypothesis]" (ibid. p 317). The development of form-function mapping can explain why in McManus' data, the interlanguage of lower proficiency L2 French learners (with L1 German and L1 English) shows prototypical influence in obligatory perfective contexts, but not in obligatory imperfective contexts: "perfectivity has been mapped in the L2 but imperfectivity has not" (McManus, 2013, p. 320). As learners gain more experience with the target language and map imperfectivity into imperfective morphology, their use of prototypical combinations both in perfective and imperfective contexts increases. Salaberry (2002, 2011) draws similar conclusions on the basis of interlanguage data collected from L1 English learners of L2 Spanish.

Rastelli and Vernice (2013) account for the absence of prototypical influence in the interlanguage of English learners of L2 Italian in terms of lexical aspectual underspecification. The researchers claim that initial learners are not influenced by lexical aspect because they do not have a fully developed representation of the lexical aspectual characteristics of the predicates. Instead, they use predicates in a semantically underspecified way. According to Giacalone Ramat and Rastelli (2013), in order to avoid comparative fallacy, studies on the effect of lexical aspect should take into account that learners' lexical aspectual competence develops over time.

3.2.6 The Default Tense Hypothesis

Evidence in favour of the Default Tense Hypothesis comes from studies which observe that during the initial stages of acquisition, learners' use of verbal morphology does not display an aspectual pattern. Studies on the acquisition of L2 Spanish (e.g., Salaberry, 1999, 2002) showed that during the initial stages, classroom learners used perfective marking across lexical aspectual classes. This finding was in contrast with two predictions of the LAH, namely that in emergent verbal systems, aspect marking precedes tense marking (i.e., learners use verbal morphology to redundantly convey lexical aspectual meanings), and that perfective marking

appears first with telic predicates because learners select verbal morphology according to the lexical aspectual class of the predicates. Salaberry's (1999, 2002) data showed that learners start using Spanish Preterite as a default marker of past tense, and the effect of lexical aspectual class of the predicates is observable in more advanced stages of acquisition. These observations led to the formulation of the Default Tense Hypothesis (Salaberry, 1999), which states that "the use of Past tense Spanish Preterite acts as a default marker of past tense during the beginning stages of acquisition among classroom L2 learners" (171). There is evidence that the effect of lexical aspect during the early stages of acquisition is not as strong as it is at more advanced stages (Salaberry, 2002, p. 406).

A similar pattern was found in studies on L2 Italian (e.g., Rocca, 2005; Wiberg, 1996). In a cross-sectional study conducted on bilingual children acquiring Italian in Sweden, Wiberg (1996) observed that learners used Passato Prossimo across lexical aspectual classes to express the meaning [+past]. The distinction between perfective and imperfective past appeared later and it showed as a "secondary opposition, less frequent and more sensitive to the inherent semantics of the verb" (p. 1110). This led to the formulation of the Unmarked Tense Hypothesis, which assumes that the perfective past is the unmarked part of the perfective/imperfective dichotomy; it is acquired first and used across lexical aspectual classes to express temporal meaning. The congruence principle (i.e., verbal morphology is used congruently with the lexical aspectual class of the predicates) primarily affects the emergence of imperfective morphology, which appears later and "exclusively with states". Consistent with Wiberg, a longitudinal study conducted on L1 English children learning and L2 Italian in the host environment, and contemporarily L2 French in instructed settings, showed that Passato Prossimo was "evenly distributed between telic and atelic predicates" and fulfilled the function of a default tense (Rocca, 2005, p. 149).

Although numerous studies observed that in the initial stages a perfective tense served as a default tense, the same role may be fulfilled by an imperfective tense. Salaberry (2003) found that the variations were due to the type of narrative: students used Spanish Preterite as a default tense in fictional narratives, while they used Imperfect as a default tense in personal narratives.

The use of a default tense is connected to cognitive factors such as developmental readiness and the conceptual framework available to the learner. It can be assumed that during the first stage of acquisition, learners whose L1 does not mark aspect are not able to conceptualise aspectual distinctions in the target language; they mark only temporal distinctions. Evidence for this assumption can be found in several studies that observe the

interlanguage of L1 English learners acquiring a Romance language (Ayoun & Salaberry, 2005, p. 254-5). Thus, the Default Tense Hypothesis differs from the LAH concerning the first stage of acquisition and predicts that lexical aspectual influences will take effect at a more advanced stage of acquisition when learners are able to conceptualise aspectual distinctions.

Conversely, evidence for the lack of conceptualisation of temporal distinction was found in studies on the interlanguage of L1 Chinese learners of L2 English. The L1 Chinese participants in Hawkins and Liszka's (2003) study performed well in a written test, however, in free production tasks they had difficulties in marking temporal distinctions. Thus, their difficulties in moving from an aspect-based system to a tense-based system mirrored the difficulties of learners moving from a tense-based system to an aspect-based system. This substantiates the assumption that initial stages are characterised by a remarkable L1 influence.

3.2.7 A comprehensive model of the acquisition of temporal-aspectual distinctions

As pointed out by Ayoun & Salaberry (2005, p. 253), the theoretical hypotheses presented above may be seen as complementary rather than exclusionary. However, integrating them into a comprehensive model is difficult for several reasons such as the differences in the identification of lexical aspectual classes, the interference of methodological choices with the research outcomes and the difficulty in distinguishing the effect of factors relevant to different levels of linguistic analysis. Nevertheless, Ayoun and Salaberry propose a comprehensive model of the development of tense and aspect marking in the Romance languages based on empirical studies on L1 English learners acquiring a Romance language.

English L1 learners are familiar with aspect marking, and since their L1 expresses the progressive aspect they can rely on their L1 to understand aspectual distinctions. However, the progressive aspect in English is marked periphrastically rather than morphologically, and imperfective morphology in the Romance languages conveys multiple semantic values, meaning that it is semantically more complex than the English progressive. Ayoun and Salaberry (2005) therefore assume that during the first stage of acquisition, interlanguage verbal morphology is used to mark tense but not aspect. This can explain the use of a default tense during the early developmental stages, a phenomenon well attested in different languages (e.g., Salaberry, 1999, 2002; Wiberg, 1996; Rocca, 2005). As learners gain more experience with the target language and their access to the input increases, they develop a conceptual framework of tense-aspect distinctions and start using prototypical pairing of lexical aspect and verbal morphology (Salaberry, 2002, 2011; McManus 2013). During the third stage, learners become able to incorporate pragmatic and discursive criteria into their interlanguage verbal system, and

select verbal morphology by taking into account the principles of discourse grounding (Ayoun & Salaberry, 2005, pp. 267-269). At this stage of acquisition, learners are able to express viewpoint aspect, i.e. to use non-prototypical combinations of lexical aspect and verbal morphology.

To sum up, the three-stage model can be summarised as follows: tense marking -> aspect marking -> discourse marking (Ayoun & Salaberry, pp. 279-280). An implication of these findings is that "the appropriate type of pedagogical intervention as well as the timing of such pedagogical manipulation must follow the stages learners go through in their development of inflectional morphology" (ibid. 281).

Recent studies (e.g., Saleberry, 2011; McManus, 2013) contradict the three-stage model and claim that the use of prototypical pairings increases with more developed proficiency. However, the above-presented studies do not have a common benchmark for the definition of proficiency which poses some difficulty in the comparison of their results. Further research is needed to find out whether there is a proficiency level where learners become able to use non-prototypical combinations or, on the contrary, the use of prototypical combinations represents the ultimate attainment of aspectual distinctions.

3.2.8 Transfer of conceptual knowledge of tense and aspect

Several form-oriented studies on tense-aspect acquisition explored the possibility of transferring conceptual knowledge of tense-aspect distinctions from one Romance language to another (Comajoan, 2005, 2006; Salaberry, 2005). These studies examined the emergence and the distribution of verbal morphology in Romance languages acquired as a third language, i.e. "a non-native language which is currently being used or acquired in a situation where the person already has knowledge of one or more L2s in addition to one or more L1s" (Hammarberg, 2010, p. 97).

Salaberry (2005) investigated the acquisition of L3 Portuguese by learners who already had an extensive knowledge of L2 Spanish. Since both languages mark tense and aspect morphologically and there is a "clear correspondence of form and meaning in Portuguese and Spanish" (ibid. 180), this language combination offers learners the possibility of directly transferring their conceptualisation of tense-aspect distinction from one language to the other. Therefore, in this study, learners' knowledge about tense-aspect distinctions was operationalized in terms of L2 proficiency and not in terms of L3 proficiency. The data showed that learners categorically marked telic verbs with perfective morphology, while imperfective morphology was not clearly associated to any lexical aspectual class (ibid. 202-203). Stative

predicates generated the highest degree of uncertainty, and their morphological marking showed a developmental effect, in the sense that categorical marking of statives was directly proportional to proficiency.

In summary, learners' use of Imperfect and Preterite reflected "the expression of aspectual notions through verbal morphology", meaning that they successfully transferred their conceptual knowledge of the Spanish tense-aspect system to the Portuguese. This was not the case for statives, a pattern that confirms the above presented distinction between rule-based and association-based learning, and suggests that the association-based application of imperfective morphology on statives increases with more developed proficiency.

Comajoan's (2005) data collected from L1 English learners of L2 Catalan, highlight a directly proportional relationship between experience in language learning and appropriate use of verbal morphology. In his longitudinal study, one out of three participants, Daniel, had an extensive knowledge of two Romance languages (Spanish and French) but no experience in learning other languages. The other participants were more experienced language learners: Barbara spoke Korean and had studied German, in addition to Spanish and French; while Robert had knowledge of four Romance languages (Spanish, French, Romanian, and Italian). As pointed out by Comajoan (2005, p. 68):

> The results of the study indicated that the period of emergence of preterite and imperfect morphology in Daniel's data was longer than in the two other learners, and that Robert's use of morphology was closer to native-speaker use than the data from Daniel and Barbara. One plausible explanation for these differences is that Barbara and Robert could transfer their knowledge of languages with perfective-imperfective morphology to the acquisition of Catalan at a faster rate than Daniel.

On the other hand, studies investigating the effect of students' L1 on the acquisition of L2 tense-aspect system (McManus, 2015; Roberts & Liszka, 2013; Salaberry, 2013b) found difficulties in form-meaning remapping in cases when the same meaning was expressed differently in the two languages (L1/L2). Salaberry (2013b) showed that highly proficient L2 learners of Spanish with L1 English were not able to distinguish fine-grained aspectual contrasts such as iterativity versus habituality. This may be related to differences in form-meaning mapping in the two languages. In Spanish, habituality is mapped into imperfective morphology, while iterativity is mapped into perfective morphology. This dichotomy does not have a clear counterpart in English, since the Simple Past can convey both habitual and iterative aspect. Thus, English learners of Spanish have to isolate aspectual meanings, recognise that their morphosyntactic distribution is different in the two languages and map the meanings into target language forms. Nevertheless, the fact that English marks aspect morphologically may have a facilitating effect.

The acquisition process may be more difficult when grammaticalised aspect is unique to the L2, as in the case of German learners of Romance languages. McManus' (2015) study that compares English and German learners of L2 French, shows that low proficiency German learners use past tense morphology to mark tense but not grammatical aspect, while English learners at the same proficiency level seem to be more sensitive to aspectual distinctions. High proficiency learners pattern similarly, regardless of their native language, suggesting that L1 influence becomes less prominent with more developed proficiency. However, Robert and Liszka (2013) claim that German and French learners of L2 English, who display equal explicit knowledge of aspectual distinctions, pattern differently in tasks measuring implicit knowledge, suggesting that "only those whose L1 has grammaticized aspect (French) (…) could be argued to have implicit knowledge of English tense/aspect distinction" (Robert & Liszka, 2013, p. 413).

McManus and Marsden (2016) focus on the usefulness of explicit information about tense-aspect distinctions in L1/L2, in order to promote form-meaning remapping when the two languages express the same meaning differently. This study suggests that the observation of the morphosyntactic distribution of the same feature in the L1 and the L2 results in "stronger conceptualization" and more efficient L2 processing (McManus & Marsden, 2016, p. 30). This is consistent with the results of research on multilingual learners who seem to be aware of structural differences and similarities between the languages they speak (Jessner, 2006, pp. 123-128).

3.3 Summary

As pointed out by Bardovi-Harlig (2002), the extensive research on the acquisition of the tense-aspect system in second and third languages produced a multiplicity of non-equivalent analyses, which are hardly comparable. The studies on the acquisition of Romance languages differ in several ways, including the theoretical framework (semantically oriented vs. syntactically oriented studies); the classification of predicates into lexical aspectual classes (two-way classifications vs. three- and four-way classifications); the method of data collection (open ended tasks such as storytelling or film retelling vs. cloze passages and forced choice tasks); the analytical techniques (within-category analyses vs. across-category analyses). Another relevant difference in these studies is connected to the learners' L1s and the target language. Most of the studies investigate the acquisition of L2 Spanish and French, however, there are several studies on the acquisition of a Romance language as a third language (L3 Catalan, L3 Portuguese, L3 Italian). One constant variable seems to be the learners' L1, mostly

English, only the studies of Giacalone-Ramat (2002), McManus (2013, 2015) and Roberts and Liszka (2013) include native speakers of German.

Despite these substantial differences, there are several patterns which constantly emerge, regardless of the theoretical framework and research methodology adapted by the studies and irrespective of what Romance language they investigate. In instructed settings, verbal morphology is extensively used even in early acquisitional stages (see Ayoun & Salaberry, 2005). Perfective past emerges before imperfective past (see McManus, 2013; Giacalone Ramat, 2002) and it is often used as a default tense for past marking (Wiberg, 1996; Salaberry 1999, 2002; Bergström, 1996). As the perfective-imperfective distinction is integrated into the interlanguage, perfective morphology is used mostly in achievement and accomplishment predicates (Salaberry, 2011). These two classes pattern similarly, therefore they may be reduced to a single class of telic predicates (Bardovi Harlig, 2002; Rosi, 2009a). Imperfective morphology occurs mostly on activities and states (Comajoan, 2006; Salaberry, 2011; Mc Manus, 2013). Activities and states are both atelic predicates; however, they cannot be reduced to a single category, because the feature of dynamicity seems to be particularly relevant for the acquisition. The processing of [-dynamic] predicates, i.e. states, seems to be association-based, rather than rule-based. As learners gain enough experience with the target language in order to conceptualise aspectual distinctions, they notice that a limited number of high-frequency statives are biased towards imperfective morphology and rely on these associations (Ayoun & Salaberry, 2005). Activities seem to be particularly sensitive to aspectual distinctions. Rocca (2005, p. 164) notes that "When the compound past appears with activities, the aspectual opposition *imperfetto*/*passato prossimo* also appears". This means "activities in the *imperfetto* (…) express the continuous/progressive aspect and set the scene in the background of a narrative. Conversely, activities in the compound past (…) express the foreground and are viewed perfectively" (ibid. 165). This finding is corroborated by Comajoan's study (2006) of L3 Catalan who notes that activities are used appropriately in both prototypical and non-prototypical pairings.

Studies on bi- and multilingual learners suggest that languages are interlinked in the learner's mind and prior linguistic knowledge has an influence on the acquisition of tense-aspect distinctions. The absence of explicit aspect marking in the L1 may have an inhibitory effect on the development of implicit knowledge about aspectual distinctions in the L2 (Roberts & Liszka, 2013) or hamper students' understanding of fine-grained aspectual distinctions (Salaberry, 2013b). However, explicit information about similarities and differences between L1 and L2 may have a positive effect on form-meaning remapping and enable students to

develop a stronger conceptualisation of aspectual distinctions (McManus & Marsden, 2016). Multilingual learners seem able to transfer their conceptual knowledge about tense-aspect distinctions from one language to another. However, such positive transfer is not automatic, and learners may need explicit training in cross-linguistic awareness to exploit their multilingualism. In fact, research on multilingual awareness (e.g., Jessner, 2006) suggests that fostering students' metalinguistic awareness by making the links between their languages explicit may promote their understanding of the language tense-aspect system.

The present chapter focused on the acquisition of tense-aspect distinctions in the Romance languages with the objective of highlighting the patterns that are common to their acquisition. The following chapter will focus on studies investigating the acquisition of Italian as a second or third language, in order to highlight the similarities and differences as compared to the studies on Romance languages.

Chapter 4
The acquisition of tense and aspect in Italian

The previous chapter reviewed studies investigating the acquisition of tense and aspect in Romance languages, and highlighted common acquisition patterns emerging despite fundamental differences in the theoretical and methodological frameworks adopted by the examined studies, and the variety of languages they focus on (Spanish, French, Italian, Catalan, Portuguese). The focus of these studies is centred on tutored language acquisition, which implies early emergence of verbal morphology and the progressive acquisition of its temporal/aspectual function, confirming "a general principle of Second Language studies – that form precedes function" (Giacalone Ramat, 2002, p. 241). The studies suggest that the first past tense form to emerge is the perfective past, with a temporal rather than aspectual meaning. In early acquisition stages, perfective past marking is in fact used across lexical aspectual classes and levels of discourse grounding, while learners do not show any preference for prototypical combinations of the three categories of temporality, i.e. tense, aspect and grounding. The perfective-imperfective opposition enters the interlanguage with the appearance of imperfective marking, first observable on stative predicates, later extended to [+ dynamic] classes. Discourse grounding exerts its influence in more advanced acquisition stages, when the use of prototypical combinations consolidates and non-prototypical combinations appear when required by the context.

Studies on bi- and multilingual learners agree on the influence of prior linguistic knowledge in the acquisition process. They emphasise the inhibitory effect of form-meaning differences between previously learned languages and the target language, which may be counterbalanced by explicit reflection on these differences (cfr. McManus, 2013; McManus & Marsden, 2016; Salaberry, 2013b). In particular, McManus and Marsden (2016) highlight the importance of explicit links between prior linguistic knowledge and the target language, which promote the understanding of target language structures, facilitate form-meaning remapping and strengthen the learner's conceptualisation of target-language phenomena. This is consistent with the outcome of studies investigating the effect of multilingual awareness on language acquisition (e.g., Jessner, 2006; Jessner et al., 2016), which found

that, when acquiring a new language, all the previously learned languages are activated in learners' minds. An explicit reflection on the differences and similarities between these languages helps learners to exploit their multilingual competence and benefit from their multilingualism.

In summary, the main pattern emerging from studies on the acquisition of tense and aspect in Romance languages is the identification of three acquisition stages characterised by the progressive integration of temporal/aspectual features into the interlanguage according to the implicational pattern *tense marking* > *aspect marking* > *discourse marking* (cfr. Ayoun & Salaberry, 2005, p. 280). Although this pattern is observable in a large variety of studies, the three-stage model cannot fully account for the distribution of the verbal morphology in the interlanguage, which is further influenced by factors such as the learner's prior linguistic knowledge and its interaction with the target language.

Studies focusing on the acquisition of the Italian tense/aspect system are even more heterogeneous with respect to their methodological approach and the linguistic backgrounds and learning environments of the participants. However, in spite of this heterogeneity, there is a clear agreement on the acquisition path for Italian verb forms, confirmed by a large variety of studies, independently of the participant's sociolinguistic background and the mode of language learning (tutored or untutored) (cfr. Rosi, 2009a). This acquisition sequence has been one of the main results of the studies conducted within the so-called Pavia Project (cfr. Giacalone Ramat, 2003b; Banfi & Bernini, 2003), that examines morphosyntactic regularities in the interlanguage of learners with a migration background, who acquire Italian in an informal context, through the interaction with native speakers. This acquisition sequence is implicational and runs as follows (Bernini, 1990a; Giacalone Ramat, 2003b):

Present > Past Participle / Passato prossimo > Imperfect > Future

Variation in the interlanguage development does not affect the order in which these forms emerge, but rather the acquisition pace and the creation of links between verb forms and their function, i.e. how conceptual distinctions are mapped into the target language forms throughout the acquisition process. Such variation in interlanguage development seems to be influenced by linguistic and extra-linguistic factors such as lexical aspect and the formation of semantic prototypes on one side; mode of language learning and learners' linguistic background on the other. The following sections will summarise the main findings concerning the influence of these factors on the interlanguage development of L2 Italian learners.

4.1 Mode of language learning: tutored *versus* untutored learners

Tutored and semi-tutored acquisition of tense/aspect distinctions in Italian is investigated in several studies conducted by Rosi (e.g., 2007, 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2011) and Wiberg (e.g., 2002a, 2002b, 2009). Two studies (Rosi, 2009a; Rastelli & Vernice, 2013) observe learners with limited access to formal instruction while studying various subjects at Italian universities within an exchange program. Rosi (2009a, p. 56) points out that, although the participants in her study attended a language class of thirty hours upon their arrival in Italy, their metalinguistic reflections suggest that "the educational input they received in their language course was very scanty". For this reason, they shall be considered semi-spontaneous learners.

Giacalone Ramat (2002) and Duso (2002) examine the interlanguage of small groups of learners with very different sociolinguistic backgrounds and learning environments. In these two studies, some of the participants had regular access to formal instruction, while others acquired the language mainly through interaction with native speakers. Wiberg (1996) examines the interlanguage of 24 bilingual Italian-Swedish youths with Italian being their "weaker language", who are resident in Sweden and have access to formal instruction in the contexts of their "mother tongue lesson" at school.

Considerable attention is dedicated to untutored acquisition, extensively researched within the Pavia Project (e.g., Bernini, 1990a, 1990b; Giacalone Ramat & Banfi, 1990; Giacalone Ramat, 2003b). In addition, Rocca's studies (2002, 2005) examined the interlanguage development of L1-English speaking pupils at the European School in Varese (Northern Italy), who learned French as their second language, while the language of instruction in their school was English. They acquired Italian through the interaction with natives and, once a week, had access to a 45-minute optional Italian language class. Given their very limited access to formal instruction, Rocca (2002, 2005) proposes treating them as untutored learners.

Finally, the studies conducted in the field of L1 acquisition (e.g., Bertinetto, Lenci, Nocetti & Agonigi, 2008; Bertinetto, Freiberger, Lenci, Noccetti & Agonigi, 2015) examine the development of verbal morphology, analysing the interaction of Italian children with their caretakers. In spite of significant differences between L1 acquisition and the acquisition of second and third languages, these studies will also be taken into account in the present

chapter. In fact, several hypotheses about L2 acquisition of tense and aspect, such as the influential Lexical Aspect Hypothesis, originate from studies conducted on L1 acquisition.

To sum up, several studies in the field of Italian tense-aspect acquisition have been conducted on data obtained from untutored learners and semi-spontaneous learners, who acquire the language mainly through the interaction with natives, while having some access to formal instruction. On the other hand, several studies carried out by Rosi focus on semi-tutored and tutored language acquisition. This raises the question whether the acquisition path observable in tutored and untutored learners exhibits substantial differences that may be related to the mode of language learning.

The data presented by Rosi (2007, 2008) suggest that tutored learners differ from untutored in that they "pay greater attention to the linguistic features of context, such as Actionality, Grounding, Aspect adverbial or connectives, in order to support their production and they are more competent to reflect on the language" (Rosi, 2009a, p. 56). This is confirmed by the study based on metalinguistic reflections carried out by semi-spontaneous and semi-tutored learners of L2 Italian (Rosi, 2010). The study shows that the latter group is able to provide fairly accurate metalinguistic explanation on morphological markers chosen in a cloze-task. However, the absence of such metalinguistic awareness does not necessarily imply low proficiency in tense/aspect marking. For instance, semi-spontaneous learners with L1 Spanish "mostrano di aver raggiunto una buona competenza linguistica anche senza aver sviluppato una profonda competenza metalinguistica" (Rosi, 2010, p. 173). Rosi and Cancila (2007), examining university learners of Italian, conclude that instructed learners show higher formal accuracy than untutored learners: "A formal rather than functional difference is that the interlanguage of instructed learners turns out more grammatically accurate than non-instructed learners' data" (p. 182). Even though formal accuracy does not automatically imply awareness of form-function relations, Rosi's (2011) study showed a positive effect of explicit instruction on the use of past tense forms in the interlanguage of L1 Chinese speakers. Rosi (2011) points out that "L'esperimento condotto sottolinea (…) l'esistenza di un effetto positivo della crescita della competenza metalinguistica sulla produzione linguistica" (p. 330).

According to Rosi's (2009a) study, the pattern found in semi-spontaneous learners does not differ significantly from the regularities observable by learners immersed in an intensive language course. Rosi points out that, "the data show that semi-spontaneous learners follow very similar acquisitional patterns to tutored learners (…), in accordance with the 'Teachability Hypothesis' (…), which claims that formal instruction cannot modify

the developmental pattern of a second language" (Rosi, 2009a, p. 144). Thus, instruction does not seem to influence the learning path, but may have a positive effect on the learning pace. The same has been observed by Bardovi-Harlig (2000, p. 395) investigating the effect of instruction on L2 English acquisition. Her analyses lead to the conclusion that "instruction affected rate, but not route". This observation is confirmed by Wiberg's (2009, p. 485) data, showing that university learners of L2 Italian follow the same acquisition path as identified by the studies conducted within the Pavia Project.

Nevertheless, substantial differences seem to emerge between spontaneous learners on one side, and semi-spontaneous and instructed learners on the other. As pointed out in 3.1, untutored learners go through an extensive acquisition process, before acquiring verbal morphology (Klein & Perdue, 1992). This applies also to Italian, despite its transparent verbal morphology, where the affixes attached to the base verb form are easy to recognise and display univocal form-function associations (Bernini, 1990a; Banfi & Bernini, 2003).

During the first stage of untutored acquisition, referred to as pre-basic variety, temporal/aspectual information is conveyed by pragmatic means, such as the Principle of Chronological Order. Thus, events are reported in the same order they occurred. The subsequent stage is characterised by the use of lexical means to locate events on the time axis and convey information related to their internal temporal boundedness. For instance, the adverb *qua* 'here' may be used to indicate reference to the present, while the expression *in Cina* 'in China' indicates a reference to the past (Banfi & Bernini, 2003, pp. 84-89). The past participle *finito* 'finished' is in turn used to convey perfective aspect. Verbal morphology appears only in the third acquisition stage, the post-basic variety.

In contrast to untutored learners, semi-spontaneous and instructed learners seem to acquire verbal morphology at a fast pace, even though the verb forms are often used in non-target-like contexts (Giacalone Ramat, 2002; Rosi, 2009a; Wiberg, 2009). The use of Imperfetto, and the expression of progressive aspect seem to be particularly difficult to acquire (Rosi, 2009a, 2009b). This suggests that discovering a network of form-function relations within the verbal paradigm is a gradual process, which follows universal principles, such as markedness principles, in the sense that less marked and more frequent form-meaning associations are acquired earlier than marked structures (Giacalone Ramat, 2008).

Since the present study focuses on instructed language acquisition, the next sections will examine studies investigating learners who display an extensive use of verbal morphology, such as semi-spontaneous and instructed learners of Italian, but also bilingual children and children acquiring Italian as L1. When referring to studies on untutored

acquisition, the attention will focus on phenomena observed in the post-basic variety, when learners start using verbal morphology.

The studies reviewed in this chapter agree on the presence of two factors that affect the emergence and development of the interlanguage tense/aspect system: lexical aspect and the learner's prior linguistic knowledge, especially their first language. However, they disagree on how the influence of these factors changes throughout the acquisition process, as will be shown in the following sections.

4.2 Lexical aspect as a triggering factor in tense/aspect acquisition

Studies on both tutored and untutored learning arrive at the conclusion that lexical aspect influences the distribution of verbal morphology in the interlanguage and relate this pattern to the concept of unmarkedness and semantic prototypes. However, they display significant differences concerning the role of lexical aspect as a triggering factor in the acquisition of tense/aspect distinctions and the extent of its influence throughout the acquisition process.

One of the first studies that emphasised the role of lexical aspect in language acquisition was Antinucci and Miller's (1976) analysis of data obtained from children acquiring L1 Italian. Antinucci and Miller found that children have a strong tendency to talk about facts relevant at the moment of speech and to use the present tense. They apply perfective past tense morphology only when referring to states resulting from previous actions. Since telic predicates imply definite change (cfr. 2.2.2), children apply past marking to telic predicates in order to emphasise the state resulting from a change. Thus, children start using prototypical combinations of lexical aspect and verbal morphology because the first distinction they encode is aspectual in nature. Weist et al. (1984) labelled this explanation Defective Tense Hypothesis (DTH), in order to emphasise the redundancy in children's use of verbal morphology. Not being able to establish abstract relations between the point of speech and the point of event, children cannot locate events on the time axis and use verbal morphology to emphasise aspectual distinctions already encoded on the lexical level. A similar pattern has been observed by Calleri (1990), who claims that temporal deixis in L1 Italian does not appear with the acquisition of the perfective past tense, Passato Prossimo, but later, with the acquisition of the imperfective past tense Imperfetto.

The view of lexical aspect as a triggering factor in tense/aspect acquisition has received wide acceptance, however, it has also been challenged by several alternative proposals. For instance, Weist et al. (1984) showed that children acquiring Polish mark not

only aspectual but also temporal distinctions, providing examples that question the DTH. As pointed out by Shirai and Andersen (1995, p. 746, emphasis in original):

> (…) Weist et al. (…) appear to be criticizing what can be called the ABSOLUTE defective tense hypothesis, which is a strong, all-or-nothing version of the hypothesis. According to the absolute version, only telic verbs receive past-tense inflection; these distinctions will be redundant and will only accompany aspectual distinctions (…).

Shirai and Andersen therefore propose a "less stringent version" of the DTH, the [Lexical] Aspect Hypothesis (LAH), based on the idea that learners acquire the concept of past tense starting from its prototype, characterised by the features [+telic], [+punctual], [+result]. Thus, the association between telicity and past tense morphology is not absolute but preferential, and results from the preference for unmarked, prototypical associations, rather than cognitive deficiency. In fact, a similar pattern is observable in adult speakers who have developed the concept of deictic past during the acquisition of their first language, and cannot be said to use verbal morphology to redundantly mark lexical aspect.

To summarise, the LAH, proposed by Andersen & Shirai (1994, 1996), resolves the controversial question whether learners mark tense or aspect by claiming that (Shirai & Andersen, 1995, p. 759):

> What children are doing is simply attaching early past inflection to the prototype of the category past (i.e. [+telic], [+punctual], [+result]). The reason children appear to be marking aspect is that the prototypes of past (tense) and perfective (aspect) are very similar.

The LAH has been very influential in both first- and second language research of Italian. Several studies on L2 tense/aspect acquisition (e.g., Bernini, 1990a, 1990b; Banfi & Bernini, 2003, Giacalone Ramat, 2002; Rosi, 2008, 2009a) claim that, consistent with the LAH, learners acquire temporal-aspectual categories starting from their prototype. Perfective marking is therefore initially restricted to telic predicates, later extended to activities and states, while imperfective marking is first applied to statives, to be later extended to [+dynamic] categories. The acceptance of this hypothesis, however, raises some questions about the role of lexical aspect and input frequency as a triggering factor in tense/aspect acquisition.

Giacalone Ramat (2002, p. 225) notes that the semantic solidarity between lexical aspect and grammatical aspect observed by the LAH "has a concrete counterpart in native languages in terms of frequency: perfective aspect is more frequently found with telic verbs than with statives and duratives". It is therefore possible that children acquiring their L1 and learners acquiring L2 Italian show a preference for prototypical combinations because they extract statistically frequent patterns from the input and not because they are developing the

category of aspect starting from its prototype. Development of the category aspect from its prototype would in fact imply a fairly advanced awareness of the lexical aspectual characteristics of the target-language predicates (cfr. Giacalone Ramat, 2008; Bertinetto, 2015). However, it hardly seems possible that children acquiring their L1 or non-native speakers learning a second or a third language possess such awareness, indispensable for the identification of prototypes. Lexical aspectual properties may be in fact hard to capture because in several cases they are not intrinsically encoded in the verb lemma, but emerge from the context (cfr. 2.2.2). Thus, the same lemma may have different lexical aspectual values according to the context. For instance, as Wiberg (1996) notes, "many activity verbs can change into telic verbs through the addition of complements" (p. 1091). The verb *mangiare* 'to eat', for example, is an activity in (1), however, it gains a telic reading in the presence of a direct object specifying what is eaten, as shown in (2) (cfr. Bertinetto et al., 2015, p. 1125):

(1) Anna mangia sempre alle due

(2) Luca ha mangiato il gelato

In addition, verbs referring to the same process display cross-linguistic variation in their lexical aspectual characteristics. Shirai and Nishi (2003) examined the lexical aspectual characteristics of the 100 most frequently used verbs in English and Japanese and found a substantial difference in the way the two languages encode processes that result in a change of state. While Japanese tends to lexicalise change of state, English encodes the resultant state, meaning that some verbs that are statives in English (e.g., *to see, to hear)* correspond to activities in Japanese. Such cross-linguistic differences in the lexical aspectual characterisation of predicates add another task to the learning process: learners have to master the lexical aspectual characteristics of the target language verbal predicates, before being able to identify prototypical associations of lexical aspect and verbal morphology.

The idea that lexical aspect is a category to acquire is further supported by studies conducted in the field of Italian SLA. Several studies conducted by Giacalone Ramat and Rastelli (e.g., Rastelli, 2009; Giacalone Ramat & Rastelli, 2013; Rastelli & Vernice, 2013) show that initial learners tend to use verbal predicates in a semantically underspecified way. Semantic underspecification is observable in cases when learners exchange aspectual pairs, i.e. verbs that share their general meaning, but differ in their lexical aspectual characterisation such as *dire* 'to say' which is telic, and *parlare* 'to speak' which is atelic in its default meaning. According to Giacalone Ramat and Rastelli (2013, p. 396), the reason for this is that "general meanings (…) have primacy in acquisition over aspectual features".

Thus, the studies conducted by Giacalone Ramat and Rastelli suggest that learners acquire the lexical aspectual properties of the predicates gradually. This contradicts the assumption that lexical aspect triggers the acquisition of verbal morphology and leads to the hypothesis that the preference for prototypical combinations in the interlanguage originates from patterns extracted from the input. The learner's ability to extract frequent patterns from the input emerges in studies conducted by Rosi (2009a, 2009b), using computational simulation. Rosi (2009b) points out that these findings provide evidence "for the interaction that exists between data-driven mechanisms and cognitive principles" (p. 4). Referring to L1 Italian acquisition, Bertinetto et al. (2015, pp. 1118-9) conclude that:

> By selecting one particular category (aspect or actionality, or possibly a mixture of the two) as the triggering factor of the acquisition process, one implicitly assumes that the learner masters the given category in a sufficiently robust manner. This assumption is seldom overtly stated (…). Nevertheless, once this argument is made explicit, its dubious implications become evident. One would hardly endorse a view suggesting that a particular ATAM [Actionality, Temporality, Aspect, and Mood] dimension must be mastered by the toddler, in order to build up the remaining dimensions from scratch.

Bertinetto et al. (2015) in fact suggest that the acquisition path depends on the morphological evidence children extract from the target language, rather than on a universal triggering factor. The earliest category to be activated is the one(s) that "receive(s) the strongest support by the target language morphology" (Bertinetto et al., 2015, p. 1116). This view raises the question about which is the most prominent temporal/aspectual category in the Italian tense/aspect system to trigger the acquisition process.

Bertinetto et al. (2015, p. 1124) claim that, from a morphological point of view, lexical aspect is the less prominent category in Italian, given that lexical aspectual features are encoded in verbal semantics but are not marked on the morphological level. Grammatical aspect is "partly marked in Italian" in the sense that verb forms have a prevalent aspectual meaning, but also display a degree of ambiguity (Bertinetto et al., 2015, p. 1126). For instance, as pointed out in 2.2.1.1, Passato Prossimo encodes both the aoristic and the perfect aspect, and it may also gain an imperfective reading. Furthermore, the Present may assume both a perfective and an imperfective value. The most explicit feature is temporality, being "to a large extent overtly marked in Italian, which may be regarded (…) as a temporality-prominent language" (ibid., p. 1126). In their default meaning, Italian tenses have a univocal temporal value: "the Present is present-referring; the Imperfect [Imperfetto], the Simple and Compound Pasts [Passato Remoto and Passato Prossimo] and the Pluperfect are past-referring; the Simple and Compound Futures are future-referring" (ibid., p. 1126). Despite the polysemous nature of Italian tense forms, also observable in the expression of modality

through verbal morphology, Italian can be seen as a temporality-prominent language. For this reason, Bertinetto et al. (2015, p. 1155) conclude that "contrary to the aspect priority view, there is ground to conclude that, in a substantially temporality-prominent language like Italian, temporality is mastered at the same time as aspect (…) or even at an earlier stage (…)". Although Bertinetto et al. investigate L1 acquisition, similar observations have been made for L2 acquisition. Giacalone Ramat (1990, p. 27) notes that initial learners use past participle as a past marker, rather than aspect marker, extending it to non-prototypical cases, i.e. activities and states. Analysing the interlanguage of an L1 German learner (identified with the initials MT), Giacalone Ramat (2002, p. 231) confirms that in early acquisition stages, Passato Prossimo marks past tense rather than perfective aspect (Giacalone Ramat, 2002, p. 231):

> When first recorded, MT's verbal system has two forms: the present which is used to refer to present situations (…) and the *passato prossimo* for past situations (…). The aspectual distinction perfective vs. imperfective is not acquired at this stage and *passato prossimo* is sometimes used along with the present for imperfective situations.

Correspondingly, Rocca (2005, p. 157) acknowledges the lack of an evident link between telicity and Passato Prossimo, used across lexical aspectual classes; while Wiberg (1996, p. 1087) claims that PP is "primarily a past tense, used with all types of verbs".

The observation that Passato Prossimo enters the interlanguage as a tense marker rather than aspect marker is consistent with the three-stage model, discussed in 3.2.7, proposed by Ayoun and Salaberry (2005). Congruent with Bertinetto et al. (2015), the three-stage model suggests that learners start using verbal morphology to mark tense but not aspect. Their awareness of the lexical aspectual properties of predicates and the grammatical aspectual properties of tenses develops over time and this development allows for the emergence of prototypical combinations. The necessity to develop awareness of lexical and grammatical aspect in the target language before being able to select prototypical combinations seems to be overlooked by the LAH. However, this view is supported by studies showing that initial learners of Romance languages use a default tense in their narratives, regardless its aspectual value (e.g., Salaberry, 1999, 2002), and they start using prototypical combinations when their language proficiency increases (McManus, 2013; Salaberry, 2011).

To sum up, the above-examined studies agree upon the relevance of lexical aspect in understanding the emergence and distribution of interlanguage verbal morphology, and support the view that lexical aspect is a relevant category in both L1 and L2 tense/aspect

acquisition. However, they present contrasting evidence about the triggering role of lexical aspect; and the development of lexical aspectual influence throughout the acquisition process. The next section further examines how lexical aspect exerts its influence across acquisition stages.

4.3 The role of lexical aspect across acquisition stages

With respect to the role of lexical aspect across acquisition stages, the studies on Italian language present contrasting views. Some studies claim that lexical aspect triggers the acquisition of the target language tense/aspect system starting from its prototypes (e.g., Bernini, 1990a, 1990b; Banfi & Bernini, 2003); while other studies support the view that lexical aspect has to be acquired by the learner before being able to select prototypical combinations of lexical aspect and verbal morphology (e.g., Bertinetto et al., 2015; Giacalone Ramat & Rastelli, 2013).

The first view suggest that initial learners are sensitive to the content-related homogeneity between lexical aspect and grammatical aspect, and acquire aspect marking starting from the prototypical manifestations of aspectuality, i.e. telic predicates with perfective marking and atelic predicates, especially statives, with imperfective marking. As pointed out by Rosi (2009a, p. 152), this is in accordance with three cognitive principles: the relevance principle (Slobin 1985), the congruence principle (Andersen 1993) and the one-to-one principle (Andersen 1984). According to the relevance principle, early verbal morphology encodes the feature which is the most relevant to the verb meaning. Since grammatical aspect and lexical aspect belong to the same category of meaning, i.e. they both convey information related to the internal temporal structuring of events (cfr. Dessì Schmid, 2014, p. 79), aspectual information appears to be more relevant to the verb meaning than temporal information. Similarly, the congruence principle states that learners tend to select the aspect marker which is congruent with the lexical semantics of the verbal predicates. The presence of a temporal delimitation on the lexical level, implied by the feature of telicity, induces the use of perfective morphology, while the absence of such delimitation induces the selection of imperfect morphology. Finally, according to the one-to-one principle, learners tend to associate one function with each target language form. For this reason, they tend to restrict a specific aspect marker to a specific lexical aspectual class. Rosi (2009a, p. 152) points out that the relevance principle and the congruence principle are observable in the linguistic behaviour of both native speakers and non-native speakers. However, the one-to-one principle applies only to non-native speakers, since native speakers are able to use

non-prototypical combinations, when required by the context, thanks to their "insider's advantage" (cfr. Andersen, 1994). Non-native-speakers acquire this competence gradually and start using non-prototypical combinations when their proficiency increases. These considerations lead to the conclusion that lexical aspect triggers the acquisition of verbal morphology and the first distinction encoded on morphological level conveys aspectuality rather than temporality. In other words, "nella codificazione delle caratteristiche temporali, la strutturazione temporale interna degli eventi – l'aspetto, (…) – precede la loro collocazione nei confronti del momento dell'enunciazione – il tempo" (Banfi & Bernini, 2003, p. 96).

On the other hand, studies claiming that lexical aspect, similar to grammatical aspect, is a feature that has to be acquired in both first and second language acquisition, question the triggering role of lexical aspect (e.g., Giacalone Ramat & Rastelli, 2013; Rastelli & Vernice, 2013; Bertinetto et al., 2015). This assumption is consistent with the outcome of studies conducted on Romance languages such as L2 French (McManus, 2013) and L2 Spanish (Salaberry, 2011), suggesting that the distribution of interlanguage verbal morphology displays a pattern opposite to the implications of LAH: the use of prototypical combinations increases with developing proficiency, instead of decreasing. The reason for this may be twofold, in the sense that the LAH can take effect under two preconditions: 1) acquisition of the lexical aspectual properties of target language predicates; 2) mapping of perfective aspect into perfective morphology and imperfective aspect into imperfective morphology.

The studies conducted by Rosi (2008, 2009a) occupy an intermediate position. On one side, Rosi (2009a, p. 119) acknowledges that "learners of a second language have to acquire Actionality values of predicates, together with Aspect functions and forms". She shows that initial learners with L1 German, whose first language does not encode grammatical aspect, delay the acquisition of aspectual contrasts and tend to overextend the perfective past tense, Passato Prossimo, to imperfective contexts (ibid. 143). Such overextension suggests that the first functions learners ascribe to Passato Prossimo may be tense marking, rather than aspect marking. However, Rosi's studies do not explicitly question the triggering role of lexical aspect and claim that "The acquisition of Aspect proceeds from most to least prototypical associations (…) where the emergence of marked forms, such as imperfective in association with telic predicates, implies the previous emergence of unmarked forms, such as imperfective with state predicates" (Rosi, 2009a, pp. 152-153).

To summarise, the data collected from L1 German speakers learning L2 Italian (e.g., Giacalone Ramat, 2002; Rosi, 2009a) show a developmental pattern that might be congruent with the predictions of the three-stage model (Ayoun & Salaberry, 2005). Before developing sensitivity to prototypical associations, learners show a prevalent use of use Passato Prossimo. As their proficiency increases, learners improve their sensitivity to aspect marking, and show preference for prototypical combinations of lexical aspect and grammatical aspect. At this intermediate stage, lexical aspect plays an important role in the selection of verbal morphology. The most proficient students incorporate the discourse principle into their interlanguage and start using non-prototypical combinations of lexical aspect and verbal morphology, when required by the context. This means that students broaden the parameters used by the selection of verbal morphology from predicate level to sentence level and start selecting verbal morphology according to the discourse context rather than according to verb semantics (Rosi, 2008, p. 398).

4.4 The semantic value of past tense forms across acquisition stages

The above examined studies suggest that the role of lexical aspect in the selection of verbal morphology may vary during the acquisition process. Such variation may be connected to the polysemous nature of Italian verb forms, expressing both temporal and aspectual information. One of these features may be more emphasised than the other in the interlanguage, depending on factors such as the acquisition stage learners are going through, the type of discourse, etc. For instance, the DTH proposed by Salaberry (1999, 2002) assumes that in early acquisition stages, the temporal value of perfective past tenses prevails over their aspectual value. Furthermore, Wiberg (1996), who investigated the acquisition process of Swedish-Italian bilingual speakers, claims that in dialogues Passato Prossimo is used as an unmarked tense, with primarily temporal meaning. Her study showed that the effect of lexical aspect is observable "only in certain types of discourse, and only for *imperfetto*, not totally for the principal past tense *passato prossimo*" (Wiberg, 1996, p. 1087).

According to Wiberg's data, collected from partially planned dialogues, Passato Prossimo is evenly distributed between telic and atelic predicates. The corpus contains 253 tokens of PP; in 128 cases PP is applied to atelic predicates and in 125 cases to telic predicates. In contrast, IMP seems to be restricted to statives (77 out of 91 cases), occasionally applied to activities (12/91) and rarely applied to telic predicates (2/91). Only the most proficient learners show a bias towards telic predicates in the distribution of PP across lexical aspectual classes. However, this is not due to effects of lexical aspect, but to

the effect of discourse type. While less proficient learners tend to give short answers to the interviewer's questions and "prompting is necessary to keep the conversation going", as shown in (3) (from Wiberg, 1996, p. 1106), more proficient learners include small narratives in their answers to the interviewer's questions, observable in (4) (from Wiberg, 1996, p. 1108).

(3) EVA: l'anno scorso che hai fatto, d'estate?
CLA: eh *abbiamo stati* a Riccione.
EVA: a Riccione. Che cosa avete fatto lì?
CLA: eh *abbiamo visitati* amici e *abbiamo fatto* il bagno.

(4) SAR: poi l'abbiamo dato a uno che aveva tanti animali. Aveva un cane e gli uccellini, colombe, pesci e un coniglio. E poi quan[t]o abbiamo dato il nostro coniglio hanno fatto prima […]

In short narrative sequences such as (4), foreground events are marked with perfective morphology and reported in chronological order, while background information is marked with imperfect morphology. Thus, the association of telic predicates with perfective morphology, produced by the most proficient learners, seems to be connected to the tendency to include narrative sequences in the dialogue, where foreground events tend to be [+telic] and [+perfective], as pointed out in 2.3 and observable in (4).

Wiberg observed a similar pattern in interviews collected from Italian native speaker pupils, visiting a secondary school in Rome. The most frequent tense in their utterances was PP, used across lexical aspectual classes, i.e. it occurred "with atelic (states and activities) and telic verbs in a fairly even distribution" (Wiberg, 1996, p. 1098). The alternation between PP and IMP was observable only in those cases, when the response of the informants turned into short narratives, in which IMP correlated with stative predicates and background utterances. Thus, the relevance principle and the congruence principle only seem to account for the use of IMP, mostly applied to statives. PP on the other hand, appears to be used as an unmarked tense, with primarily past-marking function (Wiberg, 1996, p. 1110):

> *passato prossimo* is the most frequently used perfective past tense, which covers the majority of past tense uses in dialogues and normal speech where personal retellings are involved. The most important feature of the *passato prossimo* thus seems to be a transmission of the meaning [+past]. The distinction between *passato prossimo* and *imperfetto* is therefore a secondary opposition, less frequent and more sensitive to the inherent semantics of the verb.

To sum up, the above presented studies confirm the acquisition pattern identified by the studies conducted within the Pavia Project (cfr. Giacalone Ramat, 2003a; Banfi &

Bernini, 2003) and corroborate the claim that the acquisition of Italian past tense forms unfolds in the following order:

Present tense > Passato Prossimo > Imperfetto

However, the studies show contrasting evidence about how meanings are mapped into verb forms, i.e. about the semantic value of Passato Prossimo and Imperfetto in the interlanguage. While Wiberg (1996), and Giacalone Ramat (2002) suggest that PP enters the interlanguage as past tense marker and aspectual distinction appear later, with the emergence of IMP, several studies (e.g., Bernini, 1990a; Banfi & Bernini, 2003) claim the opposite. According to the latter studies, the emergence of past participle and PP indicates the integration of the aspectual feature of completeness into the interlanguage. The emergence of IMP with the stative verb *essere*, on the other hand, indicates the acquisition of past tense marking: "la prima forma verbale con il significato temporale è quella dell'imperfetto, che entra nell'interlingua tramite il verbo essere" (Banfi & Bernini, 2003, p. 97).

This difference in the interpretation of the semantic value of past tense forms across studies may be at least partially connected to the first language of the participants from whom the interlanguage samples were collected. Several studies claiming that aspect marking precedes tense marking involve participants with aspect prominent first languages such as Chinese and Tigrinya (i.e. Bernini, 1990a; Banfi & Bernini, 2003); while data collected from learners with a tense prominent first language (German) in studies conducted by Rosi (2009a) suggest that tense may precede aspect. Thus, the learner's first language may not affect overall tendencies in interlanguage development, however, it may influence how meanings are mapped into forms during the acquisition process, as will be further emphasised in the next section.

4.5 The effect of L1 on tense/aspect acquisition

As pointed out in 4.4, learners' L1 may affect the way they integrate target language features into their interlanguage. For instance, speakers of aspect prominent languages may be more sensitive to aspect marking and attribute an aspectual, rather than temporal value to the first verb forms entering their interlanguage. On the other hand, speakers of tense-prominent languages may be more sensitive to tense marking and map temporal rather than aspectual information into the first interlanguage verb forms.

Studies focusing on the influence of languages such as German, English, Swedish and/or Spanish on the acquisition of Italian tense/aspect distinction show that L1 Spanish speakers have a clear advantage over learners with a Germanic first language. The former

display a good mastery of aspectual contrast starting from early acquisition stages (Duso, 2002; Rosi, 2009a, 2009b, 2010). In contrast, speakers with a Germanic L1 seem to acquire past tense marking earlier than aspect marking. Given that the aspectual opposition perfective/imperfective present in Romance languages has no counterpart in Germanic languages, "the domain of past time reference has proved to be a crucial point in contact between Germanic and Romance languages" (Giacalone Ramat, 2002, p. 227).

Comparing the interlanguage of L1 German and L1 English learners, Giacalone Ramat (2002) notes that the former tend to overextend PP to imperfective contexts, while the latter show the opposite tendency, overextending IMP to perfective context. This tendency may be connected to formal similarities between PP and German Perfekt on one side, and IMP and English Past Simple on the other. This is particularly the case with a German learner identified with the initials FR, characterised as "fossilised at a post-basic variety stage, with strong features of L1 influence" (Giacalone Ramat, 2002, p. 229), analysed also by Bernini (1990b, pp. 166-167). Both Giacalone Ramat and Bernini note that FR uses IMP only with two high-frequency statives, *avere* 'to have' and *essere* 'to be' and has difficulty extending it to other verbs, which results in a restriction of IMP to high-frequency statives and the overuse of PP. Furthermore, Giacalone Ramat (2002, p. 231) observes that a similar L1 influence may be observable analysing the interlanguage of a tutored learner with L1 German identified as MT. This learner has been recorded for ten months after his arrival in Milan, one and a half months before the first registration. Giacalone Ramat notes that the first stages of MT's interlanguage development are characterised by the absence of perfective/imperfective distinction. Although in some cases the learner shows a correct alternation between perfective marking in the foreground and imperfective marking in the background, background descriptions are always introduced by the verb *essere,* as illustrated in (5) (from Giacalone Ramat, 2002, p. 233):

> (5) C'era il sole alora- boh++era la prima visita della città ero content+poi ho preso l'autobus al centro e ho subito trovato il fratello del mio padrino

As pointed out by Giacalone Ramat (ibid.), the correctness of the narrative sequence (5) may be the result of a positive transfer, rather than indicating the acquisition of perfective/imperfective distinctions (Giacalone Ramat, 2002, p. 231):

> (…) although this sequence is perfectly correct in Italian, it does not prove that MT has got the aspectual distinction. It might well be the case of a positive transfer that reflects the L1 system, in particular the spoken German in Southern Germany where the *Perfekt* is generally used for past situations and the *Präteritum* (simple past) is limited to *sein* „be" and modal verbs

During the successive acquisition stages, MT in fact shows a sudden spread of IMP across lexical aspectual classes, overextending this tense to perfective contexts. This can be seen as a stage of hypothesis testing in order to find out whether IMP is a functional alternative to PP that can replace it in any context. After the initial spread, the learner starts using IMP predominantly with activities and states in imperfective contexts, proving that the aspectual distinction has been integrated into the interlanguage. To sum up, as the L1 German speaker gains more experience with the target language, the non-target-like uses of both PP and IMP decrease, which allows for the emergence of lexical aspectual influence on the distribution of verbal morphology (Giacalone Ramat, 2002, p. 234). This is congruent with the pattern found by Rosi (2009a, 2009b), who observes that the L1 influence descreases "in parallel with the increasing exposure to L2 input" (Rosi, 2009b, p. 28).

The difficulty German learners experience in acquiring the perfective/imperfective distinction has also been documented by Rosi (2009a, 2009b), who compared the acquisition path followed by L1 German and L1 Spanish speakers. Spanish learners showed a fairly good understanding of aspectual contrast, starting from the early acquisition stages. German learners, not being able to rely on their L1 aspectual system, developed their understanding of aspectual contrasts at a slower pace. They initially used PP as a past tense, expressing "all functions of the past in Italian" (Rosi, 2009a, p. 97). The emergence of PP before IMP and the consequent association between past tense and perfective aspect may be related to its formal similarity to German *Perfekt* (Giacalone Ramat, 2002), but other factors such as the frequency of PP in the input and its unmarkedness with respect to IMP (Wiberg, 1996) may also play a role. Since Spanish and German learners observed in Rosi's (2009a) study were exposed to the same input and learning environment, "a different L1 emerges as the main causal factor of this dissimilarity of interlanguage evolution" (149). This observation is substantiated by Duso's (2002) study, which examined the IL development of eight subjects, with four different first languages: Spanish, French, German and Cushitic. The most proficient group included two L1 Spanish speakers and one L1 German speaker. As Duso (2002, p. 54) notes, this group showed an almost perfect mastery of the alternation between perfective and imperfective tenses, with some persisting uncertainties in the case of the learner with L1 German, due to the typological distance between his L1 and Italian. On the other hand, the two learners with L1 French showed a good mastery of aspectual contrast, despite being overall less proficient than the learner with L1 German.

The learner's difficulties in reconfiguring form-function associations observed in the above studies are consistent with the pattern found by Wiberg (2009), analysing interlanguage data collected from L1 Swedish speakers learning Italian. The data show an aspectual pattern, in the sense that imperfective marking is prevalently applied to statives, while its extension to telic predicates is observable in more advanced learners. Wiberg points out that Swedish speakers show a tendency to overextend IMP, because it is formally similar to Swedish *Preteritum*, which encodes both perfective and imperfective aspect. Thus, learners have to isolate aspectual meanings conveyed by the same form in their L1 and map them into two different forms in the target language. Due to the difficulty to establish new form-function relations, the overuse of IMP is present in learners with advanced proficiency: "nei nostri dati la sovraestensione dell'imperfetto in contesti perfettivi, soprattutto del verbo *essere,* sembra persistere anche quando l'apprendente è talmente avanzato da riuscire ad esprimere tutti i concetti temporali" (Wiberg, 2009, p. 494).

English L1 speakers, observed by Giacalone Ramat (2002) and Rocca (2002, 2005), followed a similar acquisition pattern to German and Swedish speakers, with some variation due to L1 influence. They seem to acquire the perfective/imperfective distinction more easily than German speakers, because English marks the progressive, a subdomain of the imperfective aspect. This means that they do not have to integrate a completely new distinction into their interlanguage. Instead, they need to extend their conceptualisation of the imperfective aspect, learning that "the scope of *imperfetto* is larger and encompasses progressive and non-progressive forms in the past" (Rocca, 2002, p. 279). Bernini (1990b, pp. 168-169) observes that learners with L1 English appear to be more dynamic in using IMP than L1 German speakers. While German speakers tend to restrict IMP to high frequency statives, English speakers are more likely to extend it to other lexical aspectual classes. Similar to Swedish speakers, they also show a tendency to overextend IMP to perfective contexts, as shown in (6) (from Giacalone Ramat, 2002, p. 236):

(6) la ragazza che il padre **moriva** in un incidente
non **capivo** bene che tipo di incidente era

Giacalone Ramat and Bernini agree that the reason for this type of overextension may be twofold. It may be a case of formal transfer, due to the similarity between English Simple Past and Italian IMP. However, it may also be a case of concept level transfer, originating from the functional overlap between Italian IMP, expressing imperfective aspect, and English Simple Past, expressing both perfective and imperfective aspect. In fact, if Excerpt (6) was translated into English, both perfective events marked with IMP by the

learner would be encoded by the Simple Past, as shown in (7) (from Giacalone Ramat, 2002, p. 236):

(7) the girl whose father died in an accident – I didn't understand well what kind of accident

A different type of concept level transfer from English to Italian has been observed by Rocca (2002, 2005), who notes that the tendency to mark statives with IMP decreases with more developed proficiency. The reason for this might be the integration of the progressive aspect in to the IL, and consequently the increasing awareness of the functional overlap between IMP and English progressive. Several studies (Rocca, 2002, 2005; Rosi, 2009a; Wiberg, 2009) agree that imperfect aspect in Italian is a scalar category, in the sense that the various meanings conveyed by imperfective aspect can be located along a continuum of prototypicality. The continuous aspect is the most prototypical subdomain of the imperfective aspect and it is the first meaning to enter the interlanguage. The semantic solidarity between continuous aspect and stativity leads learners to mark stative verbs with imperfect morphology. Progressive aspect, a less prototypical subdomain of imperfectivity, enters the interlanguage later than continuous aspect and is associated with activities, while it is not compatible with statives. At the point when learners integrate the progressive aspect into their interlanguage, Rocca (2002, 2005) observes a concept-level transfer in learners with L1 English. They stop applying IMP to statives, because they understand that Italian IMP also expresses progressive meaning, which is incompatible with statives. Therefore, they start using IMP only in combination with activities. As pointed out by Rocca (2005, p. 175): "This overproduction of the *imperfetto* with activities and its underproduction with states appears to be induced by language transfer, since in English the progressive is prototypically linked to activities but prototypically avoided with states".

To sum up, the studies comparing the acquisition of tense/aspect marking by learners with different L1s (e.g., Bernini, 1990b; Giacalone Ramat, 2002; Rosi, 2009a) agree upon the existence of a general acquisition path followed by the learners, independently of their L1. However, the studies also acknowledge the presence of interlanguage variation due to first language influence. Bernini (1990b) and Rocca (2002, 2005) show that the effect of L1 may increase with more developed proficiency, because a more developed knowledge of the target language enables learners to make detailed comparisons between the two language systems. On the other hand, Giacalone Ramat (2002) and Rosi (2009a, 2009b) show that the effect of L1 decreases when learners have more experience with the target language. For instance, Rosi's (2009a) data show that as language proficiency develops, L1 German speakers integrate aspectual distinction into their interlanguage and the influence of their L2

decreases. During the final interview of her longitudinal study, L1 German learners display learning of the perfective/imperfective distinction and, similarly to L1 Spanish learners, "are able to express the aspectual contrast by means of perfective and imperfective past" (Rosi 2009a, p. 100). This leads to the conclusion that "The influence of L1 upon acquistional process may emerge in different stages. Much evidence supports the claim that major effects on learning occur at early developmental stages" (Rosi, 2009a, p. 150).

4.6 Summary

The present chapter examined the studies focusing on the acquisition of temporal and aspectual distinctions in semi-spontaneous, semi-tutored and tutored learning of L2 Italian. The studies seem to corroborate the acquisition sequence identified on the basis of interlanguage samples collected from untutored learners within the Pavia Project. Although verb forms appear to be acquired in the same order, differences in the learning path emerge in the development of form-function mapping, i.e. how conceptual meanings are mapped into verb forms. These differences seem to be connected to students' L1s and their sensibility to lexical aspectual properties of the target language predicates. The degree of influence of these two factors is a subject of disagreement among studies. Several studies (e.g., Bernini, 1990a; Banfi & Bernini, 2003) suggest that lexical aspect reaches its highest degree of influence during early acquisition stages. Recent studies (e.g., Giacalone Ramat & Rastelli 2013), however, point out that learners need to gain awareness of the lexical aspectual properties of the target language predicates before this factor can take effect. Such disagreement between studies may be at least partially connected to the first language of the participants they focus on. Learners with aspect prominent L1s may be more sensitive to aspectual distinctions, while learners with tense prominent first languages may acquire tense marking earlier than aspect marking.

Chapter 5
Methodology

The present study investigates the development of learners' implicit knowledge about tense-aspect distinction in the acquisition of Italian as a non-native language. The choice of investigating the implicit knowledge is connected to the idea that "the linguistic knowledge comprising competence is essentially of the implicit kind" (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 6). However, as pointed out by Ellis and Barkhuizen (ibid.), competence is not directly observable and researchers need to "infer competence from some kind of performance" (ibid.). From this point of view, "the key methodological issue is what kind of performance provides the most valid and reliable information about competence" (ibid. p 21).

Ellis and Barkhuizen distinguish between two types of learner language samples: naturally occurring data and elicited data. Naturally occurring data reflect learners' language use in real life situations. This type of data is not biased by the elicitation instrument, which offers a great advantage for the researcher who is seeking the opportunity to observe competence. However, naturally occurring samples often fail to contain the linguistic phenomenon under investigation because "The target structure may be used only sporadically, avoided (for various reasons), or just accidentally not occur because of the limited size of a corpus" (Callies, 2015, p. 42). This leads researchers to use elicited data that avoid the problem of underrepresentation. However, they present an inevitable methodological challenge, connected to the influence of the elicitation instrument on the data and the research outcome. For instance, Comajoan (2005) used three types of narratives as the elicitation instrument in his study on the acquisition of the tense-aspect system in L3 Catalan (video narratives, storybook narratives and folktales). The data showed the effect of grounding only with respect to storybook retelling tasks, a difference probably connected to the structure of the examined narratives: storybook retellings provided more opportunity to alternate foreground and background information than the other tasks. Salaberry (2003) observed that the default tense marker used by beginning learners of L2 Spanish varied across narrative types. In the fictional narratives, perfective morphology was used as the default tense; while imperfective morphology assumed the same role in the personal narratives.

In the present study, both research context and object of investigation shaped the research design. The aim of investigating the interlanguage tense-aspect system motivated the collection of narrative data that induce the use of deictic and anaphoric tenses, while learners are primarily engaged in message conveyance. The study is therefore based on a learner corpus, i.e. a computerised database of learner language narratives (Granger, 2012, p. 8). The samples of learner language have been collected from participants studying Italian at the Institute of Romance Languages at the University of Vienna.

This research context encourages the assumption that participants are multilingual learners of Italian. In the Austrian school system, English is taught as the first foreign language, which means that virtually every student with an Austrian primary and/or secondary education learned English before entering higher education. In fact, according to Statistik Austria (2016), in the school year 2013/14, 98% of students in the Austrian primary and secondary education system were learning English. Furthermore, the Austrian school system is characterised by a considerable and continuously increasing presence of students with life-world multilingualism, that is students who grow up with and use in their everyday communication more than one language (Gogolin, 1988). In fact, according to the statistics relating to the school year 2015/16, nearly every fourth learner (23,8%) in the Austrian primary and secondary school system had a mother language other than German, the language of instruction (see Bundesministerium für Bildung, Nr. 2/2016-17). Furthermore, the Austrian tertiary education system is characterised by a considerable presence of foreign students. According to Statistik Austria (2017), approximately 24% of students enrolled in the Austrian higher education system come from abroad. The large majority of these students come from European countries (88%), with a small proportion from Asia (7,6%) and America (2,7%). The significant percentage of foreign students[13] in the higher education systems, together with the presence of life-word multilingualism in the Austrian school system suggest that multilingualism is a common phenomenon in the Austrian higher education system. Thus, it can be assumed that students enrolled in Italian language courses at the Institute of Romance Languages are likely to be multilingual, in the sense that they are acquiring Italian in addition to one or more first and second languages (Hammarberg, 2010, p. 97).

[13] A considerable proportion of foreign students may be native speakers of German (38% of foreign students come from Germany; 10,2% from Italy, prevalently from South Tyrol, a province of Italy characterised by a significant presence of L1 German speakers). However, 51,8% of foreign students comes from other, prevalently non-German speaking countries.

As pointed out in 3.2, unlike uninstructed learners, who start using verbal morphology in advanced stages of language acquisition, instructed learners display an extensive use of verbal morphology, starting from the early acquisition stages. The extensive use of the verbal paradigm motivated a form-oriented approach to the data presented in this study. Thus, instead of examining a large variety of linguistic devices that may be used by the learners to express temporal-aspectual information such as the principle of chronological order, time adverbials etc., the study focuses on morphological means of temporal expression. On the other hand, the present approach is function-driven rather than form-driven, in the sense that the study aims to "link the occurrence of particular language forms and the function that they serve in discourse" (Callies, 2015, p. 53). Thus, the distribution of verbal morphology is investigated in order to examine its function in the interlanguage.

5.1 Research question

The study aims to describe the development of the interlanguage tense/aspect system by observing different proficiency levels in tense/aspect marking, and describing them according to the following parameters: distribution of past tense forms in the narratives and their appropriateness with respect to the context of their occurrence; the effect of lexical aspect and discourse grounding on both the overall distribution of tense forms and their distribution in the appropriate contexts.

Thus, the study aims to investigate three main research questions, each structured into sub-questions:

I. Which proficiency levels are observable in the acquisition of tense/aspect marking in L2 Italian?

a. Which proficiency levels can be identified in the present IL sample on the basis of the learner's proficiency in tense/aspect marking?
b. How does the distribution of verbal morphology change across proficiency levels?
c. To what extent does the developmental pattern identified across proficiency levels in multilingual acquisition of Italian follow the developmental pattern identified in L2 acquisition?

II. To what extent is the development of tense/aspect marking influenced by the principles of discourse grounding?

a. To what extent is the overall distribution of verbal morphology related to the principles of discourse grounding in the different proficiency groups?

b. To what extent is the distribution of verbal morphology in the appropriate contexts related to the principles of discourse grounding in the different proficiency groups?

III. To what extent is the development of tense/aspect marking influenced by the lexical aspectual value of predicates?

a. To what extent is the overall distribution of verbal morphology related to the lexical aspectual properties of the predicates in the different proficiency groups?

b. To what extent is the distribution of verbal morphology in the appropriate contexts related to the lexical aspectual properties of the predicates in the different proficiency groups?

5.2 Participants

The texts were collected from N=230 students learning Italian at the Institute of Romance Languages at the University of Vienna, in the period between November 2013 and February 2016. Before completing the task, students were asked to complete a short questionnaire about their linguistic background (Appendix A and B), by indicating their native language; how long they have been learning Italian; and the other languages they use. Students were also asked to indicate their approximate proficiency level in their non-native languages, and rate themselves on a scale between A1 and C2. Students tended to be analytical when describing their proficiency in Italian and the other non-native languages. In addition to indicating their approximate proficiency level, and the number of years they have been studying a language, they often gave information about the learning context (e.g., high school subject, school-leaving examination subject, extra-curricular activity)[14]; and about time spent in the countries where the given language is spoken[15]. This information was collected in order to verify the assumption that participants are multilingual learners of Italian

At the moment of data collection, the students were enrolled in the bachelor language courses Italian 1 (N=93), Italian 2 (N=42), Italian 3 (N=56), Italian 4 (N=7); and in the masters course Italian A (N=33). However, 80 texts were excluded from the analysis for the following reasons: 1) it was impossible to observe tempo-aspectual distinctions because the

[14] An example of the description of the learning context: "Ich studiere Italienisch im ersten Semester (hatte in der Schule seit meinem 6. Lebensjahr Italienisch wobei ich es immer nicht fließend kann und schon einige Jahre keine Übung mehr hatte)." [I am learning Italian in the first semester (I started learning Italian at school, when I was 6 years old, however, I am still not fluent, and I have not been practicing for a few years].

[15] An example of reference to learning abroad experience: "Englisch – 7 Jahre (nach einem Auslandsaufenthalt mittlerweile gutes Englisch)" [English – 7 years (after a stay abroad [I am able to speak] a good English)

entire text was written in the present tense; 2) the text did not contain any background information, which hampered the investigation of the relationship between verbal morphology and discourse grounding. Approximately 15 texts written by native speakers of Italian were also excluded from the analyses. Thus, the analyses are based on N=151 texts collected from 150 participants. One participant was present on two different occasions of data collection.

Students' L1 was German in 134 cases, while 8 students claimed to be bilingual, with German being one of their L1s in 7 out of 8 cases. The other L1s represented among the students were Albanian (N=1), Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian (N=1), Croatian (N=2), Dutch (N=1), Romanian (N=2), Spanish (N=2), Turkish (N=1). English was spoken as the first foreign language in the case of 139 out of 150 students in the present sample; while 11 students claimed to have acquired another language as their first L2 (German in 8 cases, French in 1 case, Spanish in 1 case, Italian in 1 case). Furthermore, 55% of the students claimed to be able to speak another Romance language in addition to Italian (69% French, 21% Spanish, 10% another Romance language). One student claimed to be speaking Italian as the first and only non-native language; and N=104 students claimed to be using three or more languages in addition to their L1(s).

Thus, the data collected about student's linguistic backgrounds corroborate the assumption that students enrolled in Italian language courses at the Institute of Romance languages are multilingual, and are acquiring Italian in addition to other L1(s) and L2(s). However, the presence of life-world multilingualism seems to be significantly lower compared to the primary and secondary education system.

5.3 Data collection method

As mentioned in the introduction to the present chapter, the method of clinical elicitation was chosen for data collection in order to avoid the underrepresentation of tense-aspect phenomena in the interlanguage samples. Clinical elicitation involves open-ended assignments that require learners to engage in a communicative task, focusing on the content and message conveyance, in contrast to experimental elicitation (e.g., cloze passages, gap-fill exercises), which induce learners to focus on a specific linguistic phenomenon (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, pp. 22-40).

Clinically elicited samples may be general, if they are designed to provide learners with an opportunity to communicate in the target language; or focused, if they are formulated with the scope to induce learners to use a specific linguistic structure. In the present study,

elicited narratives were used to clinically elicit focused samples of learner language. Bardovi-Harlig (2013) notes that narrative structure is acquired in early childhood, and does not have to be taught explicitly. A narrative provides learners with a prompt for communication of contents, inducing them to focus on communication, while at the same time it involves the use of different tenses, in order to locate events on the time axis and establish temporal relations between them. In fact, as pointed out by Bardovi-Harlig (2013, p. 259):

> Narratives have been used successfully in small case studies and large-scale studies, with learners of all ages, levels of proficiency, and levels of literacy and education. Narratives are excellent sources for the study of perfective past with foreground providing a contrast to the diverse time frames and tense-aspect morphology found in the background.

Since temporal and aspectual distinctions assume a central importance in the instruction of Romance languages, instructed learners are likely to monitor their use of tense-aspect morphology when communicating. However, open-ended tasks such as narratives induce learners to focus on the communication of contents and, "The greater the focus on communication, the less likely the learner is to employ explicit knowledge" (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013, p. 220). Even though elicited narratives are not produced for "authentic communication purposes" (Granger, 2012, p. 8), they share an important quality of naturally occurring data in the sense that they "demonstrate how learners use the L2 when they are primarily engaged in message construction" (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 35).

In the present study, students were asked to write a narrative in response to a prompt. A written format was chosen with the following two considerations: 1) this format may reduce anxiety concerning oral skills and pronunciation (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013, p. 241); 2) it enables the researcher to collect a large amount of data which in turn allow for the observation of general tendencies rather than individual variation (Comajoan, 2013, p. 330). In order to prevent students from monitoring their own production, a tight time constraint was set. Students were asked to write a narrative composed of at least ten sentences in approximately fifteen minutes. In addition, students were not given any information about the focus of the research, in order to avoid directing their attention to the use of past tense morphology. It was only explained that the data collection was anonymous and the texts were going to be analysed globally, in terms of frequency counts and percentages.

The data collection took place in the last twenty minutes of a regular Italian class and participation was voluntary. Students started writing approximately fifteen minutes before the regular end of their language class. Since the next class started approximately half an

hour later, they were given the opportunity to work up to five minutes longer than the regular end of the class. Most of the students completed the task within fifteen, while the maximum was twenty minutes.

5.3.1 Personal and impersonal narratives

Given that previous studies on the acquisition of tense and aspect (e.g., Comajoan, 2005; Salaberry, 2003) have shown a considerable influence of the type of elicited narrative on the research outcome, the present study was based on both personal and impersonal narratives. The narratives were analysed both globally and according to narrative genre, in order to examine the effect of text type on the data.

As pointed out by Bardovi-Harlig (2013, pp. 243-248), impersonal and fictional narratives such as film or story retelling tasks and fairy-tails offer the advantage of comparability and control over the stimulus: "the more similar the task completed by all learners, the more comparable the resulting language samples" (ibid. 221). However, impersonal narratives provide an inherent structure which may affect the opportunities available to provide foreground and background information. For instance, in Comajoan's study (2005) the effects of grounding emerged only in the storybook narratives but not in the video-retelling tasks, possibly because the latter ones induced the learners to focus on the main narrative sequence and did not offer enough opportunity for descriptions. In contrast, personal narratives do not provide an inherent structure and they offer learners the possibility of constructing their own temporal framework. In addition, personal narratives seem to be more stimulating: the possibility of sharing their own experience motivates learners to give maximal expression of their linguistic repertoire (Noyau, 1984; Duso, 2002). Finally, the above studies suggest that personal narratives show higher rates of use of verbal morphology and a more elaborated background.

In order to limit the influence of data collection methodology on the research outcome, approximately, one half of the participants (123 out of 231) were asked to write a personal narrative about the day of their school leaving examination; another half of the participants received the prompt to write the story of Little Red Riding Hood (108 out of 231). The slight difference in the size of these two groups was determined by the imbalance of students in the language courses where the data collection was carried out.

The data collection methodology was elaborated with the aim of giving learners the greatest possible control over the content and the structure of their narrative without drawing their attention to specific linguistic features or grammatical phenomena. For this reason, the

formulation of the tasks aimed to be as generic as possible. In the case of Little Red Riding Hood (LR), it was taken into consideration that students might not fully remember the story, therefore three pictures were inserted on the data collection sheet. However, based on previous research which showed that learners tend to describe pictures by using only present tenses, students were explicitly asked to tell a story instead of describing the pictures. In the case of the personal narrative, the aim of obtaining comparable texts motivated the formulation of the following prompt with five leading questions: "Please tell about the day of your school leaving examination. What time did you get up? What did you do? What did your exam look like? How did you feel? How did you celebrate?"

As pointed out in 5.2, before completing the task, students were asked to report how long they had been learning Italian at the moment of data collection, to indicate their L1, the other languages they speak and their approximate proficiency level in those languages.

The data were collected in the period between November 2013 and February 2016. The narratives were hand written because there were no computer facilities in the rooms where the language classes took place at the university. The texts were digitalised by the researcher, paying particular attention to the corrections of tense-aspect morphology which, when possible, were maintained in a digital format, in order to highlight cases when students showed monitoring of their own performance. Unfortunately, this was not always possible as several learners used a correction fluid pen or cancelled words in a way that made them unrecognisable. Even though Ellis and Barhuizen (2005, p. 83) suggest to "discount occasions when learners monitored their own performance", this criterion was not applicable to the whole corpus, because on several occasions the students made cancellations unreadable. For this reason, in each case of self-correction, only the verb form considered definitive by the student was taken into account for the analyses. Overall, the texts present a limited tendency for self-correction, which suggests that students did not monitor their production. In the whole corpus, there are 12 instances of self-correction that concern the use of perfective and imperfective marking. This issue will be briefly addressed in the next chapters.

5.4 Methods of data analysis

The present study is cross-sectional in design, in the sense that it aims to investigate the acquisition of tense aspect distinctions in Italian by observing learners at different proficiency levels. The operationalisation of the concept of proficiency level was one of the main methodological challenges, since it was not possible to carry out independent

proficiency measures. The density of curricular activities made it impossible for the teaching staff to dedicate to this research project more than twenty minutes at the end of a single language class, while for the same reason, the students were not likely to participate in extra-curricular activities.

Due to the above-described limitations connected to the research context, in the first phase of data elaboration, proficiency was operationalised on the basis of the language class students were attending. The language classes at the university are built one upon the other, and students have to pass the relative exams in order to proceed from one course level to the next. Even though students start their university education with different proficiency levels in Italian, all the students have to pass an A2 level exam in order to be admitted to the class Italian 1; while the successive language courses require the completion of the previous course level. For this reason, the assumption was made that the between-subject differences in language proficiency are at least partially balanced by university language courses.

However, a first, experimental coding of the initial dataset showed a large variation in the use of verbal morphology within and across course levels. In every language class, from Italian 1 to Italian A, there were both students who displayed a highly proficient use of verbal morphology and also students whose interlanguage tense-aspect systems appeared to be less consistent.

This is observable in Excerpt 1 and Excerpt 2, which were written by students attending the same language class, an Italian 1 course in the summer term 2015.

Excerpt 1.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[2 FG] Ma durante il suo viaggio lei [Cappuccetto Rosso] incontrava un lupo grande.	
[3 FG] Lei la chiamava	[6 BG] dove va.
[4 FG] E lui rispondeva	[7 BG] che andava a visitare la sua nonna
	[8 BG] che viveva pochi minuti da qui.
[5 FG] Dopo un certo tempo, il lupo lasciava la ragazza	

Excerpt 2.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
	[1 BG] C'era una volta una piccola ragazza
	[2 BG] che passeggiava nel bosco per visitare sua nonna.
[1 FG] Ha incontrato un lupo	
[2 FG] e lui ha raccontato	[3 BG] che sta andando alla casa della nonna.
[3 FG] Il lupo è arrivato primo alla casa della nonna	
[4 FG] e ha ingozzato la nonna.	

The distribution of verbal morphology in the two excerpts suggests that the two participants represent two different proficiency levels. Excerpt 1 demonstrates a strong tendency to use imperfect morphology in both perfective and imperfective contexts, regardless of discourse grounding principles; while Excerpt 2 displays an accurate association between perfective morphology and foreground, while the background is prevalently marked by imperfect morphology. Thus, the data showed that operationalising acquisition stage in terms of language course did not allow for the identification of any acquisition pattern in the data.

For this reason, the decision was made to group students according to their use of verbal morphology in expected (obligatory) contexts. It is acknowledged that this methodological approach is target oriented and as such, involves the risk of comparative fallacy (Shirai, 2007; Giacalone-Ramat & Rastelli, 2013). However, the learners' target-like past tense use was adopted as a criterion for dividing students into more homogenous proficiency groups with respect to the properties of their interlanguage tense/aspect system, than they would be by purely considering the language class they were attending. In order to avoid comparative fallacy, the total distribution of verbal morphology was also taken into account, in addition to its distribution in the obligatory contexts. As pointed out by Shirai (2007, p. 58), "This is not incompatible with obligatory context analysis: one can do an obligatory-context analysis and, in addition, can look at the total system".

The expected contexts for perfective and imperfective morphology were identified on the basis of the discourse function of the clauses. Perfective morphology was expected in foreground clauses, while imperfective morphology was expected in background clauses. Successively, the predicates were coded for verbal morphology and lexical aspect in order to examine the distribution of verbal morphology across levels of grounding and within lexical aspectual classes. This allowed for the examination of data from a multivariate perspective in the attempt to disentangle the effect of lexical aspect and narrative structure on the distribution of verbal morphology (Bayley, 2013). As pointed out by Salaberry et al. (2013, pp. 433-434), this is the most common type of multivariate analysis in tense/aspect acquisition research, a research field where the complexity of the examined phenomena warrants the need to adopt a multivariate perspective.

5.4.1 Coding for grounding

Labov and Waletzky (1976, p. 13) claim that a narrative discourse can be characterised by two main features: 1) temporal order of events and 2) double function, i.e.

referential and evaluative. The latter function is fulfilled by "that part of the narrative which reveals the attitude of the narrator towards the narrative by emphasising the relative importance of some narrative units as compared to others" (ibid. 37). According to studies on narrative structure conducted within the functionalist-cognitive framework (e.g, Hopper, 1979; Givòn, 1987), a narrative text is composed of two parts, foreground and background, to fulfil the referential and the evaluative functions respectively. The foreground is the main story line, while the background provides supporting material such as motivation for the events in the foreground and description of circumstances (Reinhart, 1984). To sum up, competent language users "mark out a main route through the narrative and divert in some way those parts of the narrative which are not strictly relevant to this route" (Hopper, 1979, p. 239). This distinction is a universal of narrative discourse and its acquisition does not necessitate formal instruction (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013, pp. 229-203).

In several studies (e.g., Dry, 1983; Reinhart, 1984), sequentiality appears to be the main characteristic of the foreground. According to Reinhart (1984, p. 801), "Only narrative units, i.e. textual units whose order matches the order of the events they report, can serve as foreground". Similarly, Bardovi-Harlig (2013, p. 231) emphasises the feature of sequentiality. The further characteristics such as punctuality and completeness listed in Reinhart's definition are gradable, not categorical; and, according Hopper (1979), they are connected to the feature of sequentiality: only completed events can be reported sequentially and move the narrative forward.

Foreground appears to be more essential than background. As pointed out by Bardovi-Harlig (2013, p. 232) "All narratives have a foreground. Depending on the purpose of the narrative, the skill and level of engagement of the speaker (or writer), and the context in which the narrative is told, many narratives also have a background". The background appears to be more complex, meaning that it may fulfil several functions. It may set the scene, report on-going events or events located on a different timeline with respect to the main story line and provide additional information such as description, motivation, evaluation, etc. (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013).

Discourse grounding interacts with tense/aspect morphology and "one typically finds an aspect marker specialised for foregrounding, or one specialised for backgrounding, or both functions indicated" (Hopper, 1979, p. 239). In Romance languages, perfective tenses which convey completeness and present events as a "single unanalysable whole" (Comrie, 1976, p. 3) tend to appear in the foreground, while imperfective tenses which convey progressivity, iterativity or a characterisation of a referent (gnomic imperfectives) are

typically used to mark background information. In fact, foreground and perfectivity on one side and background and imperfectivity on the other, form a "tight association between a narrative functional device and grammatical form" (Salaberry, 2011, pp. 187-8).

In the present study, coding for grounding was carried out in order to identify contexts where perfective or imperfective morphology is expected, i.e. foreground and background clauses were seen as contexts for perfective and imperfective morphology respectively. In Italian, the perfective aspect is typically conveyed by the compound past Passato Prossimo (PP) and the simple past Passato Remoto (PR), while the most common morphological marking for the imperfect aspect is Imperfetto (IMP). As pointed out by Bertinetto (1986, p. 407) PP and PR on one side and IMP on the other, form an aspectual opposition and the two perfective forms "palesano (…) una notevole solidarietà nel loro compatto contrapporsi all'imperfetto". Although there are other morphological means for conveying the perfective and imperfective aspect (e.g., progressive periphrasis and past perfect), the present study will focus on the distribution of PP, PR and IMP as they can be seen as the most common manifestations of the two aspectual categories (Bertinetto, 1986; Bronckart & Bourdin, 1993).

In the present study, the central criterion in the coding for grounding was sequentiality. Clauses that matched the chronological order of the events they reported and could not appear in an inverted order were coded as foreground. Thus, foreground clauses answered the question "What happened?" and moved the story forward. Additionally, syntactic criteria were also taken into account by assuming that main sentences are more likely to appear in the foreground than in the background. Conversely, the clauses coded as background did not fit into the chronological order of the events in the main story line. Background clauses reported on-going events, events overlapping with the main story line, and were often syntactically dependent on a foreground clause. When syntactically independent, clauses in the background set the scene or provided a characterisation of referents, description or motivation. However, as pointed out by Comajoan (2013, p. 338), coding for grounding is particularly challenging in interlanguage samples because discourse grounding underlies speakers' subjectivity and "it is practically impossible to discern exactly what a learner may have meant when producing a narrative (…) and code it accordingly for grounding". This consideration led to a flexible approach in the coding, by taking into account learners' use of verbal morphology as an indicator of grounding (Comajoan, 2005, p. 54-6): "In those cases when one sentence could be foreground or background, and morphology determined the interpretation of discourse grounding, the coding favoured the

form produced by the learner".

Following this methodological choice, clauses with PP or PR were coded as foreground, while the clauses with IMP were coded as background as long as the form produced by the learner was appropriate or at least acceptable in the given context, considering the narrative structure of the text as a whole. The coding did not favour the form produced by the learner only in those cases when a verb form was clearly not appropriate in the given context. The texts were coded for grounding by the author and discussed with two native-speakers of Italian[16].

To summarise, coding for grounding in the present study was carried out according to the criterion of sequentiality, by taking into account the morphological marking applied by the learner. Thus, coding for grounding was not independent from its linguistic marking. This methodological choice is connected to the assumption that "F [foreground] and B [background] are discourse-pragmatic phenomena, not real-world phenomena, and they do not exist independently of their marking in language (including their morphosyntactic marking)" (Comajoan, 2013, p. 331).

5.4.1.1 Coding problematic cases

The cases that proved inherently problematic for grounding were temporal clauses, relative clauses, abstracts and codas. Due to their syntactic role, temporal clauses and relative clauses are likely to be coded as background. As pointed out by Reinhart (1984, p. 795), "material presented in subordinate clauses cannot normally be foreground" because syntactic embedding is considered to be "a powerful means for signalling background material" (ibid. 796). However, in the present sample, relative clauses and temporal clauses often contain information that 1) moves the story forward; 2) is in chronological order; 3) answers the question *What happened?* and 4) is marked with perfective morphology. In fact, as pointed out by Lo Duca and Solarino (2006, p. 153), some relative clauses that do not fulfil a defining or a descriptive function are similar to syntactically independent, coordinate clauses such as in example (1):

[16] The native speaker informants were university-educated with a master's degree in humanities. Five out of eight informants held a master's degree in language related subjects such as linguistics or modern languages and literature; the other three informants held a degree in another field of humanities. Three of the informants are teachers of Italian at primary and secondary schools in Italy. Given that the informants had no experience in coding, they were asked to read the texts in the presence of the researcher and indicate the verb forms which sounded unacceptable, justify the unacceptability and indicate the verb form they would have used.
Two informants read each text. When the judgment of the two native speakers differed, the text was discussed with the supervisor of this thesis until agreement was reached.

(1) In vacanza ho conosciuto una ragazza finlandese che (= e lei) mi ha insegnato a giocare a scacchi

Thus, relative clauses and temporal clauses were coded as foreground when they fulfilled the four requirements listed above, as illustrated in Excerpt 3. In this text the temporal clause [6 FG] moves the story forward, is in chronological order with the previous sequence, answers the question *What happened?* and is marked with perfective morphology. Similarly, the relative clause [2 FG] appears to be intentionally foregrounded in order to stress that Little Red Riding Hood saw some flowers in the woods that took her attention from what she was doing and thereby she finally ran into the wolf.

Excerpt 3.

Foreground	**Background**
	[1 BG] Mentre il Cappuccetto rosso passeggiava nel bosco,
[1 FG] vedeva dei fiori	
[2 FG] che sono ~~voleva sulla piacciono~~ piacciuto tanto ~~ma.~~	
[3 FG] All'improvviso [cancellation] è stata visto di un lupo	[2 BG] che voleva mangiarla
[4 FG] Il lupo è corso alla casa della nonna	
[5 FG] ed l'ha mangiato.	
[6 FG] Quando il Cappuccetto rosso § è arrivata dalla nonna,	
[7 FG] il lupo ha mangiato anche lei.	
[8 FG] Il ~~cacciatore~~ cacciattore ha liberato ~~tu~~ entrambi~~,~~	
[9 FG] ~~tutti~~ ed ha ucciso il lupo.	

On the other hand, relative clauses and temporal clauses were coded as background when they contained non-temporal material such as description, explanation; or material located on a different time-axis with respect to the main story line, as in the case of the relative clauses [2 BG] coded as background. In this case the wolf's intention is described and this situation "does not end before the following event starts, but rather it contains all the following events" (Reinhart, 1984, p. 792). The same applies to the temporal clause [1] in the background.

As pointed out by Comajoan (2013, p. 336), learners often begin their narrative with an abstract which summarizes the most salient information in the narrative (e.g., "Ho ~~fatto~~ svolto la mia maturità un anno fa ed è stato molto faticoso") and conclude the text with an evaluative comment or a conclusion (e.g., "Alla fine tutti erano felice"). There is

disagreement among researchers with respect to coding abstracts and codas as background or foreground because technically they do not move the story forward, however, they are marked with perfective morphology. Given that in the present study verbal morphology was taken into consideration when coding for grounding, and perfective morphology was expected in the foreground, abstracts and codas were coded as foreground.

5.4.2 Obligatory occasion analysis

The obligatory occasion analysis – based on the discourse function of the clauses – was carried out in order to group learners according to their ability to use past tense morphology in narratives. Following Bardovi-Harlig and Bergström (1996, p. 311) and Bardovi-Harlig (1998), learners were divided into four groups according to their proficiency in the use of past tense morphology. This methodology allows for a comparison of learners on the basis of their appropriate use of past tense morphology, regardless of the language class they were attending at the moment of data collection, in order to investigate "how tense/aspect is distributed when learners are able to mark a specified proportion of verbs with the Past in a given sample" (Bardovi-Harlig & Bergström, 1996, p. 311).

In the first step, predicates were coded for verbal morphology. This coding included the following categories: present tense (PRES), *Passato Prossimo* (PP), *Passato Remoto* (PR), *Imperfetto* (IMP), progressive periphrasis (PROG), Gerund (GER). Following Salaberry (2002, p. 403) the forms other than past tense indicative (e.g., subjunctive or conditional), except for GER and PROG, were excluded from the analysis. Clauses conveying relative anteriority were not taken into account for the OOA, given that they do not fit the association between perfective morphology and foreground, and imperfective morphology and background. In fact, they generally convey the perfective aspect; however, they represent a departure from the chronological order, and are therefore part of the background.

Furthermore, the verb formations that were not classifiable into target-language categories, and were therefore excluded from the analysis are exemplified in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1. Verb formations excluded from the analysis

Type of excluded predicate	**Example**
Predicates written in other languages (mostly Spanish or French) or used in the sense they assume in another language (e.g., English)	'*sabia* che *sera* bene' 'sono *salito* di casa' 'il lupo *pretende* di essere la nonna' 'il lupo *comì* la ragazza'
Predicates inflected by mixing two target-language verbal forms (e.g., gerundio passato + passato prossimo)	*stava scappato*

Following Comajaon (2006, pp. 225-226), the coding was carried out by taking into account "the structure of the narratives and the distinction between appropriateness of use and accuracy of form". Verb formations that were morphologically inaccurate, but equivalent to target-language forms were classified according to target-language categories. This type of inaccuracy was not frequent, and concerned the categories PP, PR and IMP, as exemplified in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2. Non-target-like verb forms coded according to target-like categories

Type of inaccuracy	**Example**
Morphologically inaccurate forms	si sedé [si sedette] arrivì [arrivò]
Compound forms with non-target auxiliary verbs	*ha entrato* *mi ho sentito* libera

In the second step, each verb form was coded for appropriateness, based on the discourse function of the clauses and contextual information, while morphological inaccuracy was not taken into account. The coding observed two categories: 'appropriate use' and 'overuse' which were attributed following an in-depth discussion with at least two native-speakers of Italian. It was acknowledged that the use of verbal morphology as well as discourse grounding underlie subjectivity, therefore the term 'obligatory context' was treated flexibly, with every occurrence of a verb form that sounded appropriate or at least acceptable to a native speaker of Italian coded as 'appropriate use'. The code 'overuse' was only attributed to those verb forms that clearly sounded not acceptable in the given context. Due to the absence of rigid standards in the coding, it would be more appropriate to speak about 'preferential occasion analysis' instead of 'obligatory occasion analysis'. The latter label was maintained in order to make explicit reference to the technique described by Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005, pp. 72-93) which served as a basis for the present study. Thus, in accordance with Ellis and Barkhuizen, (ibid. 80) the following formula was used to calculate accuracy scores for perfective and imperfective morphology:

$$\frac{n\ correct\ application}{n\ expected\ contexts + n\ overuses}\ x\ 100$$

Taking into account the number of expected contexts enables identification of to what extent learners use past tense morphology in the expected contexts (i.e., perfective morphology in the perfective contexts and imperfective morphology in the imperfective contexts). Taking into account the number of overuses enables ascertainment of whether or not learners' use of the appropriate verbal morphology in the expected contexts is 'rule-based'. For instance, in Excerpt 4, the learner uses only IMP morphology, regardless of discourse grounding. When only the use of IMP in expected context was taken into account, the accuracy score

for IMP morphology was 75% because the learner uses IMP morphology in three out of four expected contexts (i.e., background clauses) and he/she fails to supply it in only one case. However, the same learner shows a strong tendency to use IMP morphology regardless of the discourse function of the clauses; in fact, it is also extensively used in the foreground clauses. By taking into account the cases of overuse, the accuracy score for imperfective morphology can be calculated in the following way:

$$\frac{3}{4+5}\ x\ 100$$

This formula gives an accuracy score of 33% which is considerably lower than 75%, but it offers a more accurate insight into the distribution of verbal morphology in the interlanguage of this learner, where the extensive use of verbal morphology does not follow the principles of discourse grounding, suggesting that "form precedes function" (Klein, 1994, p. 244).

Excerpt 4.

Foreground	**Background**
[1 FG] Un po' tempo tardi Cappuccetto Rosso arrivava alla casa della sua nonna.	
[2 FG] Entrava nella casa	
[3 FG] e vedeva la sua nonna,	[1 BG] che giaceva ~~in~~ nel letto
"Nonna è molto strano oggi",	[2 BG] lei pensa
[4 FG] e chiedeva lei	[3 BG] perché aveva i grandi occhi etc.
[5 FG] Per l'ultimo Cappuccetto Rosso lei chiedeva	[4 BG] perché aveva questa bocca grande.

For each text, two accuracy scores were calculated: one for the use of perfective morphology and one for the use of imperfective morphology. Overall, the perfective past tense forms considerably outnumbered the imperfective forms and perfective morphology was more likely to be used in target-like contexts than imperfective morphology.

The present corpus contains 1321 occurrences of perfective marking, and in 1269 (96%) cases it occurs in appropriate contexts, with only 52 cases of overuse. On the other hand, 184 out of 945 occurrences of imperfective morphology appear in a perfective context. Congruent with Giacalone-Ramat (2002), it can be observed that the perfective aspect is more straightforwardly encoded by perfective morphology, while learners seem to be challenged by the identification of the function of imperfective morphology. Due to its higher frequency in the corpus and the higher accuracy in its use, the accuracy score relative to perfective morphology was used as a criterion for classifying text into proficiency groups. The low proficiency group was formed by students whose accuracy score for the foreground

was lower than 55%; the intermediate group was formed by students with an accuracy score between 55-80%, the upper-intermediate group contains students with an accuracy score between 81-90%. In addition, students who scored over 90% in the OOA, but wrote a very short text (i.e. composed of less than 8 FG clauses and/or less than 5 BG clauses) were also placed in the upper-intermediate group. The high-proficiency group was composed of students who scored over 90% in the OOA and whose text contained more than 8 FG clauses and more than 5 BG clauses. The criterion of text length was applied with the consideration that a more elaborated text is more challenging than writing a short story describing only the most essential information.

To sum up, the OOA, based on the discourse function of narrative clauses, was carried out in order to categorise learners according to their proficiency in tense/aspect marking, with the aim of identifying a developmental pattern across proficiency levels.

5.4.3 Frequency analysis

A limitation of the OOA is that it is target-oriented and not capable of capturing the inherent variability of the interlanguage (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 91-2). For this reason, a frequency analysis (FEA) was carried out in order to gain a better understanding of the distribution of verbal forms in the perfective and imperfective contexts (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, pp. 93-109). This analysis examined the frequency of the verbal forms PRES, PP, PR, IMP, TRAP, PROG, GER in the perfective and imperfective contexts. For instance, an FEA of Excerpt 4 in 5.4.2 can be summarised as illustrated Table 5.3.:

Table 5.3. Frequency analysis: Excerpt 4.

	PRES	PP	PR	IMP	TRAP	PROG	GER
Foreground	0	0	0	100%	0	0	0
Background	25%	0	0	75%	0	0	0

With respect to Excerpt 4, OOA reveals that the accuracy score for perfective morphology is 0%, however, it does not give any idea about the linguistic devices used in the contexts where perfective morphology was expected (i.e., foreground clauses). FEA clarifies that at this proficiency level, perfective contexts contain imperfective morphology, since IMP is used in 100% of the contexts requiring perfective morphology. This leads to the assumption that the learner acquired imperfective morphology and is struggling to identify its function. Thus, the learner seems to be using imperfective morphology to mark both perfective and imperfective contexts. In addition, FEA points to the conclusion that despite the extensive

use of IMP, contexts requiring imperfective marking are not consistently marked with IMP as 25% of the background sentences contain a present tense.

Although FEA requires longitudinal data, in the present study a longitudinal design was not possible, due to limitations related to the research context. The present study therefore aims to identify a developmental pattern by comparing learners at different proficiency levels.

5.4.4 Coding for lexical aspect

The verbal predicates in the perfective and imperfective contexts were coded for their lexical aspectual value in order to find out to what extent this factor influences the distribution of verbal morphology in the interlanguage and whether its influence changes across proficiency levels. Coding for lexical aspect has been part of the theoretical framework of several studies on tense/aspect acquisition, starting from Andersen's studies (1986, 1989) up to the most recent ones (e.g., McManus, 2015; Salaberry, 2013a). As pointed out in 3.2.1, many of the studies that investigated the interaction between lexical aspect and morphological aspect marking are based on Vendler's four-way classification which requires the characterisation of predicates along three dimensions: telicity, dynamicity and punctuality. For the reader's convenience, Table 3.2. from 3.2.1 is reproduced below as Table 5.4 (from Shirai & Andersen, 1995, p. 744, modified).

Table 5.4. Lexical aspectual characteristics of verbal predicates

Situation	**Dynamic**	**Punctual**	**Telic**
State	[-]	[-]	[-]
Activity	[+]	[-]	[-]
Accomplishment	[+]	[-]	[+]
Achievement	[+]	[+]	[+]

According to this classification, verbal predicates can be first divided into two groups, non-dynamic (i.e., states) and dynamic. Dynamic predicates can be further divided into non-telic (i.e. activities) and telic. Finally, telic predicates can be divided into non-punctual (i.e. accomplishments) and punctual (i.e. achievements). Each category includes prototypical and less prototypical elements, and our interpretation of the lexical aspectual value of predicates may be influenced by factors such as the unitarity of the situation described in a given context. This may lead to difficulties in distinguishing stative verbs from the habitual interpretation of [+dynamic] predicates, as illustrated in (1) (from Shirai, 2013):

(1) I call him Jack, even though his name is John

While it may seem obvious that the copula *to be* is a state, it is more difficult to code the verb *to call*. As pointed out by Shirai (2013, p. 296) the coding needs to take into account whether the predicate [call him Jack] denotes "each act of calling him", in which case it is an achievement, or "a general state of my referring to him as Jack". The author suggests considering this verb as a habitual achievement, because each act of calling involves a repeated action and thus it is different from unitary states such as *to think* or *to want.* Similarly, an iterative interpretation of activities may lead to their classification as achievements. In sentences such as (2), the coding "depends entirely on the real word situation" and the predicate can be considered an activity if there is no indication that the action was repeated several times. In the opposite case, it can be coded as iterative achievement.

(2) He touched the wall

Bertinetto (1986, p. 101) claims that temporal adverbials may influence the interpretation of lexical aspect. This is illustrated in examples such as (3), where the same predicate inflected with perfective morphology assumes a different meaning according to the types of time adverbials.

(3) a. Mario si ricordò improvvisamente di quelle terribili parole

b. Per molto tempo Mario si ricordò di quelle terribili parole

According to Bertinetto's analysis, the verb *ricordarsi* (to remember) can be characterised as [+punctual] in (3a), while the same verb assumes a durative interpretation in (3b). However, following Shirai (2013), sentence (3b) may be interpreted as a habitual representation of a [+punctual] event, in the sense that for an extended period of time, on different occasions, Mario was able (or used to) recall those terrible words. Shirai (2013, p. 288) in fact claims that time adverbials "often function as a perspective taker", that is their selection is up to speakers' choice and their meaning is not inherently encoded in verbal semantics. Time adverbials are therefore related to grammatical aspect, rather than lexical aspect, and in Shirai's work they are "not included in the verb constellation to be coded for lexical aspect" (ibid.).

5.4.4.1 The number of lexical aspectual categories

Determining the number of lexical aspectual categories is a significant methodological challenge in studies on tense/aspect acquisition. Several studies on

tense/aspect acquisition (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 1998 [L2 English]; Comajoan, 2005 [L3 Catalan]; Giacalone-Ramat, 2002 [L2 Italian]; Rocca, 2005 [L2 Italian]), adopt a four-way classification in accordance with Vendler's analysis. However, as pointed out in 3.2.1, the telic categories – accomplishments and achievements – share two important features, dynamicity and telicity, differing only along the dimension of punctuality. Accomplishments are [-punctual] in the sense that they have an inherent duration (e.g., *to paint a picture*), while achievements refer to events that are [+punctual], thus they occur instantaneously and have no duration (e.g., *to explode*). Several studies show that durativity is not a relevant factor in language acquisition (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig & Bergström, 1996) and accomplishments and achievements follow a similar pattern (Bardovi-Harlig, 1998; Comajoan, 2006; Rocca, 2005; Rosi, 2009a) in the sense that both categories show a strong tendency to be marked with perfective morphology. Given that the two categories share two relevant features and show similar patterns in interlanguage development, in the studies conducted by Bertinetto et al. (2015), Salaberry (2005, 2011) and Wiberg (1996) accomplishments and achievements are condensed into a single category of telic predicates. This methodological approach is referred to as three-way classification.

Gonzalez (2013) proposes a two-way classification based on the feature of completion. Terminative[17] predicates encode the notion of completion at a tenseless level, meaning that this feature is present before tense/aspect morphology is attached. Thus, terminative predicates express "something that presents itself as a unit, as something that can be discerned as complete when compared to the rest of the domain of discourse" (Gonzalez, 2013, p. 161). On the other hand, durative predicates refer to unbounded events or processes, i.e. they do not have a rigid boundary. This classification divides predicates into two categories – terminative and durative - by condensing achievements and accomplishments into the category of terminative predicates; and merging stative verbs and activities into the category of durative predicates (ibid. 179). A similar distinction is made in terms of telicity in McManus' (2013) study where achievements and accomplishments are coded as telic, while activities and states are coded as atelic. The choice to adopt a two-way classification may be motivated by the assumption that the "telic-atelic distinction is the most stable semantic feature to determine lexical aspect" (Salaberry & Ayoun, 2005, p. 9). However, Bardovi-Harlig and Bergström (1996, p. 316) point out that binary classifications

[17] The author adopts a terminative/durative distinction instead of the telic/atelic distinction because the term "telic" originates from the Greek word *telos* ("target") and is hardly applicable to several verbs classified as telic such as *begin a walk* or *pass away* (Gonzalez, 2013, p. 161).

lead to excessively broad categories (e.g., atelic predicates may be [+/- dynamic]) which may hamper the identification of developmental effects.

5.4.4.2 Within-category and across-category analysis

Shirai (2013, p. 276) points out that the number of categories used in coding for lexical aspect may affect the research outcome. For instance, Collins et al. (2009) using a three-way classification show that 72% of past marking occurs on telic predicates, while 59% of progressive marking occur on activities. This result suggests that telic predicates are more likely to attract their prototype than activities. However, Shirai points out that the higher percentage of prototypical marking in telic predicates could be connected to the fact that this category includes two Vendlerian classes. If Collins et al. had calculated the use of past marking solely for accomplishments, they would possibly have found a rate of prototypical combinations of around 60% instead of 72%. However, this research outcome may be connected to a different factor, namely the use of across-category analysis, i.e. the focus on the distribution of verbal morphology across lexical aspectual classes, instead of a within-category analysis.

Bardovi-Harlig (2002) shows that the choice between across-category and within-category analysis may in fact have a significant effect on the research outcome. A across-category analysis asks "Where do various morphemes occur?" and calculates the distribution of past tense morphology across lexical aspectual classes. On the other hand, a within-category analysis asks "How are each of the lexical aspectual categories marked?" and calculates the distribution of past tense morphology within lexical aspectual classes. Table 5 and Table 6 show the distribution of verbal morphology in Bardovi-Harlig's (1998) data – written narratives collected from learners of L2 English – from a within-category and from an across-category perspective. To illustrate the difference between the two approaches, an excerpt from Bradovi-Harlig's data is reported below (Table 5 and Table 6), which contains the data relative to the two proficiency groups. The percentage of appropriate use of past marking was between 10-30% in the less proficient group, while the next group scored around 40%.

Table 5.5. Distribution of tense-aspect morphology across lexical aspectual classes (excerpt from Table 8. in Bardovi-Harlig, 2002, p. 142)

Group	Form	STA %	ACT %	ACC %	ACH %	Total %	Total (n)
Group10-30	Past	8	5	26	62	100	39
N=5	Prog	0	64	18	18	100	11
	Pres	86	5	5	5	100	21
	Base	6	17	26	51	100	69
	Other	13	6	6	75	100	16
Group 40	Past	8	15	25	52	100	48
N=3	Prog	0	100	0	0	100	2
	Pres	91	9	0	0	100	11
	Base	8	24	18	49	100	49
	Other	29	14	14	43	100	7

Table 5.6. Distribution of tense-aspect morphology within lexical aspectual classes (excerpt from Table 5. in Bardovi-Harlig, 2002, p. 137)

Group	Form	STA		ACT		ACC		ACH	
		%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)
Group	Past	11	(3)	9	(2)	31	(10)	32	(24)
10 to 30	Prog	0	(0)	30	(7)	6	(2)	3	(2)
N=5	Pres	67	(18)	4	(1)	3	(1)	1	(1)
	Base	15	(4)	52	(12)	56	(18)	47	(35)
	Other	7	(2)	4	(1)	3	(1)	16	(12)
	Total	100%	(27)	100%	(23)	100%	(32)	100%	(74)
Group 40	Past	20	(4)	30	(7)	55	(12)	48	(25)
N=3	Prog	0	(0)	9	(2)	0	(0)	0	(0)
	Pres	50	(10)	4	(1)	0	(0)	0	(0)
	Base	20	(4)	52	(12)	41	(9)	46	(24)
	Other	10	(2)	4	(1)	5	(1)	6	(3)
	Total	100%	(20)	100%	(23)	100%	(22)	100%	(52)

Looking at the data from an across-category perspective (Table 5.5) suggests that in early stages of tense/aspect acquisition, the past tense marking is associated with achievement predicates, while it is significantly less frequent with accomplishments. In the less proficient group, 62% of past marking occurs on achievements compared to 26% of past marking on accomplishments. However, this analysis is influenced by the number of tokens in the two lexical aspectual classes. Table 5.6 shows that achievements outnumber accomplishments, i.e. in the sub-corpus including the less proficient texts there are N=74 achievement tokens and only N=32 accomplishment tokens. Looking at the data from a within-category perspective shows that 32% of achievements and 31% of accomplishments are encoded with past tense morphology, thus the two telic categories pattern similarly. This information is lost in the across-category analysis because the analysis is "sensitive to the sheer number of tokens produced in a single category" (Bardovi-Harlig, 2002, p. 149).

For the same reason, across-category analysis does not enable visualisation of the developmental effects which emerge in the within-category analysis. Table 5.5 shows no changes in past tense marking on achievements and accomplishments from group 10-30 to group 40. In group 40, past tense marking is still strongly associated with achievements (52%), and is significantly less frequent with accomplishments (25%). However, the within-category analysis in Table 5.6 shows that in group 40, 48% of achievements and 55% of accomplishments are marked with past tense morphology, as compared to 32% and 31%

respectively in the less proficient group. Thus, there is a developmental effect, in the sense that the use of prototypical combinations increases with more developed proficiency. This information was indeed lost in the across-category analysis, sensitive to the imbalance between tokens across lexical aspectual classes (Bardovi-Harlig, 2002).

Congruent with the above-mentioned studies on tense-aspect acquisition, an unequal number of tokens across lexical aspectual categories is also observable in the present corpus. For this reason, the present study adopted a within-category analysis which is "particularly well-suited for use with language samples where an unequal number of tokens are produced" (Bardovi-Harlig, 2002, p. 151).

5.4.4.3 Operational tests to determine lexical aspect

As pointed out in 5.3.4, the type of situation (unitary vs. non-unitary) may have a significant effect on the classification of predicates. For this reason, Shirai (2013, pp. 281-4) suggests that it is necessary to determine whether the situation is unitary or repetitive before coding for lexical aspect. In the present study, the coding for unitarity was carried out in two steps, following the criteria described by Shirai (ibid.):

1. Read a small subset of the discourse to be sure about its interpretation
2. Determine whether repetition is involved and code events as unitary, or non-unitary (iterative or habitual)

a) Unitary: *He coughed once at noon yesterday; He sang for a few minutes yesterday; He loved Mary*
b) Non-unitary: *He coughed for a few minutes*

i. Iterative: *He coughed for a few minutes* [repeated on the same occasion]
ii. Habitual: *He walked to school for a month* [repeated on different occasions]

Coding for lexical aspect was carried out after coding for unitarity. By coding for lexical aspect, a three-way classification along the dimension of telicity and dynamicity has been adopted with two considerations: 1) several studies show that [+telic] predicates pattern similarly, while stative verbs pattern differently to [+dynamic] categories; 2) within-category analysis is not sensitive to the imbalance of tokens across lexical aspectual classes which counterbalances the methodological weakness of the three-way classification pointed out by Shirai (2013), namely that the category [+telic] includes two Vendlerian classes and thus a large variety of predicates.

Three operational tests have been used to classify verbs, following Shirai (2013, p. 283) and Bertinetto (1986, pp. 93-99):

Step 1. State or non-state?

If the verb is a state, it fulfils the following conditions:

a) it does not have a habitual interpretation in simple present tense (e.g., *Enrico fa l'idraulico*);
b) it is not likely to be used with imperative (e.g., **Sii bella*);
c) it is not likely to be used with periphrastic progressive (e.g., **Un ettaro sta equivalendo a 10.000m²*).

If the verb is not a state, step 2 follows.

Step 2. Activity or non-activity?

"Se qualcuno V-*ava*, e nel far ciò è stato interrotto, si può dire che ha V-*ato*?"

a) If yes, the verb is an activity. (e.g., *Anna camminava lungo il fiume*)
b) If no, step 3 follows. (e.g., *Anna attraversava la strada*)

Step 3. Test of telicity

"In quel momento qualcuno (o qualcosa) stava V-*ando*, ma in seguito si è visto che non ha V-*ato*."

If the sentence is not contradictory, the verb is telic. For instance, a sentence such as (2) does not appear to be contradictory because it can be assumed that Giovanni started drawing the portrait of his aunt but did not have the chance to complete it.

(2) In quel momento Giovanni stava disegnando il ritratto di sua zia, ma in seguito si è visto che non l'ha disegnato

It is acknowledged that grammaticality judgment tests are likely to create disagreement among raters and this limits their effectiveness. For this reason, the coding relies on the semantic interpretation of the sentences instead of grammaticality judgments. For example, Shirai (2013, p. 285) points out that in the sentence *Are you wanting your suitcase down?* – typically pronounced in a plane – the verb *to want,* despite being a stative, is compatible with progressive marking. However, at the predicational level [want your suitcase down] does not have a habitual interpretation, it can therefore be coded as stative. Similarly, in Italian, the sentence *Sii intelligente* is grammatical, thus the copula *to be* may be compatible with imperative, when it implies a voluntary change of behaviour or attitude. However, at the predication level [essere intelligente] seems to be a unitary situation, rather than the repetition of the same situation on different occasions involved by a habitual interpretation of a [+dynamic] verb.

Similar observations can be made for most of the stative verbs in the present sample, which do not yield univocal results with the tests of stativity listed above. This is congruent with Bertinetto's (1986, pp. 254-6) observation that the categories state and non-state seem to be two extremes of a continuum, rather than two distinct units. For instance, predicates

not compatible with imperative are those that lack any sense of agency, i.e. any control of the subject over the events (e.g., *puzzare*). On the other hand, predicates not compatible with progressive periphrasis are characterised by the total absence of dynamicity (e.g., *rimanere seduto*). The predicates classified as statives in the present study fulfilled at least two out of three criteria used to determine stativity.

5.4.4.4 Representation of lexical aspect in the interlanguage

Operating fine-grained lexical aspectual distinctions seems to be particularly difficult in the case of interlanguage data because learners may not have a complete representation of the lexical aspectual characteristics of the predicates. Several studies (e.g., Lardiere, 2003; Rastelli & Vernice, 2013) point out that learners' representations of the lexical aspectual characteristics of a predicate do not necessarily coincide with the target language representation. On one side, learners seem to use verbs in a semantically unspecified way, often exchanging verb pairs such as *studiare* 'to study' which is atelic and *imparare* 'to learn', which implies a concluded learning process, i.e. a telic predicate (for similar examples see Giacalone Ramat & Rastelli, 2013; Rastelli & Vernice, 2013). Thus, learners acknowledge the general meaning of the verbs which has "primacy in acquisition over aspectual features" (ibid.). Conversely, as pointed out by Lardiere (2003), learners have a developed representation of the lexical aspectual characteristics of the predicates in their L1 and verbs with the same general meaning in the L1 and L2 may have different lexical aspectual characteristics in the two languages. Such L1-L2 discrepancies may constrain prototype formation (Shirai, 2013) and the situation may be even more complex in the case of L3 acquisition, where leaners may be influenced not only by their L1(s) but also by their L2(s). Furthermore, several studies suggest taking into account that learners' representation of the lexical aspectual characteristics of target language predicates develops over time (Rastelli & Vernice, 2013), and the classification of interlanguage predicates according to target-language categories involves the risk of comparative fallacy because it assumes a more developed lexical aspectual representation than is warranted (Lardiere, 2003; Giacalone Ramat & Rastelli, 2013). However, as pointed out by Shirai (2007, p. 59), "since we cannot be sure about learners' intentions or their semantic representations, it is probably more reasonable to be agnostic about them to some degree" and treat the classification of predicates as a tool that helps to visualise tendencies in the interlanguage, without assuming that learners have a fully developed representation of the lexical aspectual characteristics of the target language predicates. On the other hand, it is acknowledged that lexical aspectual

classes are not discrete categories and, depending on the linguistic context, "almost every Italian verb may be regarded as belonging to two, sometimes three and even four different actional classes" (Giacalone Ramat & Rastelli 2013, p. 409). For this reason, the lexical aspectual value of the verbs was determined by taking into account the whole verb phrase (VP) and the type of subject. The components beyond the head of a VP, such as time adverbials, were not taken into account because they function as "perspective takers" and are not directly related to the lexical semantics of the predicates (Shirai, 2013, p. 287-288). For instance, in a sentence such as (3) the verb *mangiare* 'to eat' with a definite noun phrase (NP) and was coded as [+telic]:

(3) Il lupo ha mangiato la bambina

However, in (4) the same verb is used with an indefinite noun phrase and was considered [-telic]

(4) A questo giorno non ho mangiato quasi niente – non poteva

When a student's lexical aspectual representation of the predicate differed from its target-language representation, the student's representation was favoured, as long as it was evident from the context. For instance, in a sentence such as (5) the verb *imparare* 'to learn', a transitive verb with its direct object specifying the goal of the (concluded) learning process, is used in an intransitive manner, without a direct object. In this case the verb was classified as [-telic], thus an activity:

(5) Ho ancora imparato circa quattro ore

5.4.4.5 Type frequency versus token frequency

Several studies (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 1998; Ayoun & Salaberry, 2005) show that learners tend to associate imperfect morphology with a limited number of high frequency statives, and high frequency statives are therefore excluded from the analysis. This is particularly true for the copula 'to be', considered to be a "tense carrier" (see Giacalone Ramat, 1992), meaning that it is inflected with tense/aspect morphology earlier than other statives. However, the present corpus contains a large number of texts where imperfective morphology is restricted to the verb *essere* and/or to the following high frequency statives: *potere*, *volere*, *dovere*. If all the contexts where a high frequency stative was used with imperfect morphology were eliminated from the analysis, the results would show that students display a very limited use of imperfect morphology which does not quite reflect the pattern found in the data; a strong association between Imperfetto and high frequency statives. On the other hand, it is acknowledged that type frequency rather than token frequency accounts for the acquisition of a grammatical feature, meaning that if a learner is

only able to use imperfect morphology in combination with the verb *essere*, we cannot conclude that the learner has fully acquired the function of imperfect morphology. For this reason, type frequency was counted instead of token frequency, meaning that in each text the same combination of predicate, verbal morphology and grounding was counted only once. For instance, in Text 1 the verb 'to be' occurred five times in combination with imperfect morphology in the background and once in the foreground. In the type frequency count it was counted as one instance of 'to be' with imperfect morphology in the background and one instance of the same verb with imperfect morphology in the foreground. The occurrence of the same verb with perfective morphology was coded separately.

Text 1

Foreground	**Background**
[1] La mia maturità era abbastanza bene.	
[2] Mi sono alzata molto presto,	
[3] ma la maturità ha iniziato alle 1	
[4] ed era finita alle 7.	
	[1]Eravamo un gruppo di circa 10 personi
	[2] e tutti erano molto ~~nervo~~ nervoso.
	[3] ~~Da te~~ Lo soggetto che ~~temo~~ era terribile per me era la matematica,
[5] ~~ma ce l'ho anche fatta~~ ma anche questo ce l'ho fatta.	
	[4]§ Ero l'ultima persona di questo giorno
	[5] ed ero stanchissima.
[6] A cassa ho mangiato e celebrato con i miei genitori	
[7] e dopo sono andata a letto.	
[8] Mi ho sentito libera e alleviata.	

5.5 Summary

The present chapter was dedicated to the discussion of the methodological choices related to the collection and analysis of learner language samples. The main methodological choices can be summarised as follows: 1) the study was based on elicited narratives because it aims to examine student's use of verbal morphology when they are primarily engaged in message construction; 2) the concept of proficiency level was operationalised in terms of the student's use of verbal morphology in appropriate contexts; 3) the distribution of verbal morphology was examined from a multilevel perspective by taking into account the

discourse function of the clauses and the lexical aspectual value of the predicates; 4) the coding for grounding was carried out against the background of Reinhart's (1984) definition of narrativity and Comajoan's (2013) considerations concerning the links between morpho-syntactic marking and discourse grounding; 5) the coding for lexical aspect followed a three-way classification and the operational tests applied to classify predicates into lexical aspectual classes were elaborated on the basis of observations in Shirai (2013) and Bertinetto (1986).

Chapter 6
Results of the obligatory occasion analysis

The obligatory occasion analysis (OOA) was carried out in order to group learners according to their ability to apply the perfective/imperfective distinction in narratives. As pointed out in 5.3, this analysis was based on the discourse function of clauses. Foreground clauses (FG) were seen as a context for sequentially ordered events, presented in their completeness and marked with perfective morphology (PERF); while background clauses (BG) were considered a context for events of undetermined duration, that are simultaneous or chronologically overlapping with the events in the FG, and marked with imperfective morphology.

Coding clauses for grounding presented one of the main methodological challenges in this study. Since discourse grounding underlies the speaker's subjectivity, verbal morphology is often the only formal clue for deciding whether a clause belongs to the foreground or to the background from the perspectives of the speaker's narrative (cfr. Vet, 1991; Comajoan, 2013). For this reason, as pointed out in 5.3.1, the coding favoured the verb forms produced by the learner, in the sense that clauses with perfective morphology (i.e. Passato Prossimo [PP] or Passato Remoto [PR], in some cases Past Participle) were coded as FG, while clauses with imperfective morphology (i.e. Imperfetto [IMP]) were coded as BG, as long as the verb form produced by the learner was appropriate or at least acceptable in the given context. Clauses with Gerund and Progressive Periphrasis were also coded as BG. The verb form produced by the learner was only coded as overuse for those cases when it was clearly not appropriate in the given context[18].

The OOA focused on contexts requiring past tense forms within the indicative paradigm. Clauses requiring or containing tense forms outside of the indicative paradigm were not taken into account for this analysis, except for occasional uses of Gerund [GER], Progressive Periphrasis [PROG] and Past Participle. Furthermore, clauses where an

[18] The criteria of appropriateness applied in the present study are discussed in 5.3.2.

anaphoric past tense (i.e., Trapassato Prossimo[19] in the present corpus) was expected were also excluded from the OOA. Trapassato Prossimo [TRAP] is a prevalently perfective past tense which presents a departure from the main story line and is therefore part of the background. Thus, TRAP does not fit the perfective-foreground vs. imperfective-background distinction, while its aspectual value is often hard to capture. Its default meaning conveys the perfective aspect; however, it is likely to shift its aspectual value and express the imperfective aspect, as pointed out in 2.1.3.

OOA was adopted as a criterion for dividing students into more homogeneous proficiency groups than they would by considering the language class they were attending at the moment of data collection (cfr. 5.3.2). The next sections shall give more detailed description about the formation of proficiency groups, and the main tendencies observable in the distribution of verbal morphology in each proficiency group.

6.1 Proficiency groups

As pointed out in 5.3, the data were collected in four different language courses, the Bachelor's courses Italian 1, 2, 3, 4[20] and the Master's course Italian A. On the basis of OOA, learners were assigned two accuracy scores (AC): one for the FG, one for the BG, calculated according to the following formula (discussed in 5.3.2):

$$\frac{n\ correct\ applications}{n\ expected\ contexts + n\ overuses}\ x\ 100$$

This analysis showed that the association between perfective morphology and foreground was generally more consistent than the association between imperfective morphology and background. Therefore, the accuracy score for the foreground (ACF) was applied as a criterion for grouping the students into four proficiency groups, according to the threshold levels reported in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1. Threshold levels for the definition of proficiency groups

Proficiency group	Accuracy score for the FG
Low proficiency group	ACF lower than 55%
Intermediate proficiency group	ACF between 55-80%
Upper-intermediate proficiency group	ACF between 81-90% or text with ACF over 90% containing less than 8 FG clauses and/or less than 5 BG clauses

[19] The present corpus contains only one instance of Trapassato Remoto. This anaphoric tense is therefore not taken into account in the present discussion.

[20] The present corpus contains only 6 texts written by students attending the most advanced bachelor language class, Italian 4. These students obtained a high accuracy score and, for the statistical analyses presented in this chapter, were therefore grouped together with the students of the master's course, Italian A.

High proficiency group	ACF over 90% and text containing more than 8 FG clauses and 5 BG clauses

As pointed out in 5.3.2., the low and the intermediate proficiency groups are defined exclusively on the basis of the ACF. However, the distinction between the upper-intermediate and the high proficiency group also takes into account the text length, defined by the number of FG and BG contexts present in the texts. Texts with 81-90% ACF, and texts where the ACF was over 90%, but were very short, with less than 8 FG clauses and/or less than 5 BG clauses were classified as upper-intermediate. The high proficiency group contains texts with fairly elaborated FG and BG, and ACF over 90%. The criterion of text length was applied with the consideration that a more elaborated text is more challenging from the point of view of aspect marking than a very short text with essential background and foreground information.

To recap, the threshold levels for the definition of proficiency groups were elaborated on the basis of the ACF scores. The number of FG and BG contexts in each text were taken into account in order to operate a more accurate distinction between upper-intermediate and high proficiency levels.

6.1.1 Proficiency group and language class

The division of students into proficiency groups raises the question if there is any association between accuracy in tense/aspect marking and the language class students were attending when the data collection took place.

Bar chart 6.1. shows the distribution of students of different language classes across proficiency levels. The largest proportion of students from the language courses Italian 1, 2 and 3 was classified in the upper-intermediate group (56% from Italian 1, 41% from Italian 2 and 60% from Italian 3). The other students from each language course are distributed between the low, intermediate and high proficiency levels. The distribution of students from the language courses Italian 4 and master's course Italian A is slightly different, they show an almost equal distribution between the intermediate, upper-intermediate and high proficiency levels.

Bar chart 6.1. Distribution of students across language classes and proficiency groups

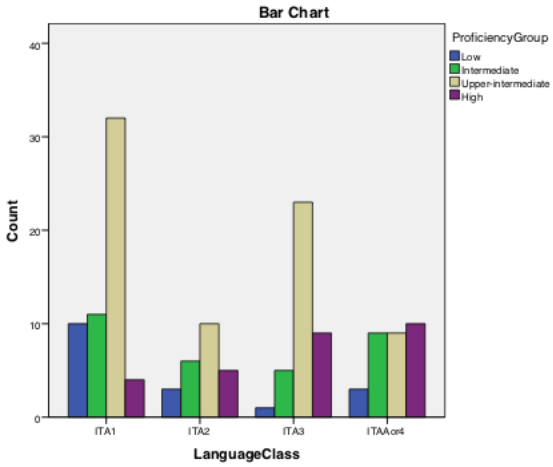


Table 6.2. shows that students from the Italian 3 course level showed the strongest tendency to be classified in the upper-intermediate or in the high proficiency level. The proportion of students from Italian 3 courses classified in the upper-intermediate or in the high proficiency group amounts to 84%. This proportion is approximately 60% in the other language courses.

Table 6.2. Distribution of students across language classes and proficiency levels

		Proficiency group				
		Low	Intermediate	Upper-intern	High	Total
Language class	ITA1	10	11	32	4	57
	ITA2	3	6	10	5	24
	ITA3	1	5	23	9	38
	ITAA or 4	3	9	9	10	31
	Total	17	31	74	28	150

On the basis of the data reported in Table 6.2, a Chi-Square test of group independence was carried out to verify if there was a relationship between the two variables, language class and proficiency group. Since the *p*-value .024 is below the .05 statistical level, the data show evidence against the null hypothesis that the distribution of students across proficiency levels is independent from the language course. However, the nature of the relationship between the language course students were attending at the moment of data collection, and their proficiency in tense/aspect marking requires further investigation.

6.1.2 Proficiency group and experience in language learning

In order to investigate the effect of previous experience in language learning on learners' ability to mark tense/aspect distinction, students were grouped according to their linguistic

repertoire. Three major groups were identified on the basis of the languages spoken by the students, as shown in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3. Distribution of students across proficiency levels and linguistic repertoire[21]

		Linguistic repertoire			
		L1 German L2 English L3 Romance	L1 German L2 English	Other	Total
Proficiency	Low	11	4	2	17
	Intermediate	15	10	6	31
	Upper-intermediate	43	17	14	74
	High	13	11	4	28
	Total	82	42	26	150

The largest group is formed by learners with L1 German and L2 English, who are learning another Romance language, in addition to L3 Italian. The distribution of these students across proficiency groups shows that one half of the students (52%) were classified in the upper-intermediate group, while the other half were distributed between the low, the intermediate and the high proficiency groups. A similar pattern is observable by the students who speak L1 German, L2 English and acquire Italian as L3, with no experience in learning other languages, with the only difference that the proportion of students classified in the upper-intermediate proficiency level is lower (40%). The group labelled "other" contains students with less frequent language combinations, for instance with L1 different from German and/or L2 different from English. This group is more heterogeneous than the first two, because it contains students with very different linguistic backgrounds. However, the distribution of students across proficiency levels follows a similar pattern as identified for the first two groups, given that 54% were classified in the upper-intermediate group, while the remaining students are distributed across the other proficiency levels.

A Chi-Square test of group independence was carried out to investigate the association between students' linguistic repertoire and their proficiency in tense/aspect marking. The results show that the *p*-value .684 is above the .05 statistical level. Thus, the results fail to reject the null-hypothesis that there is no relationship between students' linguistic backgrounds and their proficiency in tense-aspect marking in Italian. For instance, it cannot be claimed that students who have another Romance language in their linguistic repertoire are more proficient in tense and aspect marking than students who acquire Italian as their

[21] The present corpus, as pointed out in 5.2, is composed of 151 texts. However, one participant was present in two different occasions of data collection. For the statistical analyses, only the first text written by this participant was taken into account, therefore the total number of participants in Table 6.2. and 6.3. is 150.

first Romance language. This suggests that learners do not automatically exploit their linguistic knowledge by learning a new language (Jessner, 2016). In fact, a closer look at the data reveals both cases where students seem to be exploiting their knowledge of other languages, and also cases where students show inconsistent tense/aspect marking, despite their experience in multiple language learning. For instance, Excerpt 1, classified in the upper-intermediate group, was written by a learner who claimed to be learning Italian for three semesters at the moment of data collection, while being fluent in Spanish and also speaking French.

Excerpt 1.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[2 FG] Quando ho avuto l'impressione	[2 BG] che ero [cancellation] preparato abbastanza bene
[3 FG] ho preso [cancellation] una piccola colazione,	
[4 FG] ho fatto la doccia	
è sono salito dalla casa.	
[5 FG] Quando sono arrivato a scuola	[3 BG] tutta la gente era nervosa
	[4 BG] ed anche io avevo qualche pensi negativi.
[6 FG] Ma quando ho ricevuto la foglia con i compiti	[cancellation] sabbia che sera bene.

This excerpt displays a consistent association between perfective marking and foreground on one side, and imperfective marking and background on the other. The learner's claim to be learning Italian only for three semesters suggests that he/she may have been relying on his/her knowledge of other Romance languages, especially Spanish, in the selection of tense/aspect marking. The influence of this language is also observable in the clauses with lexical transfer, such as 'sono salito dalla casa' and 'sabbia che sera bene'. These clauses were not taken into consideration for the OOA, because they contain Spanish predicates. However, they corroborate the assumption that the learner is making use of his/her Spanish knowledge while writing an Italian narrative.

On the other hand, Excerpt 2 was written by a learner who claimed to be learning Italian for five years and to have C1 proficiency in Spanish.

Excerpt 2.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[4 FG] Cuando la ragazza entrò la casa,	
[5 FG] scoprì	[8 BG] che la sua nonna non c'éra nel letto
	[9 BG] c'éra il lupo mascherato come la nonna.
[6 FG] la ragazza chiedeva	Perché hai gli occhi così grandi?
[7 FG] Il lupo rispondeva:	Affinché ti possa guardare meglio.
Dopo qualche domanda il lupo comì la ragazza.	
[8 FG] ~~Sf~~ Afortunatamente ~~il~~ un cacciatore veniva […]	

This excerpt shows an inconsistent association between tense/aspect marking and discourse grounding. Several foreground clauses, such as [4 FG] and [5 FG], are marked with PR, while background clauses such as [8 BG] and [9 BG] are marked with IMP. Similar to Excerpt 1, the influence of Spanish is clearly observable on the lexical level, in clauses containing a Spanish predicate, such as "Dopo qualche domanda il lupo comì la ragazza". However, contrary to Excerpt 1, IMP is also used in the foreground, in clauses from [6 FG] to [8 FG]. This use of IMP suggests that, despite being highly proficient in Spanish, the learner might not be entirely able to exploit this knowledge when using L3 Italian.

To sum up, the data confirm that investigating the interaction of languages in multilingual language learning requires a holistic approach (Jessner, 2016). This was not possible in the present study, which focuses on major tendencies in interlanguage development, rather than individual variation.

6.2 Distribution of past tense marking across proficiency groups

Table 6.4 presents the distribution of perfective and imperfective morphology across levels of discourse grounding in the texts grouped according to the proficiency level they represent. The corpus as a whole is composed of N= 151 texts, containing in total 1489 foreground clauses and 874 background clauses.

Table 6.4. Distribution of perfective and imperfective marking across levels of grounding and levels of proficiency

	Foreground			Background		
	FG clauses	FG clause with PERF	FG clause with IMP	BG clause	BG clause with IMP	BG clause with PERF
low (N=17)	142	54	78	104	86	9
intermediate (N=31)	276	209	58	203	171	20
upper-interm. (N=74)	699	664	34	348	307	21
high (N=29)	372	358	15	219	213	3
TOTAL	1489	1285	185	874	777	53

The most evident pattern emerging from Table 6.4, is that Imperfetto is more likely to be overextended than the two perfective past tenses, Passato Prossimo and Passato Remoto. In the whole corpus, IMP is overextended to the foreground in 185 cases, while the perfective tenses are overextended in a background context on 53 occasions. Thus, the majority of

overextensions derive from the use of IMP in the foreground. This phenomenon reaches its highest level in the low proficiency group, where 55% of the foreground clauses (78 out of 142) are marked with IMP. The tendency shows a significant decrease when proficiency develops. In the intermediate proficiency group, only 21% of the FG clauses contain IMP, while the percentage drops to 5% (34 out of 699 clauses) in the upper-intermediate group and to 4% in the high proficiency group.

The perfective past tenses, especially Passato Prossimo, are used with a higher appropriateness rate, starting from early acquisition stages. Due to the tendency to overextend IMP, low proficiency learners show a limited use of the perfective past tenses, which occurs in 38% of foreground clauses. However, the learners seem to be sensitive to the discourse function of the perfective past, in the sense that it is prevalently used in the appropriate contexts. The low proficiency sub-corpus contains 63 clauses with perfective marking, and 86% of these clauses (54 out of 63) occur in the foreground. 14% of clauses marked with PERF morphology occur in the background, which constitutes 9% of the total background clauses in this sub-corpus.

The tendency to mark foreground with perfective morphology becomes more pronounced as proficiency develops. In the intermediate group, 75% of FG clauses contain PERF marking. This percentage increases to 95% in the upper-intermediate group, although a slight tendency to overextend perfective morphology to the background persists. In fact, the proportion of BG clauses marked with PERF morphology amounts to 10% in the intermediate group, and to 6% in the upper-intermediate group. In the high proficiency group, the association between foreground and PERF morphology is categorical: 96% of foreground clauses are marked with PERF morphology, while the overextension of PERF morphology concerns only 1% of background clauses.

To summarise, the data presented in Table 6.4 suggest that all the students have an extensive knowledge of verbal morphology, in the sense that they are able to produce both perfective and imperfective morphology, starting from the low proficiency group. However, as frequently observed in studies on language acquisition, verbal forms seem to be acquired earlier than their function. This leads to their overextension, observable in the use of IMP in foreground clauses, and vice versa, in the use of PERF morphology in the background.

6.2.1 Effect of text type

As pointed out in 6.1, the data collection was carried out in five different language courses, from the Bachelor's course Italian 1 to the Master's course Italian A.

Approximately one half of the participants (123 out of 231) were asked to write a personal narrative (The Day of my School Leaving Examination); another half of the participants (108 out of 231) were given the task of writing an impersonal narrative (Little Red Riding Hood). The slight difference in the size of the two sub-corpora was caused by the imbalance of students in the language classes where the data collection was carried out. The distribution of students across language classes and task assignments is summarised in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5. Distribution of the participants across language classes and task assignments [22]

	School leaving	Little Red
Italian 1	48	45
Italian 2	18	24
Italian 3	35	21
Italian 4	7	
Italian A	15	18
TOTAL	123	108

The initial dataset was composed of 231 texts. However, 80 texts were not suitable for the analyses carried out in the present study, for one of the following reasons: 1) they were written using only the present tense, which made it impossible to examine the alternation of perfective and imperfective marking; 2) they did not contain any background material and did not provide any information about the learners' ability to mark grounding through the alternation of perfective/imperfective tenses (cfr. 5.2)[23]. The issue of writing the whole text by using PRES as the dominant tense occurred in the case of the impersonal narrative, while it was never observed in the case of the personal narrative. In the latter case, the main cause of exclusion was that some texts focused only on foreground information (the main events of the day in chronological order) and did not contain any supporting material, making it impossible to observe students' ability to mark the background. Approximately 15 texts written by native speakers of Italian were also excluded from the analyses.

Table 6.6 shows the texts which were suitable for the analyses (N=151), classified according to text types (i.e., personal vs. impersonal narratives), and proficiency groups. This shows that the impersonal narrative proved to be a challenging task for the students: 46% (50 out of 108) of the texts about Little Red Riding Hood had to be excluded from the

[22] The cells marked with grey contain a large number of texts because the data were collected in two different courses of the same level.

[23] According to Bardovi-Harlig (2013), the omission of background information may be a sign of limited linguistic competence. However, due to the impossibility of carrying out independent proficiency measures, the relationship between proficiency and lack of narrative background was not directly observable in the present study.

analyses for one of the two reasons discussed above. The data suggest that writing about the day of their school leaving examination might have been a less challenging and/or more motivating task for the students, since only 24% (30 out of 123) of the personal narratives had to be excluded.

Table 6.6. Distribution of text types across levels of proficiency

	School leaving	Little Red
Low (N=17)	5	12
Intermediate (N=31)	23	8
Upper-intermediate (N=74)	55	19
High (N=29)	10	19
TOTAL	93	58

In addition, Table 6.6 suggests a further effect of text type in the data. In the low proficiency group, where students show a strong tendency to overuse IMP, the majority of the texts (12 out of 17) belong to the category of impersonal narrative. When writing about their school leaving examination, students appeared to be less likely to overuse IMP, although this tendency was not completely absent, as observable in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 3.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[3 FG] Aveva dovuto aspettare, per me, troppo lungo,	
[…]	
[4 FG] Infine c'era il momento	[2 BG] in cui toccava a me.
[5 FG] Questa situazione sembrava /all'improvviso/ molto corto	

Excerpt 3 contains two clauses that present a turning point in the narration and move the story forward, [4 FG] and [5 FG]. This is emphasised by the connectives chosen by the speaker, *infine* and *all'improvviso*. However, despite their discourse function, both clauses are marked with imperfect morphology. The opposite tendency, i.e. using a perfective past tense both in the foreground and the background, was less frequent, observable in only three low proficiency texts of the present corpus. In these three texts, students' accuracy score for the foreground was over 50%, because the text contained significantly more foreground than background information. However, the consistent use of the perfective past Passato Prossimo also in the background suggested that the tense was being used independently of discourse grounding, as observable in Excerpt 4. In this excerpt, the two clauses coded as background are marked with perfective morphology, even if they are part of a description,

and seem to refer to temporally unbounded situations, which overlap with the story line, instead of moving the narration forward.

Excerpt 4.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[1 FG] Sono alzata molto presto alla ~~mattita~~ mattina	[1 BG] e sono stata molto molto nervosa.
[2 FG] Sono andata in scuola	
[3 FG] e ho ciacciarato un po con gli altri studenti	per pensare qualcosa altra e non pensare dal momento del esame.[24]
	[2 BG] Gli altri studenti sono stati nervosi come io o anche un po più di me.

In the intermediate and the upper-intermediate proficiency groups, personal narratives significantly outnumber the impersonal narratives, forming more than 70% of each sub-corpus. This may suggest that writing a personal narrative, where the speaker has extensive control over the text structure, might be easier for the learners who are building up the perfective/imperfective distinction in their interlanguage. Finally, in the high proficiency group, where learners show a secure mastery of aspectual distinction, the distribution of personal and impersonal narratives reverses: 34% of the texts are personal, 66% are impersonal narratives.

To summarise, the OOA was used as a tool for dividing students into more homogeneous proficiency groups, than they would be by purely considering the language classes they were attending at the moment of data collection. The four proficiency groups identified on the basis of the OOA can be briefly characterised as follows: 1) the low proficiency group, composed of texts presenting a dominant past tense used across levels of discourse grounding; 2) the intermediate proficiency group, composed of texts where students show a tendency to use perfective marking in the foreground and imperfective marking in the background, however, several instances of overuse are also observable; 3) the upper-intermediate group includes texts where the perfective/imperfective distinction is used with a high appropriateness rate and a few occasions of overuse; 4) the high proficiency group shows a secure mastery of aspectual distinctions. In order to obtain a deeper understanding of the above-presented tendencies, the following sections are dedicated to a more detailed description of the proficiency groups.

[24] As Pointed out in 5.4.2 and in the introduction to the present chapter, the verb forms that are not part of the target structures examined in this study were excluded form the analysis. The clauses containing these verb forms are not marked with a progressive number.

6.2.2 The low proficiency group

The low proficiency group is composed of N=17 texts, where perfective morphology was used with an accuracy rate lower than 55%. The group accuracy score[25] was 35% for the foreground and 47% for the background. Such a low accuracy rate in the foreground is connected to the significant tendency to overextend IMP to foreground contexts. The higher accuracy score for the background originates consistently from the use of IMP independently from grounding, which also increases the likelihood of using it in the background. This is observable in Excerpt 5.

Excerpt 5.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
	[1 BG] C'era una volta la mamma di Cappuccetto Rosso
[1 FG] mandava lei per portare una cesta colmato con alimenti alla sua nonna.	
[2 FG] Nel bosco Cappuccetto Rosso incontrava un lupo.	
[3 FG] Loro dialogavano	
[4 FG] e § Cappuccetto Rosso lo raccontava	[2 BG] che lei voleva visitare la sua nonna.
[5 FG] Dopo la conversazione il lupo usava una abbreviazione	
per andare alla casa della nonna di Cappuccetto Rosso.	
[6 FG] Un po' tempo tardi Cappuccetto Rosso arrivava alla casa della sua nonna.	
[7 FG] Entrava nella casa	
[8 FG] e vedeva la sua nonna,	[3 BG] che giaceva ~~in~~ nel letto.

In Excerpt 5, IMP is correctly used in three background clauses, from [1 BG] to [3 BG]. However, its correct application does not seem to be the result of learners' choice to mark the temporal unboundedness of situations by means of imperfective aspect. In fact, the same tense is overextended to eight foreground clauses, referring to a sequence of chronologically ordered events, that take place one after the other[26]. The same tendency is observable in 14 out of 17 texts in this group and may be connected to students' L1, which is German in 16 out of 17 cases. As pointed out in 2.4, German does not mark aspect morphologically and the two past tense forms, *Präteritum* (simple past) and *Perfekt* (compound past) may express both the perfective and the imperfective aspect (Hentschel & Vogel, 2009, pp. 53-54). Given

[25] The group accuracy score was calculated by treating the totality of the texts in a group as a single unit. Thus, the cases of correct application of perfective and imperfective verb forms are summed and divided by the total number of expected contexts and the total number of overuses (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 83).

[26] The only event coded as FG that could virtually be simultaneous with another event is *loro dialogavano* 'they spoke to each other'. This clause may be interpreted in two ways. The learner might have meant to express simultaneity, by stating that while speaking to the wolf, Little Red Riding Hood mentioned that she was heading to her grandmother's. However, in the absence of a connective expressing simultaneity, the coding favoured the sequential interpretation.

that the Simple Past is frequently used in written narratives and is formally similar to Italian IMP, the overuse of IMP in the present corpus might be a case of formal transfer.

On the other hand, in 3 out of 17 texts the dominant tense is the compound past, Passato Prossimo. Some of these texts focus on the foreground, and contain very limited background information, marked with perfective morphology or the present tense, as observable in Excerpt 6:

Excerpt 6.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[1 FG] Mi sono svegliata molto presto	[1 BG] perché sono già stata molto nervosa.
[2 FG] Quando sono arrivata a scuola	
[3 FG] ~~prima~~ anzitutto tutti insieme abbiamo dovuto entrare nella grande sala	[2 BG] dove tutti i professori sono seduti
[4 FG] Poi ho avuto un po' di tempo prima mia esame.	
[5 FG] Ho dovuto fare una presentazione e un'esame in una altra materia.	
[6 FG] Dopo questa ho riuscito tutto	[3 BG] e sono stata molto felice

In this excerpt, PP seems to be used independently of grounding. In fact, clause [1 BG] describes a situation that is more likely to be simultaneous to the events presented in the main story line, rather than being in chronological order with them. Similarly, in Excerpt 7 the event of looking for the grandmother's house [6 BG] seems to chronologically overlap the appearance of the wolf who starts talking to Little Red Riding Hood [2 FG]. Furthermore, the situations of being hungry and wanting to know where the grandmother's house is, described in the clauses [7 BG] and [8 BG], appear to be unbounded and chronologically overlapping with the event described in [2 FG], rather than temporally bounded and sequentially ordered:

Excerpt 7.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
	[6 BG] La figlia ha cercato la casa della nonna
[2 FG] quando un lupo ha cominciato a parlare.	
	[7 BG] Il lupo ha avuto fame
	[8 BG] e ha voluto sapere
	[9 BG] dove era la casa della nonna.
[3 FG] Quando il Cappuccetto è arrivata alla casa della nonna, [...]	

Thus, students in the low proficiency group seem to use verbal morphology independently of discourse grounding. This suggests that they have not yet mapped aspectual distinctions into verbal morphology and use past tense forms to locate events on the time axis, rather than characterising them along the dimension of boundedness.

Table 6.7. Distribution of past tense forms across levels of grounding and text types in the low proficiency group

	Foreground			Background		
	FG clauses	FG clause with PERF	FG clause with IMP	BG clause	BG clause with IMP	BG clause with PERF
Little Red (N=12)	101	27	69	75	63	4
School leaving (N=5)	41	27	9	29	23	5

The assumption that low proficiency learners use past tense morphology to mark tense, rather than aspect seems to be substantiated by the effect of text type observable in this group. Table 6.7 shows the distribution of verbal forms across levels of discourse grounding in the two text types: the impersonal narrative (Little Red Riding Hood) and the personal narrative (The day of my school leaving examination). The majority of texts (12 out of 17) with an accuracy score lower than 55% are impersonal narratives. In these texts, the tendency to use IMP independently of the discourse function of the clauses is particularly pronounced, with 68% of the FG clauses being marked with IMP morphology. This tendency shows a significant decrease in the case of personal narratives (5 out of 17 texts), where only 22% of the FG clauses are marked with IMP morphology.

Table 6.7 reveals that students are more likely to adhere to IMP as a prevalent tense in the impersonal narrative, and to choose PP as a dominant tense in the personal narrative. This tendency reflects the use of the simple past (*Präteritum*) and the compound past (*Perfekt*) in German (Thieroff, 2000), the L1 of the majority of learners. In German, both tenses are used for past marking rather than aspect marking, and the choice between the two tenses underlies stylistic criteria. The compound past is used in everyday communication (Schmiedova, 2004, p. 195), while the simple past is a stylistically marked form, used in written narratives. Although both text types were produced in written format, writing a personal narrative may relate to daily communication and induce the use of the compound past, while the impersonal narrative may activate a more formal register.

To summarise, the low proficiency group appears to be using past tense morphology for tense marking rather than aspect marking. This may be connected to L1 influence. Due

to their tense prominent L1, German in 16 out of 17 cases[27], the students seem to be more sensitive to temporal distinctions rather than the aspectual meaning encoded by Italian tenses. The L1 influence is also observable on the formal level, in the choice of the past tense forms in personal vs. impersonal narratives.

6.2.3 The intermediate proficiency group

In the intermediate proficiency group, students (N=31) scored between 55 and 80% accuracy in the foreground. As observable in Table 6.4, students in this group still show a tendency to overextend IMP to the foreground, although to a less significant extent than the low proficiency group, meaning that 21% of foreground clauses (58 out of 276) are marked with IMP. On the other hand, there is a limited tendency to use perfective marking in the background, observable in only 10% of background clauses (20 out of 203). This suggests that students started mapping the perfective/imperfective distinction to past tense morphology, and start using such distinction to mark discourse grounding. The influence of their L1 is less significant compared to the low proficiency group, on both a conceptual and a formal level. They do not seem to be using verbal morphology exclusively for tense marking and they do not seem to select verbal morphology on the basis of its formal similarity to German verb forms. This is observable in Excerpt 8, where the background information, that provides a short description of the main characters in clauses [1 BG] to [4 BG], and describes a habit in clause [5 BG], is marked with IMP morphology. On the other hand, the chronologically ordered events in the foreground are marked with perfective morphology, except for clauses [2 FG] and [4 FG]. These two clauses contain imperfect morphology, even though they display the main properties of a FG clause identified in 5.4.1: 1) they answer the question "What happened?"; 2) they match the chronological order of the events, which is emphasised by the presence of the connective *e poi*; 3) the alternation of the order of clauses from [1 FG] to [4 FG] would lead to a different interpretation of what happened.

[27] 1 out of 17 students is a native speaker of Turkish. According to Aksu-Koç (2006), this language encodes tense, aspect and mood on a morphological level. However, past tense morphology does not seem to encode aspect explicitly, in the sense that a fundamental distinction is made between direct experience and indirect experience. The two inflections conveying such a distinction "contrast explicitly in terms of modality but not of aspect" (Aksu-Koç, 2006, p. 18). Thus, the learners' sensitivity to temporal rather than aspectual distinctions may be connected to the minor relevance of aspectual distinctions in the Turkish past tense system.

Excerpt 8.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
	[1 BG] C'era una volta una piccola ragazza
	[2 BG] si vestiva spesso un cappotto rosso
	[3 BG] ed andava ogni giorno con un cesto con una bottiglia di vino rosso ed un dolce ad sua nonna
	[4 BG] che viveva nel bosco
[1 FG] Una volta un lupo ha mangiato la nonna	
[2 FG] e poi il lupo stava in letto	[5 BG] come la nonna faceva spesso.
[3 FG] Il lupo ha mangiato anche la piccola ragazza	
[4 FG] e poi un cacciatore vieneva in scena.	
[5 FG] Lui /ha/ mortato il lupo	
[6 FG] e ha salvato il cappuccetto rosso e la nonna nell'ultimo momento!	

In clause [2 FG], the learner seems to be struggling to identify a verb that expresses a change of state and the beginning of a situation on the lexical level, such as *mettersi* or *sdraiarsi,* and uses a construction with a stative verb *stare a letto*, semantically congruent with the imperfective aspect. This might suggest that the learner is influenced by the lexical aspectual properties of the predicate, and uses Imperfetto, even though the clause belongs to the foreground. However, in clause [4 FG] the learner uses a telic verb (*venire [entrare] in scena*) with imperfect marking. The overextension of imperfect morphology to the FG with both telic and stative predicates questions the effect of lexical aspect, and suggests that the learner continues to experiment with the use of IMP, because at this point of interlanguage development he/she cannot ascribe a clearly recognisable function to this tense. This type of experimentation seems to be characteristic of the texts in the intermediate group and affects not only the IMP, but also the PP, observable in Excerpt 9.

Excerpt 9.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[1 FG] Al giorno della mia esame orale mi ha alzato alle 6.30.	
[2 FG] ho mangiato colazione	
[3 FG] e poi mio papà mi ha portato a scuola.	
	[1 BG] Era un giorno come tutti gli altri
	[2 BG] non sono stata molto nervosa o qualcosa.
	[3 BG] Dovevo fare una presentazione di 20 minuti di un ~~topico~~ thema
	che mi ha interessato[28].

[28] This relative clause was excluded from the coding because it is not clear whether the learner used perfective morphology to express that the topic captured his/her attention, or perfective morphology refers to a temporally

	[4 BG] Avevo ~~il~~ un thema di giovane ragazze
	che sono dipendente di Facebook o altri "social media".
	[5 BG] Dopo la mia presentazione doveva ~~andare~~ siedermi.
[4 FG] Al momento quando ho realizzato	[6 BG] che tutti gli insegnanti guardavano a me,
[5 FG] diventava nervoso.	

Excerpt 9 presents two cases of overextension: PP is used in the background in [2 BG], while IMP is used in the foreground in [5 FG]. The use of PP in [2 BG] would have been appropriate, if clauses [1 BG] and [2 BG] were placed at the beginning or at the end of the story, both marked with perfective morphology to express a global perception of the events. However, in this case, [2 BG] is placed in the middle of a descriptive section composed of clauses marked with IMP morphology. The state of not being nervous is not in chronological order with the foregrounded events and does not answer the question "What happened?". This overextension suggests that the function of perfective/imperfective distinction has not been completely integrated into the interlanguage. This assumption is corroborated by the overuse of imperfective marking in [5 FG]. The event of becoming nervous is in chronological order with the previous events, it answers the question "What happened?" and introduces a turning point in the narrative. Thus, it belongs to the foreground and the use of IMP in this context may be attributable to the learner's uncertainty about the function of the IMP. Furthermore, the use of IMP in clauses [3 BG] and [5 BG] may be connected to L1 influence, given that modal verbs are likely to be inflected with Präteritum in German. If these two events were foregrounded, they would be in chronological order with the preceding and subsequent events, and would move the story-line forward. Thus, the use of perfective morphology might have been more appropriate in these two cases. However, the two clauses were not coded as overuse of IMP, because IMP in this context was rated as acceptable by both native speakers who read the text[29].

The overall tendencies observable in the intermediate proficiency group are summarised in Table 6.8. As illustrated by the above reported narrative excerpts, intermediate proficiency learners start associating perfective marking with the foreground and imperfective marking with the background. This suggests that they have started

unbounded situation (a general interest in the topic). The latter meaning is conveyed by imperfective morphology in the TL.

[29] Both native speakers agreed that the use of IMP in clauses [3 BG] and [6 BG] suggests that the speaker describes a prearranged sequence of events.

integrating aspect marking into their interlanguage verbal system. This is an important developmental step compared to the low proficiency group, where learners seem to be using verbal morphology to mark tense, but not aspect (except for some uses of PERF morphology in the foreground).

Table 6.8. Distribution of past tense forms across levels of grounding and text types in the intermediate proficiency group

	Foreground			Background		
	FG clauses	FG clause with PERF	FG clause with IMP	BG clause	BG clause with IMP	BG clause with PERF
Little Red (N=8)	71	49	15	56	50	1
School leaving (N=23)	205	160	43	147	121	19

Table 6.8 shows that only one third of this sub-corpus is composed of texts about Little Red Riding Hood, while approximately two-third is composed of texts about students' school leaving examination. However, contrary to the low proficiency group, the text type does not seem to have a significant effect on the selection of verbal morphology, in the sense that both types of narrative display a similar proportion of clauses marked with appropriate verbal morphology.

6.2.4 The upper-intermediate proficiency group

The upper-intermediate sub-corpus contains 49% of the texts in the present sample, suggesting that the majority of the students possesses a good knowledge of tense-aspect distinctions in Italian. 74 out of 150 students scored between 81-90% accuracy in the foreground, or wrote a very short text with an ACF higher than 90%. Thus, the upper-intermediate proficiency group is composed of two types of texts: 1) short texts with over 90% ACF but a reduced narrative structure, focusing on the most relevant foreground events and presenting some essential background information; 2) texts with elaborated narrative structure, a vivid foreground and, in several cases, a rich description of the background, and an accuracy rate between 81-90%. In the first type of texts, the association between perfective marking and foreground seems to be categorical, while the association between background and imperfect marking is less consistent, with overextension of PP or occasional use of present tense in the background. In the second category, the association of discourse grounding with verbal morphology seems to be consolidating, however, due to the

complexity of the narratives, a limited tendency to overuse both perfective and imperfective verb forms persists.

Excerpt 10 exemplifies a short text, with categorical association between foreground and perfective marking, but very limited background information.

Excerpt 10.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[1 FG] Mi son svegliata alle 8 di mattina	
[2 FG] e ho preso l'autobus per arrivare alla mia scuola.	
[3 FG] La maturità orale ha avuto [luogo] alle 10 di mattina.	
	[1 BG] Ero un po' nervoso
[4 FG] ma quando ho iniziato a parlare	
[5 FG] mi sono rilassato.	
	[2 BG] Non era così difficile
	come ho pensato prima.
[6 FG] Ho iniziato a parlare del mio tema personale	
[7 FG] e i professori mi hanno fatto qualche domanda.	
[8 FG] Dopo questa parte del esame ogni professore mi ha fatto domande della sua materia.	

The Excerpt contains 8 foreground clauses, consistently marked with perfective morphology. However, the background is composed of only 3 clauses. Two are marked with imperfective morphology, applied to the stative verb *essere* 'to be' used as copula, i.e. the verb that is most frequently used with imperfect marking. The clause *come ho pensato prima* was not taken into account for the analysis, because the context requires the expression of relative anteriority. Thus, the narrative suggests that the learner associates perfective marking with the foreground; however, it provides very limited information about his/her ability to mark background.

Excerpt 11 exemplifies a text with more elaborated foreground and background, and a limited tendency to overextend imperfective morphology to the foreground, observable in clauses [10 FG] and [11 FG], referring to sequentially ordered events. In fact, in clause [12 FG] the learner uses the same verb as in [10 FG], however, in this case, he/she correctly applies perfective marking.

Excerpt 11.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
	[1 FG] C'era una volta una bambina
	[2 FG] che si chiamava Cappuccetto Rosso.
	[…]
	Cappuccetto Rosso,
	[4 FG] che aveva un cappuccetto Rosso

	[5 FG] e per questo si chiamava così,
	[6 FG] voleva andare a visitare alla sua nonna
	[7 FG] che abitava dall'altra parte del bosco.
	[8 BG] Mentre la bambina camminava
[1 FG] si trovò con un lupo cattivo	[9 BG] ma lei non lo sapeva.
[2 FG] Il lupo cominciò a parlarle e Cappuccetto Rosso,	[10 BG] avendo dimenticato il consiglio della mamma,
[3 FG] gli ascoltò.	
[4 FG] Cappuccetto gli dise	[11 BG] che andava a visitare sua nonna, nel bosco
[5 FG] e lui [cancellation] se ne andò prima e più veloce.	
[6 FG] Quando il lupo arrivò a casa della nonna,	
[7 FG] La mangiò	
[8 FG] e si traviste di nonna.	
[9 FG] così, arrivata [alla casa della nonna]	[12 BG] Cappuccetto Rosso credevadi vedere sua nonna un po' cambiata
[10 FG] e le chiedeva	[13 BG] perché aveva gli occhi così grandi
[11 FG] e il lupo rispondeva	che per vederla meglio.
[12 FG] Lei chiese	[14 BG] perché avevale orecchie così grandi e la bocca
[13 FG] e lui le dise che per mangiarla meglio,	
[14 FG] così il lupo si mangiò Cappuccetto Rosso.	

Table 6.9 summarises the tendencies observable in the upper-intermediate group, where the students display a limited tendency to overuse perfective and imperfective tenses. Except for the fact that the personal narratives significantly outnumber the impersonal narratives, there seems to be no further effect of text type. In both types of narrative, an average of 5% of foreground clauses carry imperfective marking, while approximately 4 to 6% of the background clauses carry perfective marking.

Table 6.9. Distribution of past tense forms across levels of grounding and text types in the upper-intermediate proficiency group

	Foreground			**Background**		
	FG clauses	FG clause with PERF	FG clause with IMP	BG clause	BG clause with IMP	BG clause with PERF
Little Red (N=19)	170	161	7	94	74	4
School leaving (N=55)	529	503	27	254	233	17

The results summarised in Table 6.9 lead to the hypothesis that in the upper-intermediate group, students developed a fairly good understanding of aspectual distinctions and use verbal morphology to mark the perfective/imperfective distinction in their narratives. A

limited number of overextensions may represent instances of hypothesis testing or persisting uncertainties about the aspectual features of Italian past tenses.

6.2.5. The high proficiency group

The high proficiency group is composed of N=29 texts, characterised by a nearly target-like use of the perfective/imperfective distinction. Perfective past tenses mark the foreground, while IMP is used in the background, as observable in Excerpt 12.

Excerpt 12.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
	[BG 1] C'era una piccola ragazza
	[BG 2] che aveva una nonna malata.
	[BG 3] Questa ragazza portava sempre un cappuccetto rosso.
	[BG 4] ~~Lei andava dalla visitava~~ voleva visitare sua nonna con un po' di pane e un po' di vino.
[FG 1] Nel bosco la ragazza ha incontrato un lupo	
[FG 2] e gli ha detto	[BG 5] che andava a visitare sua nonna.
[FG 3] Il lupo ~~le~~ è corso alla casa della nonna,	
[FG 4] l'ha mangiata	
[FG 5] e si è messo nel letto.	
[FG 6] Poi è arrivata la ragazza	
[FG 7] e ha chiesto:	"Nonna, perché tu hai occhi così grandi?"
[FG 8] Il lupo ha anche mangiato la ragazza	[BG 6] che credeva di parlare con sua nonna
[FG 9] ed è andato di nuovo al letto per dormire.	
[FG 10] Ad un tratto è entrato un cacciatore	(che ~~ha~~ aveva sentito il lupo russare)
[FG 11] e lui ha liberato la ragazza e sua nonna.	

In this group, perfective marking is overextended to the background on only 3 occasions. The occurrences of IMP in the foreground are also rare. These overextensions are sometimes due to the learner's attempt to express the inchoative meaning, observable in Excerpt 13 [FG 9]. This clause represents a context that requires a verb with inchoative meaning encoded on the lexical level, marked with perfective morphology (e.g., *si è addormentato/si addormentò*), or an inchoative periphrasis (e.g., *si è messo a dormire*/*si mise a dormire*). However, the student uses a generic verb marked with IMP morphology[30].

Excerpt 13.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[FG 7] Il lupo ha mangiato la ragazza	
[FG 8] e dopo si è messo nel letto	
[FG 9] e dormiva.	

[30] This phenomenon will be further examined in Chapter 8.

As summarised in Table 6.10, however, instances of overextension are sporadic in the high proficiency group, characterised by a target-like aspect marking, with virtually no tendency to overuse perfective marking and a very limited likelihood of overextending IMP to the foreground.

Table 6.10. Distribution of past tense forms across levels of grounding and text types in the high proficiency group

	Foreground			**Background**		
	FG clauses	FG clause with PERF	FG clause with IMP	BG clause	BG clause with IMP	BG clause with PERF
Little Red (N=19)	258	247	12	145	142	1
School leaving (N=10)	114	111	3	74	71	2

6.3. Summary

The present chapter describes the results of the OOA, based on the discourse function of the clauses in the narratives. This analysis allowed for the identification of four proficiency groups on the basis of students' accuracy in tense/aspect marking. The distribution of past tense forms across levels of discourse grounding suggests that low proficiency learners use past tense morphology for tense marking, rather than aspect marking, in the sense that they use perfective and imperfective verb forms independently of discourse grounding. Students in the intermediate proficiency groups integrate aspect marking into their interlanguage and show a tendency to use perfective morphology in the foreground and imperfective morphology in the background. This tendency gets more pronounced in the upper-intermediate group, while it seems to be categorical in the high proficiency group. The expression of inchoative meaning appears to be a challenging task for the students, which leads to occasional overextension of IMP morphology to the foreground, even in the high proficiency group.

Chapter 7
Results of the frequency analysis

As pointed out in 5.4.3, a limitation of the OOA, presented in the previous chapter, is its target-oriented approach, in the sense that it requires the linguistic forms being evaluated as appropriate or inappropriate with respect to target-language norms. Therefore, the application of this analysis does not allow for the mapping of linguistic forms independently of their appropriateness. For this reason, a frequency analysis was carried out, in order to gain a better understanding of the inherent variability of the interlangauge. This analysis involves the selection of a linguistic variable (discourse grounding, in the present study), and the examination of the various devices used by learners in the contexts where different levels of that variable are expected. This approach permits the examination of the interlanguage, "in its own right rather than in relation to the target language norms" (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 93). Thus, the present chapter focuses on the frequency of the verbal forms Presente (PRES), Passato Prossimo (PP), Passato Remoto (PR), Imperfetto (IMP), Trapassato Prossimo (TRAP)[31], Gerund (GER) and Progressive Periphrasis (PROG) in the foreground and background contexts respectively.

7.1. The low proficiency group

The frequency analysis in the low proficiency group reveals that in 14 out of 17 texts the prevalent tense is IMP, with two texts prevalently written using PP, while one text is characterised by the alternation of TRAP and IMP. Graph 7.1 and 7.2[32] summarise the overall use of tense forms in the foreground and background of low proficiency texts, suggesting that past tense forms are used independently from discourse grounding principles. In fact, as observable in Graph 7.1, the most frequently used tense in the foreground is IMP, followed by PP. The same tendency is observable in Graph 7.2 representing the background, with the only difference being that PP appears with lower frequency in the background, while

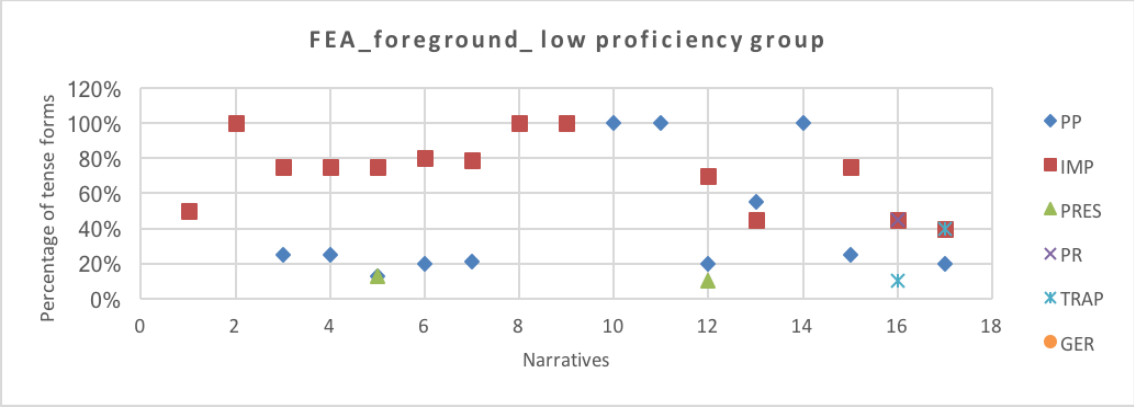
[31] In OOA, clauses requiring TRAP had to be excluded from the analysis because TRAP does not fit the perfectivity-foreground vs. imperfectivity-background distinction. However, given that FEA allows consideration of all the linguistic forms used by the learners in a given context, TRAP is taken into account for the present analysis.

[32] In each graph presented in this chapter, the horizontal axis displays the narratives represented by a progressive number, and the vertical axis displays the frequency of tense forms in each narrative in terms of percentages.

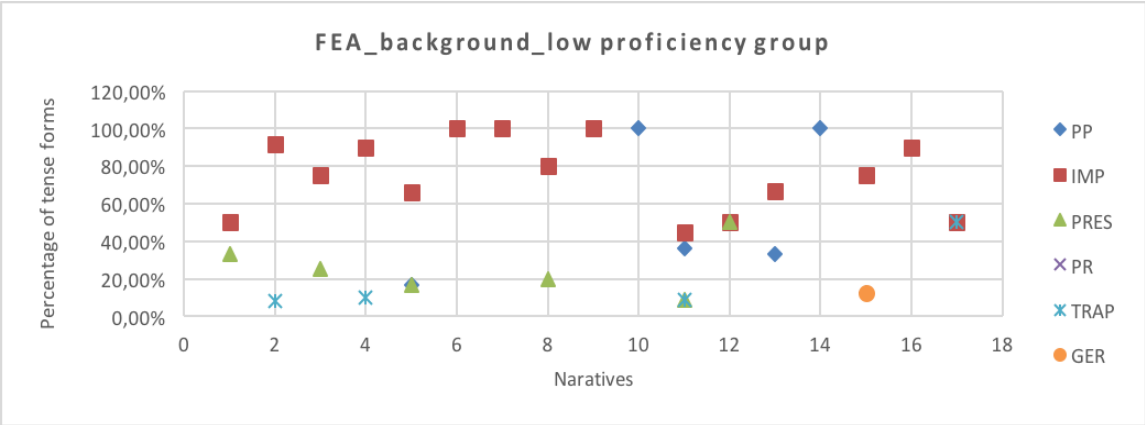
PRES and TRAP show a slight tendency to be used more often in the background than in the foreground. The variety of tense forms used by the students suggests that they acquired the morphological means to mark both perfective and imperfective aspect. However, both perfective and imperfective past tenses seem to be used in an aspectually underspecified way (Bertinetto, 2008), meaning that, in the majority of cases, they seem to convey temporal rather than aspectual information. For instance, the use of IMP in the foreground, where events are presented in chronological order, suggests that students are using this tense to locate events on the time axis before the moment of speech. However, it does not seem to convey any information about the temporal delimitation of events.

In the texts with IMP as the prevalent tense (N=14), the frequency of IMP in the foreground is at least 40%; and in 10 out of 14 cases it exceeds 90%. The remainder of the FG contexts are marked with PP, occasionally with PRES or TRAP. In some cases, the use of PP in the foreground seems to be an attempt to mark aspect morphologically, while PRES may be used as an unmarked tense.

Graph 7.1.



Graph 7.2.



The above described tendencies are exemplified in Text 1, where IMP is used in 80% of the foreground clauses, and only occasionally replaced by PP.

Text 1.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
	[1 BG] C'era una volta il Cappuccetto Rosso
	[2 BG] che voleva andare ~~alla~~ a sua nonna.
	[3 BG] ~~La~~ Sua nonna viveva nel bosco
	[4 BG] e il piccolo Cappuccetto Rosso portava del vino e della torta.
[1 FG] Nel bosco il Cappuccetto Rosso non trovava più la casa della nonna	
[2 FG] e all'improvviso è comparso il lupo.	
[3 FG] Il lupo lo chiedeva	[5 BG] dove andava.
[4 FG] Lei rispondeva	[6 BG] che andava da sua nonna.
	[7 BG] Il lupo sapeva
	[8 BG] dov'era questa casa
[5 FG] ed andava lì.	
[6 FG] § Mangiava la nonna	
[7 FG] e si metteva le vestiti dalla nonna	
[8 FG] e faceva finta di essere la nonna.	
[9 FG] Il Cappuccetto Rosso ~~andava~~ quando ~~arrivava~~ è arrivato dalla nonna	
[10 FG] chiedeva al lupo	[9 BG] perché aveva gli occhi così grandi,
	[10 BG] e perché aveva ~~g~~le orecchie così grande,
	[11 BG] e perché aveva la bocca così grande.
[11 FG] Il lupo rispondeva	[12 BG] che così poteva meglio vederla, sentirla e mangiarla.
[12 FG] E poi la mangiava.	
[13 FG] Alla fine è arrivato il cacciaguida	
[14 FG] e uccideva il lupo.	

In Text 1, the foreground is composed of 14 clauses, 11 marked with IMP and 3 marked with PP. These clauses refer to a series of events occurring one after the other, located before the moment of speech on the time axis. Sequentiality involves temporal delimitation, meaning that the beginning of an event presupposes the completion of the previous event. For instance, the event of going to the grandmother's house referred to in clause [5 FG] is necessarily completed before the event of eating the grandmother referred to in clause [6 FG] can take place. In this text, the temporal delimitation of foreground events can be inferred from the context, and is conveyed on the lexical level, given that the majority of clauses contain telic predicates (only [8 FG] contains an atelic verb). Telicity triggers sequential interpretation (Bohnemeyer & Swift, 2004), even though the temporal delimitation of events does not seem to be marked on the morphological level. In fact, the background clauses, referring to simultaneous and/or temporally unbounded events, carry the same morphological marking as foreground events. This suggests that the use of IMP is aspectually underspecified (Bertinetto, 2008) because it is used to mark past tense, while aspectual information is conveyed on the lexical level, as occurs in German, the L1 of 16 out of 17 students in the present sub-corpus.

The use of PP in the clauses [2 FG], [9 FG] and [13 FG] may be connected to the influence of lexical aspect. Clause [9 FG] seems to be particularly interesting, because the student first uses an accomplishment verb *andare [dalla nonna]* with IMP marking. This is cancelled and replaced by an achievement verb *arrivare* 'to arrive' with IMP marking. However, it seems that the lexical aspectual class of this verb induces the student to replace imperfective marking with perfective marking, and "arrivava" is therefore replaced by "è arrivato". The same verb is used with perfective marking in [13 FG], while [2 FG] contains another achievement verb, *comparire,* with perfective marking. This occasional use of perfective marking on telic predicates in the foreground suggests an initial attempt to mark perfective aspect morphologically. Consistent with the LAH, this process seems to start with the mapping of perfective aspect into perfective past tense morphology, applied to telic predicates. The effect of lexical aspect on the use of past tense forms will be discussed more extensively in Chapter 8. At this point we limit ourselves to observing that perfective marking on telic predicates is not systematic in the low-proficiency sub-corpus. For instance, in Excerpt 1 the telic verb *arrivare* is marked with IMP in the clause [7 FG].

Excerpt 1.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
	[2 BG] [Il lupo] Voleva sapere ~~dove è la ca~~
	[3 BG] che cosa ~~faceva~~ fa
	[4 BG] e dove va [Cappuccetto Rosso].
[4 FG] ~~La~~ Cappuccetto Rossa diceva il lupo tutto	
[5 FG] e lui va alla casa della nonna	
[6 FG] e la mangiava	
[7 FG] Quando la bambina arrivava ci	
[8 FG] il lupo mangiava anche lei	
[9 FG] un po' dopo il cacciatore ha visto il ~~lupo~~ animale nella casa di nonna,	
[10 FG] ~~e~~ lo tagliava	
[11 FG] e ha preso la bambina e la vecchia donna fuori della pancia	

Similar to Text 1, Excerpt 1 shows a prevalent use of IMP, which seems to convey information about the location of events on the time axis, but not about their temporal delimitation. The feature of temporal boundedness is conveyed on the lexical level, given that all the predicates occurring in the foreground are telic; it is marked morphologically on only two occasions. Perfective morphology is applied to a telic predicate in [9 FG], and in [11 FG]. However, the mapping of aspectual features into perfective morphology seems to be unstable, given that perfective marking in the foreground is used only occasionally. In fact, Excerpt 1 shows a considerable variation of tenses in the foreground, with IMP being the prevalent tense, and occasional switches to PRES and PP. Such oscillation in the use of

tense forms in the foreground seems to be characteristic of the low proficiency group and decreases with more developed proficiency.

To summarise, Text 1 and Excerpt 1 suggest that the first attempts to mark perfective aspect into verbal morphology are reflected in the occasional use of perfective morphology with telic predicates. However, several texts in the low proficiency group challenge this assumption. Similar to IMP, PP also seems to be used independently of the temporal delimitation of events, and the principles of discourse grounding. Excerpt 2 starts with some background information introducing the main characters, marked with present tense and IMP. The first FG information introduced in clause [1 FG] is marked with PP, which usage may suggest that the student uses perfective morphology to mark the feature of completeness on the morphological level. However, after the introduction of the first FG information, there is an unexpected switch to PP even in the background. In fact, the event of looking for the grandmother's house [6 BG], the situations of being hungry and wanting to know where the grandmother lives described in clauses [7 BG] and [8 BG] seem to chronologically overlap the main story line, rather than being temporally bounded and sequentially ordered. In spite of this, all three of the clauses contain PERF marking.

Excerpt 2.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
	[1 BG] Una volta c'è una figlia
	[2 BG] che si chiamava Cappuccetto Rosso
	[3 BG] /perché portava sempre un cappuccetto rosso/.
	[4 BG] Il cappuccetto aveva una nonna
	[5 BG] che era in malattia.
[1 FG] La sua madre ha chiesto la figlia	di portare la nonna un Korb con le medicine e una torta
	[6 BG] La figlia ha cercato la casa della nonna
[2 FG] quando un lupo ha cominciato a parlare.	
	[7 BG] Il lupo ha avuto fame
	[8 BG] e ha voluto sapere
	[9 BG] dove era la casa della nonna.

Thus, Excerpt 2 suggests that similar to IMP, perfective morphology may also be used to convey temporal meaning, i.e. to locate events on the time axis before the moment of speech, without an aspectual specification. Such a tendency is also observable in texts where PP is the prevalent tense (3 out of 17 texts, as pointed out in Chapter 6).

The inconsistency of form-meaning associations does not only concern the perfective/imperfective distinction, it is also observable in the use of TRAP. In Excerpt 4, TRAP seems to be used to locate the event in [9 FG] on the time axis with respect to the moment of speech, and not with respect to an anaphoric reference point. In fact, the event

referred to in clause [9 FG] marked with TRAP is clearly in chronological order with [8 FG] and cannot be located before [8 FG] on the time axis. The use of TRAP in the FG suggests that relative anteriority has not been mapped into the IL tense system.

Excerpt 4.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[7 FG] Il lupo rispondeva:	Affinché ti possa guardare meglio.
Dopo qualche domanda il lupo comì la ragazza.	
[8 FG] ~~Sf~~ Afortunatamente ~~il~~ un cacciatore veniva	
[9 FG] e aveva ucciso il lupo.	

The narrative excerpts presented in this section demonstrate that low proficiency group learners use prevalently past tense forms in their narratives, with occasional switches to PRES. The distribution of past tense forms seems to be independent from discourse grounding principles, suggesting that students use past tenses to locate events on the time axis with respect to the point of speech, but do not mark their temporal boundedness on the morphological level. Chronologically ordered events are often marked with IMP, even in those cases, when the completion of an event is a prerequisite for the subsequent event to start. Background events, simultaneous or chronologically overlapping with the main story line are also marked with IMP, sometimes with PP. This suggests that the function of perfective and imperfective past tense forms in the interlanguage is tense marking, rather than aspect marking. PRES is more often used in the background as part of descriptive passages, but it also appears in the foreground. In a similar way, TRAP is more likely to be used in the background expressing relative anteriority, although, it also appears in the foreground.

7.2. Intermediate proficiency group

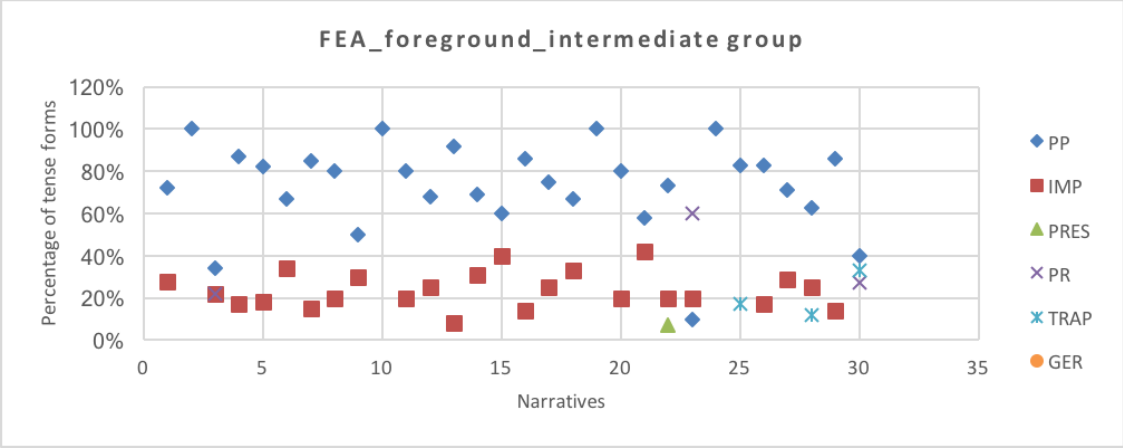
Hopper (1979, p. 219) considers aspect as a "device or set of devices which exist in order to guide the language user through a text" by marking the distinction between the foreground and the background. From this perspective, students whose narratives form the intermediate proficiency group seem to be integrating aspectual distinctions into their interlanguage tense/aspect system. Their narratives are characterised by a tendency to use perfective tenses in the foreground and imperfective tenses in the background. As illustrated in Graphs 7.3 and 7.4, the prevalent tense in the foreground is PP, or in some cases PR, while background clauses are often marked with IMP. Thus, it seems that students use the perfective/imperfective distinction to convey temporal boundedness on the morphological level. However, this tendency is far from being consistent. Although the tense forms are

often applied according to discourse grounding principles, a tendency to use IMP in the foreground and, vice versa, PP or PR in the background persists. The use of IMP in the foreground affects 77% of the texts at this proficiency level, and on average 23% of FG contexts within a text. The use of PP in the background affects 39% of the texts and 31% of BG contexts on average.

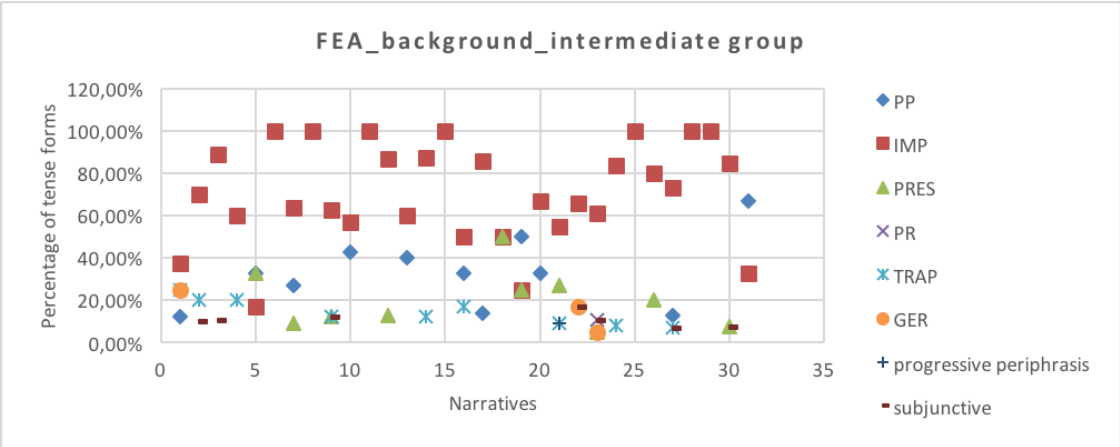
The background is characterised by a greater variation of tenses in addition to IMP, such as PRES, TRAP and GER. This is consistent with Hopper's (1976, p. 216) observation, which notes that temporal relationships in the background tend to be complex, given that "the sequentiality constraint is lifted" and "backgrounded clauses may be located at any point along the time axis or indeed may not be located on the time axis at all". In the intermediate proficiency sub-corpus, descriptive passages in the background are sometimes marked by PRES or GER, whereas the two verb forms are unlikely to appear in the foreground[33]. While GER is only used sporadically (it appears in 3 out of 31 texts), PRES appears in place of IMP in 11 texts. PRES is often used in subordinate clauses (5 out of 11 cases) where, according to Wiberg (2010), IMP is required by the tense of the main clause. In addition, PRES is used in clauses that characterise a referent, i.e. convey gnomic imperfectivity (4 out of 11 cases). As pointed out by Wiberg (2009), "Il presente al posto dell'IMP in opposizione con il passato prossimo è tipico dell'interlingua meno avanzato" (p. 488). Furthermore, the variability observed in the background is congruent with the observations made by Giacalone Ramat (2002, p. 228) and Rosi (2009a, pp. 92-93) who point out that, when learners start integrating aspectual oppositions into their IL, the use of IMP in opposition to the perfective past tenses may not be entirely consistent, because students may use PRES as unmarked tense in place of IMP. In addition, some background clauses are marked by TRAP, which mostly occurs in background contexts to express relative anteriority; however, it is occasionally used in the foreground and marks events described in chronological order. This suggests that the expression of relative anteriority by means of anaphoric tenses has not been fully integrated into the interlanguage at the intermediate proficiency level.

[33] In this sub-corpus, PRES is used in the FG on one single occasion, while GER is never used in the FG.

Graph 7.3.



Graph 7.4.



Text 2 exemplifies the major tendencies in the intermediate proficiency group. In this text, the foreground clauses from [1 FG] to [13 FG] seem to present events in their globality, given that the completion of each event is necessary for the next event to take place. In fact, the prevalent tense in these clauses is PP, while occasional switches to IMP are observable in clauses [1 FG], and [4 FG] to [6 FG] inclusive. This use of IMP does not seem to convey the imperfective aspect. In fact, a progressive interpretation of IMP can be excluded, due to the absence of a focalised moment within a temporally unbounded situation. A gnomic interpretation of IMP can also be excluded, given that the events in these clauses are unlikely to express a generalisation about a referent. A continuous interpretation can also be excluded, since the conclusion of the events does not seem to be undetermined. Attributing a perfective meaning to IMP seems to be the only plausible interpretation. The narrative context and the lexical aspectual value of the predicates suggests that the events are temporally bounded, and sequentially ordered. However, temporal boundedness is marked only at the lexical level, in the sense that the clauses contain telic predicates.

The prevalent use of PP in the FG may be interpreted as an indication of a gradual integration of aspect marking into the interlanguage. However, due to the gradualness of the process, the tendency to use past tense forms with only temporal meaning may persist.

The use of IMP in clause [13 FG] reflects the frequent tendency in this corpus to mark the concluding situation at the end of the narratives with IMP. This may be connected to the learner's intention to convey temporal unboundedness, in the sense that the situation of living happily after ever refers to a time interval with an undetermined duration. This tendency is also observable in the upper-intermediate group, as will be shown in 7.3. However, given that [13 FG] is the concluding sentence of the story, the use of perfective morphology is necessary. Presenting the situation as temporally unbounded creates a sense of suspense suggesting that the story has not come to an end.

The background of Text 2 is prevalently marked with IMP, although, several other verb forms are observable, such as Gerund in [3 BG]; Present tense and present Progressive Periphrasis in the clauses reporting indirect speech, i.e. [4 BG], [5 BG][34], [6 BG] and [11 BG]; and TRAP in [8 BG]. The appropriateness of these verb forms is variable and concerns not only the aspectual but also the temporal dimension. For instance, the use of the Present tense and the present Progressive Periphrasis in the subordinate clauses reporting indirect speech may be appropriate on the aspectual level. However, it violates the *consecutio temporum* principle according to which, the tense of the main clause governs the choice of tense in the subordinate clause.

Text 2.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
	[1 BG] C'era una volta il Cappuccetto Rosso
	[2 BG] che attraversava il bosco
	per arrivare da sua nonna.
	[3 BG] andandoci
[1 FG] incontrava un lupo	
[2 FG] che lei ha chiesto	[4 BG] dove va.
[3 FG] Il Cappuccetto Rosso ha risposto	[5 BG] che sta andando dalla nonna
	per portarla ~~sua da bere~~ il vino e un dolce
	[6 BG] dato che è malat~~i~~a.
[4 FG] Il lupo andava dalla nonna,	[7 BG] prima che il Cappuccetto Rosso arrivava
[5 FG] e mangiava la nonna.	
Quando il Cappuccetto Rosso arrivava[35]	[8 BG] il lupo si era messo nel letto della nonna

[34] This is the only occurrence of progressive periphrasis in the intermediate proficiency sub-corpus. This category is therefore not present in Graphs 7.3 and 7.4.

[35] This clause was excluded from the analysis because its aspectual interpretation may be connected to the interpretation of the conjunction *quando* which in standard Italian means 'when'. However, as pointed out by Lo Duca (2003, pp. 261-2), L2 learners of Italian often use the conjunction *quando* as a generic temporal connective which gains its interpretation from the context. Thus, the learner's intended meaning of this conjunction might be

	[9 BG] e faceva finta di essere la nonna.
[6 FG] Il Cappuccetto Rosso si sorprendeva	[10 BG] che la nonna aveva gli occhi § e la bocca così grande.
[7 FG] Il lupo ha detto	[11 BG] che ti posso mangiare
[8 FG] e ha mangiato il Cappuccetto Rosso.	
[9 FG] [cancellation] Dopo il lupo si è messo e dormire.	
[10 FG] Per caso è passato un cacciatore	
[11 FG] ha ucciso il lupo	
[12 FG] così che la nonna e il Cappuccetto Rosso sono state salvate[36]	
[13 FG] e vivevano contente e felice.	

In some cases, the use of IMP in the foreground may be connected to the intention to emphasise the undetermined duration of events. This is exemplified in Excerpt 5, in clauses [2 FG], [3 FG] and [11 FG] which are marked with IMP, even though in this context, the description of events following one after another requires perfective marking, reducing the events to a single point, without referring to their internal complexity or duration.

Excerpt 5.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[1 FG] Mi sono alzata alle 8,	[1 BG] ma gli esami erano circa alle 14.
[2 FG] ~~Dopo~~ Prima il mezzogiorno mettevo in ordine la mia camera,	
[3 FG] guardavo la TV	
[4 FG] e dopo ho ~~man~~ pranzato.	
[5 FG] Poi sono andata a scuola in bus,	
	[…]
[9 FG] Un po' di giorni dopo [l'esame di maturità] sono uscita con tutta la classe,	
[10 FG] siamo andati in un ristorante ~~a~~ e poi in città a un bar.	
[11 FG] Ci divertavamo	
[12 FG] e siamo tornati a casa molto tardi.	
[13 FG] Il prossimo giorno ci ~~abbiamo~~ siamo incontrati a Alte Donau a fare il bagno	[8 BG] il tempo era bellissimo

To summarise, texts in the intermediate proficiency sub-corpus suggest that students have started integrating aspect marking into the interlanguage verbal system. In several cases, they seem to be using the perfective past to view events as temporally bounded and reduced to a single point on the time axis, which triggers a perception of time movement and moves the story forward. Thus, aspect marking interacts with discourse grounding, in the

mentre, a conjunction that typically attracts IMP, or *prima che* which requires the subjunctive. Both interpretations would classify the clause as part of the background. In the absence of a clear contextual indication that justifies a non-target-like interpretation of the conjunction, its target-like meaning was privileged, and the clause was classified as part of the narrative structure. However, due to the ambiguity of its aspectual interpretation, it was excluded from the analysis.

[36] This is the only occurrence of passive voice in the intermediate proficiency sub-corpus. This category is therefore not present in Charts 3 and 4.

sense that foreground is associated with perfective morphology. On the other hand, the background contains descriptions, characterisation of referents and events that overlap with the main storyline. These events and situations are therefore viewed imperfectively, by using verb forms such as IMP, PRES and GER. Thus, the tendency to associate perfectivity with the foreground and imperfectivity with the background is present in the intermediate proficiency group. However, these associations are not always accurately produced, and in several cases the temporal value of past tenses seems to prevail over their aspectual meaning. In these cases, students seem to use past tense forms to locate events on the time axis before the moment of speech, while information about temporal boundedness has to be inferred from the context. This is especially the case for IMP, when referring to sequentially ordered events.

7.3. The upper-intermediate proficiency group

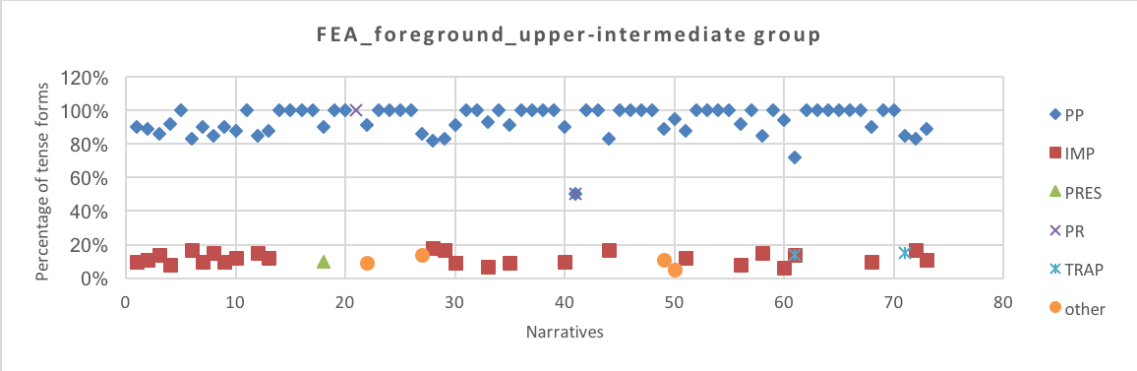
The distinguishing feature of the upper-intermediate proficiency group is the more pronounced association between foreground and perfective marking as compared to the intermediate group. While in the intermediate group, perfective marking is observable in approximately 60% to 80% of the foreground clauses[37], in the upper-intermediate group this association reaches above 80%. Furthermore, the use of IMP in the foreground shows a significant decrease compared to the intermediate group. In the latter group, 77% of the texts are characterised by the presence of IMP in the foreground, in addition to the perfective past (this affects 23% of FG contexts within a text on average). In the upper-intermediate group, the percentage of texts affected by this phenomenon decreases to 35%, and it affects on average 12% of FG contexts within a text. The significant association between foreground and perfective marking suggests that students use perfective morphology to convey both tense and aspect. Thus, PP and PR are used to locate events on the time axis before the moment of speech, and to present them in their globality, as temporally bounded, which generates a perception of temporal movement. This suggests that the mapping of perfective aspect into perfective morphology is very advanced, but not fully completed. In addition to the occasional appearance of IMP in the foreground, the perfective past occasionally appears in the background, in 35% of the texts (22,5% of BG clauses within a text). In addition,

[37] In 4 out of 31 texts of the intermediate group, the use of PP in the foreground reaches a frequency of 100%. However, these texts show a significant overuse of PP in the background. It is therefore not possible to assume, that the association of FG and perfective marking is categorical in these texts.

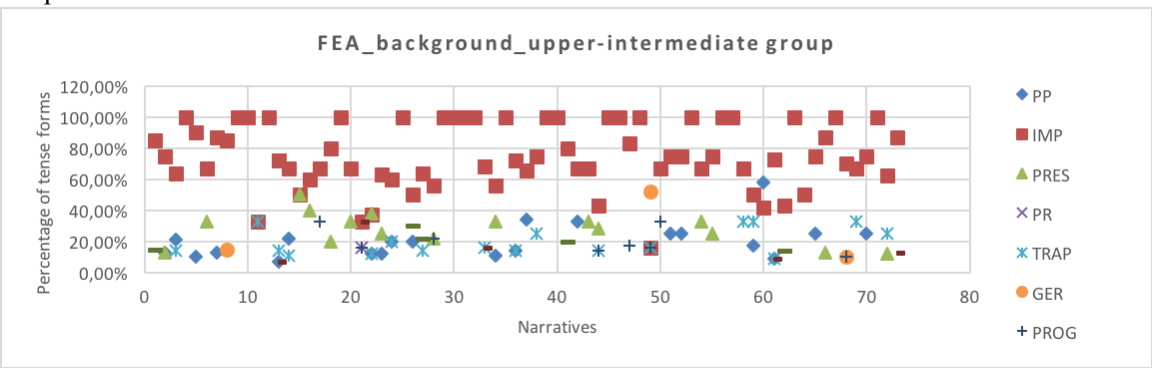
Graph 7.5 shows that PRES and TRAP are sometimes used in the foreground, while the label "other" represents the few cases when the passive voice or bare past participle is used in a foreground context.

Similar to the intermediate group, the background of narratives forming the upper-intermediate sub-corpus contains a variety of tenses, observable in Graph 7.6. The most frequently used tense is IMP, followed by PRES, which often occurs in main clauses containing descriptions, but also in completive subordinate clauses, independently from the tense of the main clause. This suggests that the *consecution temporum* principle has not been fully integrated into the interlanguage at this proficiency level. TRAP is almost exclusively used in the background, suggesting that students have integrated relative tense marking into their interlanguage[38]. This assumption is corroborated by the appropriate use of compound conditional to mark relative posteriority, observable in three texts.

Graph 7.5.



Graph 7.6.



Text 3 exemplifies the main tendencies observable in the upper-intermediate proficiency group. It is characterised by the use of perfective and imperfective morphology corresponding to discourse grounding principles. Foreground events are almost exclusively marked with PR which conveys the aoristic aspect. Background events are marked with

[38] In this sub-corpus, TRAP is not likely to be used in the FG. However, some contexts requiring TRAP contain PP used as an anaphoric tense (cfr. Bertinetto, 1986, p. 421).

imperfective morphology. The student seems to be expressing different meanings of the imperfective aspect, such as the gnomic imperfect (in clauses [1 BG] to [3 BG]) and the continuous aspect (in clauses [4 BG], [5 BG], [8 BG], [10 BG]) conveyed by IMP. The progressive aspect is conveyed by GER [6 BG] and Progressive Periphrasis [7 BG]. The use of GER with instrumental meaning in [11 BG] is in turn connected to the expression of simultaneity. Thus, the text displays an accurate association between verbal morphology and discourse grounding, and it also conveys several meanings of the imperfective aspect. However, the integration of tempo-aspectual meanings into the interlanguage seems to be still in progress, given the occasional use of IMP in the foreground, observable in [5 FG], and vice versa, the use of PR in the background in [9 BG].

Text 3.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
	[1 BG] C'era una volta una piccola fanciulla
	[2 BG] che si chiamava Cappuccetto Rosso.
[1 FG] Un giorno, sua madre Le mandò a trovare sua nonna,	[3 BG] che abitava in mezzo al bosco.
	[4 BG] La nonna stava male
	[5 BG] e aveva bisogno di compania.
	[6 BG] Camminando verso la casa della nonna,
[2 FG] Cappuccetto Rosso incontrò un lupo	
[3 FG] che le chiesi	[7 BG] cosa stava facendo.
[4 FG] La ragazza gli spiegò la situazione	
[5 FG] ed andava avanti	
[6 FG] Arrivò dalla nonna	
[7 FG] e la trovò stesa su letto.	
	[8 BG] Sembrava cambiata, infatti,
	[9 BG] non fu la nonna
	[10 BG] ma il lupo che aspettava la bambina
[8 FG] e la mangiò.	
[9 FG] Per fortuna arrivò un cacciatore in tempo per salvare Cappuccetto Rosso,	[11 BG] tagliando la pancia del lupo.

As pointed out above, the most evident distinguishing feature of the upper-intermediate group is the strong association between perfective morphology and the foreground. Several texts display an elaborated foreground marked with perfective morphology, but with limited background information. This is observable in Excerpt 6, taken from a text with 16 foreground and only 4 background contexts. Although the association between perfective

morphology and foreground seems to be categorical in this case, the text was classified in the upper-intermediate rather than the high-proficiency group, because it does not seem to give enough information about the student's ability to mark background.

The self-correction in [10 FG] seems to corroborate the assumption that the integration of aspectual meanings into the IL is still in progress, and this process involves an occasional use of past tense forms with temporal rather than aspectual meaning. In fact, the clause [10 FG] is part of a narrative sequence, reporting a series of events in chronological order. The student first uses the verb [augurare][39] with IMP marking, however, he/she seems to acknowledge that the context requires perfective marking, and replaces IMP with PP.

Excerpt 6.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[1 FG] Al mio giorno mi maturità mi sono alzato alle 6 di mattina.	
[2 FG] Ho fatto la colazione	
[3 FG] e poi ho preso il treno delle 6:30.	
[4 FG] Arrivato ~~alla~~ ## scuola	
[5 FG] ho incontrati i miei compagni di classe.	
	[1 BG] Tutti erano nervosi
	[2 BG] e stavano tremando.
[6 FG] ~~Le~~ I ~~ultimi~~ primi due esami sono andati molto bene	
[7 FG] e l'ultimo l'esame della lingua italiana è ~~stata~~ andato ~~d~~ molto molto bene.	
[8 FG] ~~Mi sono felice che~~ Mi sono sentito felice che,	[3 BG] dopo che i professori mi hanno detto
	[4 BG] che ho passato tutti i tre esami cono i \migliori/ voti[40].
[9 FG] Poi sono ritornato a casa	
[10 FG] la mia famiglia, mi ~~augurava~~ ha augurato,	
[11 FG] abbiamo parlato e mangiato insieme.	

On the other hand, several texts present an elaborated background with a variety of verbal forms, where students seem to be going through a stage of hypothesis testing. In fact, the appropriateness of verb forms used in the background of these texts is highly variable. For instance, Text 4 represents a case with a high appropriateness rate in the foreground but an unsystematic use of verb forms in the background. The text starts with a short narrative framework introducing the protagonist. This sentence presents an unexpected switch from IMP in [1 BG] to PRES in [2 BG]. Both tenses may be appropriate from an aspectual point of view. However, on the temporal level, this switch from past tense to the present does not seem to be justified. The sentence composed of clauses [3 BG] and [4 BG], describing the

[39] In this context, the verb is used with the meaning of *congratularsi.* For the present analyses, the learner's intended meaning was privileged over the target language meaning of the word, because the former was clearly identifiable from the context.

[40] In clauses [3 BG] and [4 BG], PP seems to be used to mark relative anteriority (cfr. Bertinetto, 1986, p. 421).

mental state of the protagonist is even more complex. Clause [3 BG] may represent an instance of dramatic present, used to emphasise important information. However, the switch to PP in [4 BG] contradicts this assumption and suggests that the student's choice of tense forms in the background is not entirely systematic. Furthermore, the use of TRAP in [8 BG] exemplifies an appropriate marking of relative anteriority in the active voice, while the same feature cannot be conveyed in the passive voice, as observable in [9 BG].

The foreground of this text, on the other hand, presents an accurate association with perfective morphology. This suggests that, consistent with the findings in Giacalone Ramat (2002) and Rosi (2009a, 2009b), perfective marking is integrated into the IL at a faster pace than imperfective marking. This might be connected to the similarity between the prototype of past tense and perfective aspect, both characterised by temporal boundedness (Dahl, 1985, p. 78). The background, being more complex, conveys a variety of temporal relations, and its linguistic marking may be more challenging for the students. This may result in a slower development of background marking. The slower integration of imperfective marking into the IL may also be connected to the markedness of IMP, pointed out by Wiberg (1996, p. 1110).

Text 4.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
	[1 BG] C'era una ragazza
	[2 BG] che tutti chiamano Cappuccetto Rosso.
[1 FG] Un giorno sua madre l'ha pregato	di andare a sua nonna con vino e una fete di torta.
[2 FG] [cancellation] Cappuccetto Rosso è andata al bosco	
[3 FG] e ha incontrato il Lupo.	
	[3 BG] Lei non sa
	[4 BG] che il lupo ha voluto mangiarla
[4 FG] perciò lo ha detto	[5 BG] ~~che~~ dove lei andava
	[6 BG] dove viveva sua nonna.
[5 FG] Il lupo è arrivato prima alla casa della nonna.	
	[7 BG] ~~e la~~ La nonna è malata
	[8 BG] per questo non aveva chiuso la porta.
[6 FG] Il lupo è entrato	
[7 FG] e ha mangiato la nonna.	
[8 FG] ~~Il~~ La Cappuccetto Rosso è arrivato alla casa	
[9 FG] e il lupo	[9 BG] che è stato mascherato come sua nonna
l'ha mangiato	
[10 FG] Alla fine ~~s~~ il Jäger ha salvato Cappuccetto rosso e sua nonna.	

To summarise, upper-intermediate proficiency narratives can be divided into three types. The first type is represented by Text 3, with equally elaborated FG and BG, marked with perfective and imperfective morphology respectively, and occasional instances of

imperfective marking in the FG, and perfective marking in the background. The second type is exemplified by Excerpt 6, representing texts with highly elaborated foreground, highly accurate association between foreground and perfective morphology, but very restricted background. The third type of text is illustrated by Text 4, where the association between perfective morphology and foreground is categorical, but the elaborated background presents a large variation in tense forms. The common denominator of these texts is the strong association between perfective morphology and foreground. The prevalent use of perfective morphology in contexts requiring events presented as temporally bounded suggests that students mapped perfective aspect into perfective morphology. Perfective morphology is used to "mark out a main route through the narrative and divert in some way those parts of the narrative which are not strictly relevant to this route" (Hopper, 1979, p. 239). The background seems to develop at a slower pace, which may be connected to its complexity, the markedness of IMP (Wiberg, 1996), and the difficulty of integrating the imperfective aspect into the IL (Giacalone Ramat, 2002; Rosi, 2009a).

7.4. The high proficiency group

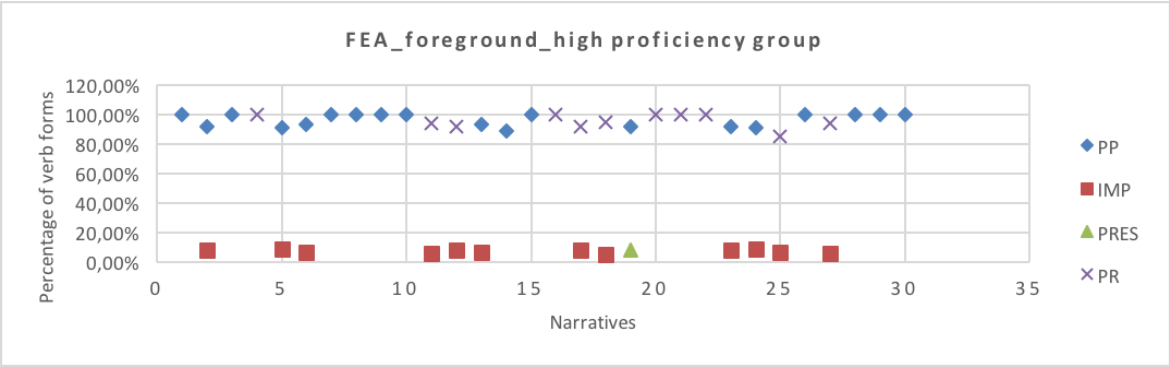
Texts in the high proficiency group are characterised by a categorical association between foreground and perfective morphology, which occurs in 85% to 100% of foreground contexts, as observable in Graph 7.7. Occasionally, the foreground may contain a bare participle or a past infinitive, while the use of IMP in the FG is less frequent compared to the upper-intermediate group. Even though it occurs in 43% of the texts, it only affects 5% to 8% of the FG contexts within a text (i.e. there is only one overextension per text). On the other hand, 57% of the high proficiency texts contain exclusively perfective marking in the foreground. The use of perfective morphology in the background is occasional, observable in only 5 out of 29 texts[41]. Thus, it can be assumed that perfective aspect has been mapped into perfective morphology.

Graph 7.8 reveals a strong association between IMP and background, which occurs in 60% to 100% of BG contexts. In 9 out of 29 texts the frequency of IMP in the background reaches 100%, while in the remaining narratives, IMP is occasionally replaced by other verb forms conveying the imperfective aspect, such as GER and sometimes PRES. The use of PRES in the background shows a significant decrease compared to the upper-intermediate

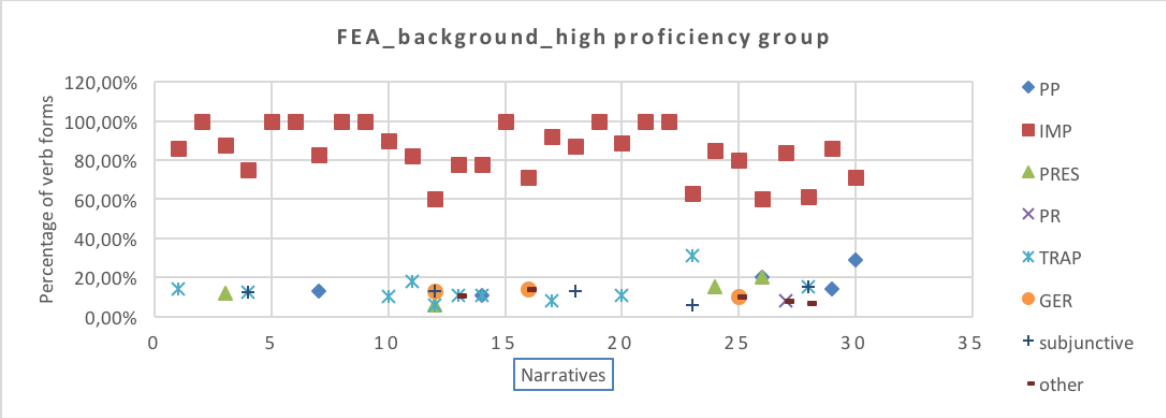
[41] In 2 out of 5 cases, PP is used in a context requiring an anaphoric tense expressing relative anteriority; in 3 cases PERF marking is used in an imperfective context.

group. Its occasional occurrence does not seem to follow a specific pattern; it is therefore not possible to identify contexts where students would typically switch to PRES. TRAP is used exclusively in the background and conveys relative anteriority, it never appears in the foreground.

Graph 7.7.



Graph 7.8.



The distribution of verbal morphology observable in the high proficiency group suggests that students integrated both perfective and imperfective aspect into their interlanguage, as illustrated by Text 5. In this narrative, the foreground is systematically marked with PR, that conveys the aoristic aspect, while 1 out of 18 FG contexts contains a bare participle. The background displays prevalently IMP marking. Clauses [1 BG] to [3 BG] introduce the main character, while clauses [4 BG] and [5 BG] express simultaneity with the main story line. Clause [6 BG] contains a GER with a causal meaning which is, as pointed out by Schwarze (1988, p. 190), associated the expression of simultaneity. Given that the foreground is marked with Passato Remoto, the relative anteriority is expressed by Trapassato Remoto in [7 BG], which represents the only occurrence of this tense in the present corpus. Although

the use of this tense respects the *consecution temporum* principle, the native speaker raters have pointed out that they would have preferred the use of TRAP[42].

Text 5.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
	[1 BG] C'era una volta una bambina chiamata Capuccetto Rosso
	[2 BG] che ~~Un giorno~~ abitava con sua madre in una piccola casa nel bosco.
[1 FG] Un giorno la madre decise di mandare la sua figlia dalla nonna,	[3 BG] che abitava dall'altra parte del bosco,
	per portarla una bottiglia di vino e una torta.
[2 FG] Il Cappuccetto Rosso parti subito	
[3 FG] però dopo la metà del corso perse il cammino.	
[4 FG] Nel bosco buio incontrò ~~il lupo~~ un lupo	
[5 FG] che provò a mangiarlo	
[6 FG] però il Capuccetto Rosso riuscì a scappare.	
[7 FG] Arrivata dalla nonna	
[8 FG] ~~il C~~ la bambina ~~pi~~ si sedé vicino al letto	
[9 FG] e cominciò a raccontarla una storia.	
[10 FG] Dopo un po' di tempo ~~la nonna~~ il Capuccetto Rosso si accorse	[4 BG] che la nonna aveva un aspetto strano.
[11 FG] Chiese	"Perché hai gli occhi così grandi?"
[12 FG] La nonna rispose	"Per vederti più chiaro"
[13 FG] ~~A~~ Il Capucetto chiese di nuovo:	"Perché hai una bocca così grande, nonna? "
[14 FG] e la nonna risposée	"[cancellation] così ~~ti posso~~ e più facile di mangiarti".
[15 FG] Subito ~~di la il~~ la bambina si accorse	[5 BG] che era il lupo
[16 FG] e ~~g~~ cominciò a gridare.	
	[6 BG] /Sentendo le grida/
[17 FG] arrivì il cacciatore	
[18 FG] e salvò il Capuccetto Rosso e la nonna	[7 BG] che il lupo ebbe mangiato.

Apart from this occasional use of Trapassato Remoto, relative anteriority is consistently marked with TRAP in the high proficiency group[43], as illustrated in Excerpt 7.

Excerpt 7.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[1 FG] Dopo essermi alzata alla solita ora (circa verso le sei e mezza)	
[2 FG] sono andata in cucina a fare colazione.	
	[BG 1] Lì i miei genitori mi aspettavano già con molta ansia.

[42] A reason for this may be that Trapassato Remoto only occurs in temporal clauses, where the conclusion of the event is seen as immediately preceding the reference moment (Wiberg, 2011b). Furthermore, Trapassato Remoto is sporadically used in standard Italian, in fact, according to Wiberg (ibid.), "è una forma praticamente inesistente, dato che il suo uso è ristretto alla lingua letteraria di tono elevato e a volte arcaizzante, e, dal Novecento in poi, non se ne hanno che isolate occorrenze".

[43] The use of PP in a context conveying relative anteriority in observable in two texts. It affects contexts where the use of PP instead of TRAP seems acceptable. In fact, as pointed out in 2.1.2.1, PP is characterised by a flexibility of meaning, which allows for the use of PP as an anaphoric tense, locating a situation on the timeline with respect to a reference point, as exemplified in the sentence *La casa è crollata dopo che sei uscito* (from Bertinetto, 1986, p. 421).

	[BG2] Mia mamma mi aveva preparato un piatto di frutta fresca tagliata
	[BG 3] ed era già andata al panificio a comprarmi i miei panini preferiti.

To sum up, the distinguishing features of the high proficiency group are the categorical association between perfective morphology and the foreground, and the consistency of background marking, carried out by means of IMP, occasionally replaced by GER or PRES. The use of past tense morphology according to discourse grounding principles suggests that students integrated the perfective/imperfective distinction into their IL. In addition to tense marking, they use perfective morphology when referring to complete events presented in their globality; while imperfective morphology is used to convey temporal unboundedness. The use of PP or PR in the background, and, vice versa, the use of IMP in the foreground is occasional.

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7.5. Summary

To sum up, the frequency analysis enables a description of the proficiency groups on the basis of the linguistic devices students used in the foreground and background of narratives. Low proficiency narratives display a use of past tense forms independently from discourse grounding principles, which suggests that students use past tense forms to mark tense but not aspect, apart from occasional attempts to mark perfective aspect prevalently on telic predicates. Intermediate proficiency learners start integrating aspect making into their IL, which is observable in the use of perfective marking in the foreground, and imperfective marking in the background. However, the temporal value of tense forms is likely to prevail over their aspectual meaning. This may be the cause of the inconsistent association between verbal morphology and discourse grounding, observable in the use of imperfective morphology in the foreground, and perfective morphology in the background. The upper-intermediate group is distinguished by a strong but not absolute association between foreground and perfective marking, suggesting that perfective marking has been integrated into the IL. Background marking in upper-intermediate narratives seems to be less consistent, displaying a variety of tense forms used with a variable degree of appropriateness, suggesting that the background develops at a slower pace. The high proficiency group is characterised by a categorical association between perfective morphology and foreground, and consistency of background marking carried out prevalently by IMP, sometimes GER, and occasionally PRES. High proficiency texts suggest that the learners integrated the perfective/imperfective distinction into their IL.

Chapter 8
The effect of lexical aspect on the distribution of past tense morphology

The previous chapters focused on morphological aspect marking and its correlation with discourse grounding. The appropriateness and the distribution of verb forms in the interlanguage was examined against the background of discourse grounding principles, in terms of accuracy rates and frequency counts. However, as pointed out in Chapter 2, aspect is a multidimensional phenomenon and is also present on the lexical level. Lexical aspect interacts with both verbal morphology and discourse grounding. For instance, telic predicates referring to events with an inherent endpoint on the lexical level are likely to be viewed in their completeness, as temporally bounded. This increases their likelihood of being marked with perfective morphology and of appearing in the foreground, which contains events viewed as temporally bounded, reduced to points on the time axis, with no reference to their internal complexity and duration (Dry, 1983).

On the other hand, stative verbs and activities refer to situations with inherent duration and no implication of an endpoint. On the morphological level, they are more likely to be viewed as temporally unbounded and, consequently, to be marked with imperfective morphology. From a discourse perspective, they are likely to appear in the background, which contains temporally unbounded situations such as descriptions, events overlapping or simultaneous with the main story line, etc. Thus, the distribution of tense forms in the narratives is affected by semantic prototypes, resulting from the semantic affinity between features related to lexical aspect, morphological marking and discourse grounding (e.g., semantic solidarity between telicity, perfectivity and foreground). Bertinetto (1986, p. 109) notes that semantically congruent combinations of lexical aspect and verbal morphology are more frequent in the input than non-congruent combinations. The frequency of semantic prototypes is also observable in developing linguistic systems in both L1 and L2 acquisition. This observation led to the formulation of the LAH (Andersen & Shirai, 1994), which predicts that learners acquire tense/aspect distinctions starting from their prototype, in the sense that they select verbal morphology on the basis of the lexical aspectual properties of the predicates. For this reason, as pointed out in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, coding of predicates for lexical aspect is a frequently used methodological tool in research on the acquisition of

tense and aspect, and several studies consider lexical aspect as an explanatory factor for the distribution of verbal morphology in the interlanguage. However, the studies display numerous differences concerning the definition of lexical aspectual classes and the analytical techniques.

As pointed out in Chapter 5, the present study adopts a three-way classification. Following the studies conducted by Wiberg (1996), Rosi (2009a) and Salaberry (2005, 2011), predicates are characterised along the dimensions of telicity and dynamicity. This allows for the identification of the three lexical aspectual categories:

State	[- dynamic] [- telic]
Activity	[+dynamic] [-telic]
Telic	[+dynamic] [+telic]

The present chapter investigates the distribution of verbal morphology within these three lexical aspectual categories in order to examine to what extent the selection of verb forms is influenced by the lexical aspectual class of the predicates and consequently by semantic prototypes. As pointed out in Chapter 4, there are two contrasting accounts in the scientific literature about Italian tense/aspect acquisition. On one side, several studies (e.g., Bernini, 1990a, 1990b; Banfi & Bernini, 2003) claim that lexical aspect triggers the acquisition of tense and aspect, in the sense that learners build up the interlanguage tense/aspect system starting from prototypical combinations of lexical aspect and verbal morphology. On the other hand, recent research has argued that the formation of semantic prototypes presumes a developed awareness of the lexical aspectual properties of target language predicates, as well as the mapping of aspectual distinctions into verbal morphology. It is therefore problematic to assume that initial learners of a language have such awareness and can use it in building up the target-language tense-aspect system. An alternative hypothesis is proposed by Bertinetto et al. (2015), on the basis of data from L1 Italian acquisition. This hypothesis claims that learners build up the target-language tense/aspect system on the basis of morphological evidence from the input. Given that Italian is a temporality-prominent language, students may acquire tense-marking contemporarily or even before aspect-marking. This hypothesis is consistent with the pattern found by Wiberg (1996), who discovered that bilingual learners of Italian, as well as native speakers, used Passato Prossimo primarily for tense marking in spoken language. The aspectual opposition between perfective and imperfective past tenses appeared to be a “secondary opposition” in their linguistic production (Wiberg, 1996, p. 1110).

The following sections will analyse the distribution of verbal morphology within lexical aspectual classes against the background of these two hypotheses. As pointed out in 5.3.4.5, when coding predicates for lexical aspect, type frequency rather than token frequency is taken into account, meaning that within a text, the same combination of lexical aspect and verbal morphology is counted only once. The analysis will focus on clauses containing one of the following verb forms: Passato Prossimo (PP), Passato Remoto (PR), Imperfetto (IMP). As pointed out in Chapter 6, clauses marked with anaphoric tenses, verb forms outside the indicative paradigm, and those containing aspectually ambiguous tenses will not be considered for the analysis. An exception is made for a few occurrences of Gerund [GER] and Progressive Periphrasis [PROG], included in the analysis.

Although the clauses have been coded for appropriateness for the target-oriented obligatory occasion analysis (Chapter 6), the coding for lexical aspect is not restricted to verbal forms appearing in the appropriate contexts. On the contrary, the overall distribution of verb forms PP, PR and IMP within lexical aspectual classes will be examined before turning attention to the distribution of these tense forms in the appropriate contexts. Given that the expression of the imperfective aspect by means of Progressive Periphrasis and Gerund concerns a very limited number of narratives, only marginal attention will be dedicated to this phenomenon.

8.1 The low proficiency group

Low proficiency group learners, as pointed out in 6.2.2 and 7.1, seem to use verbal morphology independently of discourse grounding principles. The most frequently used tense is IMP, highly likely to appear both in the FG and the BG of narratives and used across lexical aspectual classes. Including the criterion of lexical aspect into the analysis suggests that this factor cannot account for the distribution of verbal morphology.

Table 8.1. shows that states and activities, which are prototypically associated with imperfect morphology, do not show a significant tendency to be inflected with IMP compared to telic predicates, semantically congruent with perfective morphology. The proportion of statives and activities marked with IMP is 81% and 73% respectively, while the percentage of telic predicates carrying IMP is 65%. Like IMP, perfective tenses also seem to be used independently of their semantic affinity with lexical aspect. The share of telic predicates marked with perfective morphology is 35%. Activities are almost as likely to carry perfective marking as telic predicates (27%), while the proportion of states marked with perfective morphology is slightly lower (19%).

Table 8.1. Distribution of verbal morphology within lexical aspectual classes in the low proficiency group

	PERF in FG	PERF in BG	IMP in BG	IMP in FG
TELIC (N=106)	35% (37)	0% (0)	10% (11)	55% (58)
ACTIVITY (N=22)	23% (5)	4% (1)	18% (4)	55% (12)
STATE (N=69)	9% (6)	10% (7)	76% (52)	5% (4)

A slightly more evident aspectual pattern in the distribution of verbal morphology emerges when looking at the columns marked with grey, representing the contexts where verbal morphology is applied according to discourse grounding principles, meaning that PERF is used in the foreground and IMP in the background. In this case, an aspectual pattern emerges in the background, in the sense that IMP in the background is primarily associated with statives; the proportion of statives marked with IMP in the background is 76%. This proportion drops to 10% for telic predicates. However, the aspectual pattern does not affect activities, for which the percentage of IMP marking in the BG is only 18%. A less evident aspectual pattern is observable in the foreground, where the highest proportion of PERF marking in appropriate contexts is observable within the class of telic predicates (35%), followed by activities (23%) and states (9%). However, this pattern may be connected to coding decisions, based on the acceptability of tense forms in the context of their occurrence. Given that low proficiency texts contained mostly IMP morphology, they did not provide any morphological clue about temporal boundedness and grounding. The main criterion used to identify the foreground was sequentiality, and temporal boundedness was inferred from the context. Clauses with state verbs were likely to be interpreted as temporally unbounded, and assigned to the background. In fact, 52 out of 56 clauses containing states marked with IMP were coded as background, and, consequently, as correct applications of IMP. The opposite situation is observable in the case of telic predicates, which were likely to be interpreted as part of the narrative sequence. Even though IMP was applied to 65% of telic predicates, in most cases, it was coded as an overextension of IMP to the foreground. Only 11 out of 69 clauses containing a telic predicate with IMP marking were coded as background. This phenomenon is observable in Excerpt 1, where almost every clause is marked with IMP. The clauses coded as background contain stative verbs marked with IMP, which seem to denote a temporally overlapping situation [2 BG] and a characterisation of an individual [3 BG] and [4 BG]. The clauses coded as foreground contain telic predicates marked with IMP. Despite their morphological marking, they seem to refer to sequentially ordered events, demonstrating that IMP is being used across lexical aspectual classes, regardless of grounding, and temporal boundedness has to be inferred from the context. For

instance, the event referred to in [8 FG] is unlikely to take place before the completion of the event in [7 FG].

Excerpt 1.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[7 FG] Entrava nella casa	
[8 FG] e vedeva la sua nonna,	[2 BG] che giaceva ~~in~~ nel letto.
	"Nonna è molto strano oggi"
	lei pensa[44]
[9 FG] e chiedeva	[3 BG] lei perché aveva i grandi occhi etc.
[10 FG] Per l'ultimo Cappuccetto Rosso lei chiedeva	[4 BG] perché aveva questa bocca grande.

On the other hand, clauses containing telic predicates with perfective marking were highly likely to be coded as foreground. In fact, this combination was never coded as overextension in this sub-corpus. Even though perfective morphology seems less likely to be overextended than imperfective morphology, its application to telic predicates appears to be occasional rather than systematic at this proficiency level. Excerpt 2 exemplifies the occasional switch to PP in the FG, observable in several texts in the low-proficiency group. In this case, 3 out of 5 telic predicates are marked with IMP, while 2 carry PP marking.

Excerpt 2.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[7 FG] Quando la bambina arrivava ci	
[8 FG] il lupo mangiava anche lei	
[9 FG] un po' dopo il cacciatore ha visto il ~~lupo~~ animale nella casa di nonna,	
[10 FG]~~-e~~ lo tagliava	
[11 FG] e ho preso la bambina e la vecchia donna fuori della pancia	

To summarise, the most frequently used tense in the low proficiency group is IMP, applied to both telic and atelic predicates, and used in both foreground and background contexts. The perfective past seems to be more likely to appear in the foreground than in the background. However, the low proportion of telic predicates marked with perfective morphology, and the frequent overextension of IMP to contexts where perfective marking is expected, suggest that learners are struggling to differentiate between the function of perfective and imperfective past tenses. The slight aspectual pattern emerging from the appropriate use of verbal morphology (prevalence of imperfective marking within statives and perfective marking within telic predicates) may be connected to the interaction between the three levels of aspectuality (lexical aspect, morphological aspect and grounding), and

[44] In this clause, the aspectually neutral present tense could be replaced by both PERF and IMP, thus, it could be both foregrounded or backgrounded, depending on the speaker's intention. Given that the tense used by the learner is aspectually neutral and the context does not provide any information about the discourse function of the clause, it was excluded from the OOA and consequently from the coding for lexical aspect.

coding strategies. For instance, in a text written by using exclusively IMP, statives were likely to be coded as background, and consequently to be considered appropriate use of verbal morphology. However, this use of IMP with statives in the background can hardly be considered the result of students' sensitivity to semantic prototypes. The lack of an evident semantic bias in the data, together with the use of verbal morphology regardless of discourse grounding substantiate the hypothesis advanced in Chapters 6 and 7, namely that low proficiency learners use past tenses for tense marking rather than aspect marking. A similar pattern has been observed by Salaberry (2003) in L2 Spanish acquisition, and in Wiberg's (1996) data, collected from Swedish-Italian bilinguals. The difference between the latter study and the present data is that the prevalent tense in Wiberg's data is the perfective past tense PP. This difference may be connected to the data elicitation instrument, and learners' linguistic backgrounds. Wiberg's study was based on partially planned dialogues, where "certain topics such as activities during the most recent vacation, projects for the coming summer/winter holidays, family situations, visits to Italy, and interests were stressed" (Wiberg, 1996, p. 1089). Oral accounts, based on personal experiences are likely to trigger the use of PP. On the other hand, impersonal narratives in written format, which are prevalent in the present sub-corpus, seem to induce to use of IMP, especially among learners with L1 German. When writing an impersonal narrative in German, learners would have used *Präteritum*, structurally similar to Italian IMP[45]. Thus, the strong L1 influence in the low proficiency groups is observable on both formal and functional level, in the sense that learners seem to use past tense morphology for tense marking, and chose the past tense form on the basis of its formal similarity to tense forms in their L1.

8.2 The intermediate proficiency group

The intermediate proficiency group seems to represent the transition from tense marking to tense and aspect marking. The texts are characterised by the use of PERF morphology prevalently in the foreground, while IMP occurs prevalently in the background. It is especially notable that overextension rates in FG show a significant decrease compared to the low proficiency group. The proportion of telic predicates with imperfective marking in

[45] This type of transfer is not observable in Wiberg's data, despite the presence of a simple past tense form in Swedish, *preteritum*, which is structurally similar to both German *Präteritum* and Italian *Imperfetto*, and conveys both the perfective and the imperfective aspect. This difference between the present data and Wiberg's data might be connected to a number of factors, such as the different status of Italian in learner's linguistic repertoire, differences in mode of language acquisition, access to input, etc.

the foreground decreases from 55% to 8%. Similarly, the proportion of activities with IMP marking in the foreground decreases from 55% to 16%. Only the tendency to overextend statives with IMP marking increases. As the next sections will show, the morphological marking of statives generates uncertainties throughout the acquisition process. A similar pattern was observed in L3 acquisition of Portuguese by Salaberry (2005, p. 193), who claims that states are a marked category that generates acquisitional challenges.

The data summarised in Table 8.2 show a conjunct effect of lexical aspect and discourse grounding in both the distribution of lexical aspectual classes across levels of discourse grounding and the distribution of verbal morphology within lexical aspectual classes. Telic predicates are predominantly marked with PERF (83%), while states are principally marked with IMP (83%). This semantic bias is also observable in the grey columns, showing the proportion of verb forms used according to discourse grounding principles. 81% of telic predicates is marked with perfective morphology and appears in the foreground, while 64% of statives is marked with IMP and appears in the background. However, as pointed out in Chapter 7, this group is characterised by a limited but constant tendency to overextend imperfective verb forms to the foreground and, vice versa, perfective verb forms to the background. The highest percentages of overextension involve prototypical combinations of lexical aspect and verbal morphology, i.e. activities and states marked with IMP. This tendency suggests that the integration of aspect marking into the IL is in progress and, in some cases, the effect of lexical aspect may override the effect of discourse grounding principles. Stative verbs and activities marked with imperfective morphology are in fact the most likely to be overextended (19% and 16% respectively).

Table 8.2. Distribution of verbal morphology within lexical aspectual classes in the intermediate proficiency group

	PERF in FG	PERF in BG	IMP in BG	IMP in FG
TELIC (N=180)	81% (146)	2% (3)	9% (16)	8% (15)
ACTIVITY (N=42)	60% (25)	0% (0)	24% (10)	16% (7)
STATE (N=150)	8% (12)	9% (13)	64% (97)	19% (28)

In several cases, the overuse of an activity predicate with imperfective marking seems to derive from the learner's attempt to mark the inherent duration of a process on the morphological level, observable in [11 FG] of Excerpt 3. However, when part of a narrative sequence, processes with internal duration should be reduced to single points on the time axis, to sustain the perception of sequentiality and time movement (Dry, 1983).

Excerpt 3.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[9 FG] Un po' di giorni dopo [l'esame di maturità] sono uscita con tutta la classe,	
[10 FG] siamo andati in un ristorante ~~a~~ e poi in città a un bar.	
[11 FG] Ci divertavamo	
[12 FG] e siamo tornati a casa molto tardi.	

Excerpt 4 illustrates the occasional overuse of IMP with activities and states in a text, where the foreground is prevalently marked with PP, while the background is prevalently marked with IMP, with occasional switch to PRES.

Excerpt 4.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[6 FG] Ho cominciato con l'inglese	per fortuna, è una delle mie materie preferite[46].
	[4 BG] Ma il professore sapeva questo
[7 FG] e mi ha dato un testo molto difficile su "Genderfascism".	
[8 FG] Dopo il tempo di preparazione ho davuto presentare il mio testo e descrivere i miei pensieri e le mie emozioni.	
	[5 BG] Ero ancora molto nervosa,
[9 FG] ma dopo le parole rilassanti del mio prof. ero calma	
[10 FG] e potevo [cancellation] farlo bene.	
[…]	
[14 FG] Immediatamente dopo ~~la~~ i miei esami, aspettavo i miei colleghi […]	

In this text, the overextension of IMP to the foreground in clauses [9 FG] and [14 FG] seems to be connected to the learner's attempt to mark the beginning of a situation. This seems to be a challenging task for learners, and leads to the overextension of IMP throughout the acquisition process. Learners tend to use verbs with a general meaning marked with IMP (*essere [calma]; aspettare*), instead of choosing a verb that expresses the inchoative aspect (*calmarsi*) or an inchoative periphrasis (*mettersi ad aspettare*) and marking it with perfective morphology. Instead of marking sequentiality by means of lexical aspect and verbal morphology, the learner tries to create the effect of temporal movement by means of the temporal preposition *dopo*, reinforced by the adverb *immediatamente* in [14 FG]. In [10 FG] the modal verb *potere* appears to be used in place of a telic predicate with a more specific meaning such as *sostenere [l'esame con successo]*. In this case, IMP morphology may be

[46] This clause was excluded from the analysis, because it seems to be a comment, rather than part of the narrative structure.

attracted by the presence of a modal verb, prevalently marked with IMP throughout the corpus.

As discussed in Chapter 7, the background of intermediate proficiency narratives presents a large variety of tense forms. The most frequent verb form in the background is IMP, followed by PP and PRES. The latter typically occurs in subordinate clauses, where IMP is required by the past tense form used in the matrix clause. In other cases, it conveys gnomic imperfectivity, denoting a property, as observable in Excerpt 4 (*per fortuna, è una delle mie materie preferite*), and in example (1), and it seems to express a comment:

(1) Avevo ~~il~~ un thema di giovane ragazze che sono dipendente di Facebook o altri "social media".

Given that present tense conveys both the perfective and the imperfective aspect, the clauses with PRES were not taken into account when counting the distribution of tense forms within lexical aspectual classes. However, it is noticeable that in the intermediate sub-corpus, PRES is almost exclusively applied to stative verbs in the background (in 11 out of 14 occurrences). This tendency is consistent with the pattern identified by Giacalone Ramat (2002, p. 228), who notes that when learners start acquiring aspectual distinctions, "the use of imperfect forms to code the imperfective past is inconsistent since the present as unmarked form may still be used for imperfective past".

As pointed out by Rosi (2009a, p. 109) and Rocca (2005, p. 138), imperfective aspect is a scalar category, in the sense that its various sub-domains can be located along a continuum of prototypicality. Table 8.3 summarises the frequency of the different subdomains of imperfective aspect in the present corpus, and their distribution within lexical aspectual classes.

Table 8.3. Distribution of imperfective subdomains in BG

	Continuous	Gnomic	Progressive
TELIC (N=16)	62,5% (10)	25% (4)	12,5% (2)
ACTIVITY (N=10)	60% (6)	20% (2)	20% (2)
STATE (N=96)	81% (78)	19% (19)	0% (0)

Consistent with the pattern observed by Rosi (2009a) and Rocca (2002, 2005), the continuous aspect, being the most prototypical meaning of IMP, seems to be the first sub-domain of imperfective aspect to enter the interlanguage. The semantic congruity between continuous aspect and stativity leads learners to associate high frequency stative verbs with imperfective morphology, as exemplified in the background clauses in Excerpt 5, where IMP

is restricted to the verb *essere*[47], and the modal verbs *potere* and *dovere*[48]. In this passage, the clauses from [3 BG] to [6 BG] may be interpreted as an amplification of the event referred to in [3 FG], viewed as a single unanalysable whole. Furthermore, from a temporal perspective, IMP in [6 BG] may be interpreted as conveying relative posteriority[49].

Excerpt 5.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[2 FG] Mi ero svegliata alle sei di mattina[50]	
	[1 BG] perché non potevo più dormire.
	[2 BG] Ero molto nervosa.
	[3 BG] I miei 4 esami orali erano nel pomeriggio.
	[4 BG] La prima materia era l'Inglese.
	[5 BG] Era la § prima volta per me
	[6 BG] dove ~~potevo~~ dovevo parlare in una lingua straniera/per qualche minuti/ davanti ai miei insegnanti e alle altre persone.
[3 FG] Per fortuna, ho passato tutti gli esami	
[4 FG] e dopo tutta la /mia/ classe ha ~~celeb~~ festeggiato per tutta la notte.	
[5 FG] Francamente abbiamo bevuto troppo	
[6 FG] e abbiamo mangiato benissimo!	
[7 FG] Dopo il cena un tasi ci ha portato in una discoteca.	

Gnomic imperfectivity seems to enter the interlanguage at the intermediate proficiency level. Several texts suggest that in the intermediate proficiency group, students already use IMP with the function of characterising a referent (Bertinetto & Lenci, 2012), observable in Excerpt 6.

Excerpt 6.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
	[1 BG] C'era una volta una piccola ragazza
	[2 BG] si vestiva spesso un cappotto rosso
	[3 BG] ed andava ogni giorno con un cesto con una bottiglia di vino rosso ed un dolce ad sua nonna
	[4 BG] che viveva nel bosco.
[1 FG] Una volta un lupo ha mangiato la nonna	
[2 FG] e poi il lupo stava in letto	[5 BG] come la nonna faceva spesso.

[47] Several studies (cfr. Banfi & Bernini, 2003) note that the first verb to be marked with IMP in the interlanguage is the verb *essere.* This verb is generally considered a "tense carrier" in studies on language acquisition, meaning that it is inflected with tense/aspect morphology earlier than other statives (cfr. Giacalone Ramat 1992).

[48] This tendency has also been observed by Wiberg (2009).

[49] This function of IMP is referred to as *imperfetto prospettico* (Wiberg, 2010).

[50] As pointed out in Chapter 7, at this proficiency level, TRAP is sometimes used to convey sequentially ordered events, and students do not seem to be aware of its anaphoric nature.

In this excerpt, the background clauses seem to convey different subtypes of gnomic imperfectivity, such as the habitual aspect in [2 BG], [3 BG] and [5 BG], involving [+dynamic] predicates and referring to them as regularly occurring; while clauses [1 BG] and [4 BG] denote a characterising condition. Gnomic imperfect is present in 6 out of 31 texts in the present sub-corpus, suggesting that students have already started the integration of gnomic imperfectivity into their IL. However, as observed above, at this proficiency level IMP is sometimes overextended to the foreground, especially in context that require to focus on the beginning of a process. This is observable in [2 FG], where IMP was applied to a stative predicate, in a context requiring perfective marking and a verb with inchoative meaning such as *mettersi [a letto]*.

As observable in Table 8.3, continuous aspect seems to be the most widespread subdomain of imperfective aspect in the intermediate group. However, this pattern might be influenced by the prevalent text type in this sub-corpus, containing 23 narratives about the day of students' school leaving examination, and 8 texts about Little Red Riding Hood. When talking about the day of their school leaving examination, students tend to dedicate the background of their narratives to the description of mental states and circumstances valid for a delimited time frame, the day of the examination, as observable in Excerpt 5. This tendency implies that the texts rarely contain information of general validity, conveyed by gnomic imperfectivity. This type of imperfective aspect is more likely to occur in texts telling the story of Little Red Riding Hood, which often start with a short description of the main characters, as observable in Excerpt 6. The appearance of gnomic imperfectivity already in the intermediate proficiency group contradicts the pattern found by Rosi (2009a) and Wiberg (2009), who claim that habitual aspect, a subdomain of gnomic imperfectivity, is the last imperfective subdomain to enter the interlanguage. However, this research outcome might be influenced by the elicitation instrument. The film retelling task in Rosi's (2009a) study may have induced participants to focus on the main story line. Dialogues about personal experiences such as the last holiday in Wiberg's (2009) study may also have induced speakers to focus on events and situations within a delimited time frame, rather than providing information of general validity conveyed by gnomic imperfectives. Conversely, telling the story of Little Red Riding Hood induces descriptions of the main characters, by using gnomic imperfectives.

Consistent with the observations made by Rosi (2009a) and Rocca (2002, 2005), progressive aspect, being the less prototypical meaning conveyed by IMP, seem to enter the interlanguage at a slower pace than continuous aspect. Since activities are temporally

unbounded on the lexical level, and are semantically congruent with the progressive aspect, the Lexical Aspect Hypothesis predicts that "progressive marking begins with activities, then extends to accomplishments and achievements" (Bardovi-Harlig, 2002, p. 130). However, in the present sub-corpus, activities are more likely to carry perfective marking rather than IMP. For instance, the clauses from [4 FG] to [6 FG] in Excerpt 5 refer to a single occurrence of activities presented in their completeness, regardless of their internal complexity and temporal extension implied on the lexical level. At this proficiency level, progressive marking is only occasionally observable, and is applied to both activities (Excerpt 7) and telic predicates (Excerpt 8). Congruently with LAH, progressive marking is not overextended to stative verbs.

Excerpt 7.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[4 FG] Al momento quando ho realizzato	[6 BG] che tutti gli insegnanti guardavano a me,
[5 FG] diventava nervoso.	

Excerpt 8.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[1 FG] Purtroppo Cappuccetto Rosso ha incontrato questo lupo	[8 BG] mentre andava alla nonna

Progressive periphrasis occurs in only two texts in the intermediate proficiency sub-corpus, which is congruent with the observation that at this proficiency level, learners are more likely to mark the continuous aspect and gnomic imperfectivity.

To sum up, the above reported examples demonstrate learners' sensitivity to aspectual distinctions on both a lexical and a morphological level. One of the most evident signs of such sensitivity is the tendency to use perfective morphology applied to telic predicates in the foreground. Thus, the temporal boundedness, characteristic of narrative foreground, seems to be mapped into perfective morphology, and learners seem to recognise the semantic affinity between temporal boundedness and telicity. In addition, the consistency of this association is demonstrated by the strong tendency to use telic predicates with perfective marking in the appropriate contexts, with a low rate of overextension (2%). The assumption that perfective marking is acquired earlier than imperfective marking seems to be further corroborated by the prevalent use of activities with perfective marking in the foreground (60%). Even though activities do not imply an inherent endpoint on the lexical level, students are able to present them as temporally bounded, when they are part of a narrative sequence.

However, at this proficiency level, the distinction between perfective and imperfective aspect does not seem to be consistent, given the tendency to overextend imperfective marking to the foreground. In fact, congruently with the LAH, imperfective

aspect seems to be acquired at a slower pace than perfective aspect. IMP is mostly applied to stative verbs, which denote continuous situations that are unlikely to change, and are therefore semantically congruent with imperfective aspect. When statives are part of a narrative sequence, the semantic affinity between statives and imperfect marking may override the effect of lexical aspect, and lead to the overextension of IMP to the foreground. In fact, 19% of statives are marked with IMP appearing in the foreground. In a similar way, 16% of activities are marked with IMP, despite being part of a narrative sequence.

8.3 The upper-intermediate proficiency group

The most salient feature of the upper-intermediate group is a nearly complete association between foreground, perfective morphology and telicity. The data summarised in Table 8.4. reveal that 96% of the telic types in the present sub-corpus appear in the foreground, and carry PERF marking. There is not a single occasion of overextension of telic predicates marked with perfective morphology to the background. Furthermore, perfective morphology is also extended to activities. Despite being semantically congruent with imperfective aspect, 78% of activities appear with perfective marking in the foreground. The categorical association between semantically congruent aspectual features, together with the low tendency to overextension of both prototypical and non-prototypical pairings of lexical aspect and verbal morphology, suggest that students integrated perfective aspect marking into their interlanguage, and use perfective morphology to mark the foreground of their narratives. The few remaining uncertainties concern the background and imperfective marking, especially the morphological marking of statives.

The proportion of stative verbs marked with imperfect morphology shows a slight decrease, as compared to the intermediate group. In the latter group, the overall rate of IMP marking on statives amounts to 83%, while it decreases to 69% in the upper-intermediate group. The same is observable on activity predicates. In the intermediate group, 40% of activities are marked with IMP, while this proportion decreases to 19% in the upper-intermediate narratives. However, the association between atelicity, imperfective marking and background seems to have gained stability, because the most significant decrease concerns the rates of overextension. Contrary to the intermediate group, where activities and states carrying imperfective marking are likely to be used in the foreground (16% and 19% respectively), this tendency shows a significant decrease in the upper-intermediate group (2% for activities and 7% for states).

Thus, the tendencies observable in the background suggest that imperfective marking is a more challenging task for the learners, and is integrated into the IL at a slower pace than perfective marking.

Table 8.4. Distribution of verbal morphology within lexical aspectual classes in the upper-intermediate proficiency group

	PERF in FG	PERF in BG	IMP in BG	IMP in FG
TELIC (N=471)	96% (447)	0% (0)	2% (12)	2% (10)
ACTIVITY (N=122)	78% (94)	3% (4)	17% (21)	2% (3)
STATE (N=294)	26% (76)	5% (15)	62% (181)	7% (22)

Excerpt 9 illustrates the main patterns identified in the upper-intermediate group. The foreground is characterised by the prevalent presence of telic predicates, marked with perfective morphology to convey temporal boundedness on the morphological level. Activities are also marked with perfective morphology, as exemplified in clause [10 FG], where the verb *festeggiare* is marked with PP and presented as a single point on the time axis, with no reference to its internal duration. Furthermore, this excerpt illustrates the consistent use of imperfect morphology with stative predicates to convey the continuous aspect in [1 BG] and [5 BG]; and gnomic imperfectivity in [2 BG].

Excerpt 9.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[1 FG] Non mi sono alzata presto,	[1 BG] perché il mio esame c'era solo dopo mezzogiorno.
[2 FG] Sono andata a scuola verso le due di pomeriggio	
[3 FG] e ho avuto gli esami di musica, italiano e chimica (sempre con un oretta di pausa).	
[4 FG] Per l'esame di musica ho cantato una canzone	[2 BG] che faceva parte del mio "Spezialgebiet",
	[3 BG] cioè il tema che ho scelto per scrivere un lavoro più grande.[51]
[…]	[…]
[8 FG] Quando ho saputo i voti	
[9 FG] ho subito telefonato a tutta la famiglia	[5 BG] perche ero così felice.
[10 FG] Dopo di che ho festeggiato con il mio fidanzato,	
[11 FG] lui mi ha regalato alcune piccole cose	
[12 FG] e anche dalla mia mamma ho ricevuto un regalo.	

The frequent use of activity predicates in the foreground can be observed in Excerpt 10, where clauses [7 FG] and [10 FG] refer to events with an internal duration and no inherent endpoint, but are presented as a single, unanalysable whole. Clause [11 FG] contains a

[51] As pointed out in Chapter 7, only the high proficiency group shows full integration of relative anteriority into the IL. Up to the high proficiency group, relative anteriority is not systematically encoded by TRAP. PP may occur in contexts where TRAP is expected and, vice versa TRAP is occasionally used in the main story line.

predicate which is telic in its target-like meaning, however, in this context, it seems to be used as an activity, with the meaning of *festeggiare*.

Excerpt 10.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[7 FG] Ho festeggiato molto, una volta con la mia famiglia, poi con i miei parenti, poi con gli miei amici e con la mia classa.	
[8 FG] Poi abbiamo avuto una grande festa nella scuola,	
[9 FG] dove abbiamo avuto il documento dal preside.	
[10 FG] ~~La mus~~ La banda scuolastica ha suonato	
[11 FG] e ~~abbiamo~~ siamo usciti tutta la notte.	

Thus, the foreground of upper-intermediate proficiency narratives is marked with perfective morphology applied to telic predicates and activities, while the background is marked prevalently with stative predicates and imperfective morphology. While telic predicates are categorically associated with the foreground, statives are distributed across levels of grounding. In fact, Table 8.4 reveals that 26% of states also occur in the foreground and are marked with PP, while 5% are marked with IMP despite being part of the narrative sequence. Clauses [6 FG] and [8 FG] in Excerpt 11 exemplify the use of stative predicates with PERF marking in the foreground. The learner's ability to mark statives with both perfective and imperfective morphology according to the context suggests awareness of the perfective/imperfective distinction. According to Salaberry (2005, p. 193), statives are a marked category, consequently their aspectual marking generates acquisitional challenges. Learners may cope with this challenge by automatically associating statives with imperfect morphology, given that the class of statives is composed of a limited number of high frequency items often occurring with IMP in the input. However, the present narratives demonstrate the learner's ability to mark statives with perfective morphology when required by the context. This suggests that the choice of verbal morphology may be rule-governed, rather than association-based.

Excerpt 11.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[6 FG] [..] primi due esami sono andati molto bene	
[7 FG] e l'ultimo l'esame della lingua italiana è ~~stata~~ andato ~~d~~ molto molto bene.	
[8 FG] […] Mi sono sentito felice che,	
[9 FG] dopo che # i professori mi hanno detto […]	

On the other hand, the use of statives with imperfective marking in the foreground is characteristic of abstracts, i.e. sentences summarising the most salient information of the narratives, and codas, i.e. evaluative comments placed at the end of the narratives, as exemplified in (1) and (2) respectively.

(1) Il giorno della mia maturità orale era meno interessante come abbia pensato

(2) Era un bel giorno, perché ho ricevuto la maturità

The morphological marking of these textual units may be challenging for the learner. Abstracts and codas do not move the story forward, however, they are marked with perfective morphology because they express a global view on the narrated events, an evaluation from the speaker's point of view (Lo Duca & Solarino, 1992). Thus, abstracts and codas may be considered marked contexts, which generate acquisitional challenges, probably connected to their commentative function.

Similar to the intermediate group, the backgrounds of upper-intermediate proficiency narratives relate to the description of circumstances and characterisation of individuals, using the continuous aspect and gnomic imperfective. However, the progressive aspect appears more often, in approximately 26% of activities and 40% of telic predicates with IMP marking. This is exemplified in Excerpt 12, where 6 out of 8 background clauses convey gnomic imperfectivity, meaning that they "attribute a defining property to the intended referent(s)" and express a generalisation (Bertinetto & Lenci, 2012, p. 860). Clause [8 BG] expresses the progressive aspect. In this case, IMP marking is applied to an activity and denotes an on-going process. Clause [1 FG] focuses on a single moment within the temporally unbounded process of *walking,* when Little Red Riding Hood meets the wolf.

Excerpt 12.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
	[1 FG] C'era una volta una bambina
	[2 FG] che si chiamava Cappuccetto Rosso.
	[3 FG] La mamma di Cappuccetto Rosso le diceva sempre
	di non ascoltare agli stranieri
	e di non fidarsi di loro.
	Cappuccetto Rosso,
	[4 FG] che aveva un cappuccetto Rosso
	[5 FG] e per questo si chiamava così,
	[6 FG] voleva andare a visitare alla sua nonna
	[7 FG] che abitava dall'altra parte del bosco.
	[8 BG] Mentre la bambina camminava
[1 FG] si trovò con un lupo cattivo […]	

In some cases, the progressive aspect is expressed by progressive periphrasis, especially in subordinate clauses reporting indirect speech, as exemplified in clauses [3 BG], Excerpt 13.

Excerpt 13.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
[2 FG] Nel cammino incontrò [cancellation] il lupo,	
[3 FG] che le chiese	dove stette andando.

[4 FG] La ragazzina rispose	[3 BG] che stava andando dalla nonna.

Thus, the expression of chronologically overlapping processes by using progressive marking is the least represented phenomenon in the upper-intermediate proficiency narratives. Activities, prototypically associated with progressive aspect, are more likely to appear in the foreground, as part of the narrative sequence, and are therefore highly likely to be marked with perfective morphology.

Similar to the intermediate group, background clauses requiring imperfective marking sometimes contain an aspectually neutral tense form, the present tense. PRES in the background appears in combinations with statives (21 out of 25 cases), and activities (4 out of 25 cases). It usually conveys the continuous aspect (3) or gnomic imperfectivity (4).

(3) La nonna è malata per questo non aveva chiusa la porta

(4) […] ho fatto anche una passeggiata con i miei due cani che si chiamano Spike e Ciccio

To sum up, the upper-intermediate proficiency narratives suggest that learners integrate perfective marking into their interlanguage, and associate the foreground with temporal boundedness conveyed on both lexical and grammatical level. In addition to telic predicates, which imply temporal boundedness on the lexical level, activity verbs occurring in the foreground are also consistently marked with perfective morphology, to convey temporal delimitation morphologically. Moreover, perfective marking is extended to stative verbs in the foreground.

The background of narratives and its association with imperfective morphology seems to develop at a slower pace and present several similarities with the intermediate group. The proportion of statives marked with IMP in the background is 64% in the intermediate group, 62% in the upper-intermediate group. There is only a limited tendency to use imperfective marking with activities (17%). Progressive aspect, the imperfective subdomain prototypically associated with activities appears sporadically in this sub-corpus, and activities are more likely to occur in the foreground, marked with perfective morphology. On the other hand, there is a moderate tendency to use statives with imperfective marking in the foreground, or to replace IMP by PRES in the background. The concurrence of these factors suggests that the association between temporal unboundedness and background is not as consistent as the association between temporal boundedness and foreground.

8.4 The high proficiency group

Table 8.5 shows that the main distinguishing feature of high proficiency texts is the target-like use of tense-aspect marking. The tendency to use tense/aspect morphology independently from discourse grounding is nearly absent, which suggests that students integrated the distinction between perfective and imperfective aspect into their interlanguage, and are aware of the discourse function of such distinction. From the point of view of lexical aspect, the preference for prototypical combinations is clearly observable not only in the foreground, but also in the background. The tendency to associate telic predicates with perfective morphology and foreground is invariable compared to the upper-intermediate group. The main differences between the high proficiency and the upper-intermediate groups relate to the background. First of all, the high proficiency group displays a more straightforward association between background, imperfective morphology and stativity, meaning that 82% of statives are marked with IMP and occurs in the background. Furthermore, at this proficiency level, learners strengthen the association between imperfect marking and activities. The proportion of activities marked with IMP and occurring in the background increases compared to the upper-intermediate group, from 17% to 31%. This tendency is accompanied by a slight propensity (8%) to use activities marked with IMP in the foreground. On the other hand, the percentage of activities marked with perfective morphology in the foreground is significantly lower compared to the upper-intermediate group (78% in the upper-intermediate group and 61% in the high proficiency group).

Table 8.5. Distribution of verbal morphology within lexical aspectual classes in the high proficiency group

	PERF in FG	PERF in BG	IMP in BG	IMP in FG
TELIC (N=263)	95% (250)	0% (0)	4% (9)	1% (4)
ACTIVITY (N=59)	61% (36)	0% (0)	31% (18)	8% (5)
STATE (N=168)	14% (24)	2% (4)	82% (137)	2% (3)

The strong association between imperfect marking and stativity implies that the aspectual meanings most frequently conveyed by IMP are, similar to the upper-intermediate group, the continuous aspect and gnomic imperfectivity. Although the progressive aspect is less recurrent than the continuous aspect and gnomic imperfectivity, its frequency on activities increases compared to the upper-intermediate group, from 26% to 38%.

The use of IMP to convey various subdomains of imperfective aspect is observable in Excerpt 15, where the clauses from [1BG] to [6 BG] contain gnomic imperfectives, that describe a characterisation of referents, valid for a vaguely delimited time frame; while

clause [7 BG] encodes the progressive aspect, and visualises a single moment of an on-going event. Clauses [12 BG] and [13 BG] in turn express the continuous aspect, referring to a single occurrence of a situation with undetermined duration, without focusing on a single moment of the relative time frame.

Excerpt 15.

FOREGROUND	BACKGROUND
	[1 BG] C'era una volta una ragazza
	[2 BG] la cui nonna era molto malata.
	[3 BG] La nonna viveva nel bosco
	[4 BG] e non aveva nessuno
	[5 BG] che si badava di lei.
[1 FG] Così fu che la ragazza,	[6 BG] che si chiamava Cappucetto rosso,
[2 FG] venne mandata dalla mamma a portare un cesto con dei cibi alla casa della nonna.	
	[7 BG] ~~M~~ Mentre camminava nel bosco,
[3 FG] incontrò un lupo,	
[4 FG] che le chiese	cosa facesse nel bosco con questo cesto.
[5 FG] bussò alla porta,	
[6 FG] ma nessuna aprì la porta.	
[…]	
[16 FG] La nonna si alzò dal letto a prendere il capuccetto rosso [cancellation]	
[17 FG] e perse [cancellation] i suoi vestiti.	
[18 FG] Così venne fuori il lupo con un pancione grande,	[12 BG] nel cui c'era già la nonna
[19 FG] Il cappuccetto rosso scappò della casa	
[20 FG] e allarmò un cacciatore	[13 BG] che si trovava vicino.
[21 FG] Il cacciatore venne subito	
[22 FG] e colpii il lupo.	

Furthermore, this excerpt illustrates the categorical association between foreground, perfective morphology and telicity, observable in both upper-intermediate and high proficiency narratives. Except for clause [1 FG], containing a non-prototypical combination of the stative predicate *essere* and perfective morphology, the foreground of this text is characterised by the presence of telic predicates marked with PERF.

To recap, high proficiency texts display a clear preference for prototypical combinations in both the foreground and the background. Such a preference, together with the low rates of overextension, suggests that students select tense/aspect marking on the basis of both the lexical aspectual features of the predicates and the discourse function of the predication. This presupposes 1) mapping the concept of temporal boundedness into perfective morphology, and recognising the semantic solidarity between telicity, perfective marking, and sequentiality in the foreground; and 2) mapping the concept of temporal

unboundedness into imperfective morphology, and awareness of the semantic affinity between stativity imperfectivity, and their use in marking the background. The awareness of the semantic affinity between temporal unboundedness on the lexical level and indeterminateness conveyed by imperfective verb forms may trigger the extension of imperfect marking to activities in the high proficiency group. The slow extension of imperfect morphology to activities is consistent with the pattern found by Rosi (2009a), who points out that L1 German speakers learning L2 Italian in her study associate imperfective morphology with statives, and mark activities and telic predicates almost exclusively with perfective tenses, regardless of the discourse function of the predication. Furthermore, Rosi (2009a) notes that "Throughout the learning process, German speakers encounter difficulty in codification of progressive events using the imperfective past (…)" (p. 116).

Concerning the appropriateness of verb forms in the high proficiency group it seems noteworthy that activities are the only lexical aspectual class that still shows a moderate tendency to be overextended (8%). This phenomenon is mostly observable in contexts requiring a verb with inchoative aspect, to focus on the beginning of a process with inherent duration, exemplified in (5). This context requires a verb with an inchoative meaning such as *addormentarsi*, rather than an activity verb with a more generic meaning marked with imperfective morphology. As pointed out in the previous sections, referring to the beginning of a process is a challenging task for learners, and this difficulty seems to persist throughout the acquisition process.

(5) Il lupo ha mangiato la ragazza e dopo si è messo a letto e dormiva.

To sum up, high proficiency narratives are characterised by a categorical association between perfective marking, telicity and foreground on one side; stativity, imperfective marking and background on the other, reflecting the integration of aspectual distinctions into the interlanguage. A fairly developed competence in tense/aspect marking is confirmed by the extension of imperfective marking to activities together with their predominant use in the appropriate contexts. Consistent with Rosi (2009a, p. 143), the data show that the "diffusion of the imperfective past from states to activities represents an important step within development of use of the imperfective".

8.5 Summary

The present chapter investigated the relationship between the distribution of verbal morphology across levels of discourse grounding and the lexical aspectual class of the predicates. The most influential hypothesis concerning this relationship is the LAH, which

predicts that learners first integrate prototypical combinations of lexical aspect and verbal morphology into their interlanguage, and build up the target language tense/aspect system starting from its prototypes, progressively incorporating non-prototypical combinations. The present data, congruently with recent studies on the acquisition of tense and aspect in Romance languages (e.g., McManus, 2013; Salaberry, 2011), show that, in order to recognise prototypical combinations of lexical aspect and verbal morphology, learners need to fulfil two preconditions: 1) mapping the perfective/imperfective distinction into verbal morphology; 2) acquiring the lexical aspectual properties of target language predicates. It seems that these preconditions cannot be met at low proficiency levels, therefore low proficiency narratives do not show an aspectual pattern. Prototypical combinations are integrated into the IL progressively, starting from telicity and perfective aspect, followed by the association between imperfectivity and stativity. The acquisition of progressive aspect does not seem to follow an aspectual pattern, in the sense that it appears with both telic predicates and activities, starting from the intermediate group. However, a semantic bias can be observed in the increasing tendency to associate activities with their prototype (the proportion of activities with IMP marking conveying the progressive aspect is 20% in the intermediate, 26% in the upper-intermediate, 38% in the high proficiency group).

Overall, the present data suggest that the use of prototypical combinations consolidates alongside proficiency. It can be hypothesised that, after the consolidation of prototypical combinations, learners start integrating non-prototypical combinations into their IL. However, this tendency is not strongly represented in the present data, and mainly relates to the appropriate use of states with perfective marking in the foreground.

Chapter 9
Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the development of tense/aspect marking in the interlanguage of multilingual learners of Italian, as part of learners' linguistic competence. As pointed out in Chapter 5, since competence is not directly observable, learners' competence in tense/aspect marking was inferred from their performance (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 6), namely from analyses carried out on a corpus of written narratives.

The present chapter discusses the results of interlanguage analyses presented in the previous chapters against the background of studies on the development of tense/aspect marking in Romance languages acquired as L2 and L3.

9.1 Identification of developmental stages in tense/aspect marking

The interlanguage samples analysed in the present study were collected from students enrolled in the following bachelor language courses: Italian 1, Italian 2, Italian 3, Italian 4; and in the master's course Italian A, at the Institute of Romance Languages at the University of Vienna. Although students start their university education with variable proficiency in Italian, it was assumed that university language courses and the common exam requirements balance at least partially the initial differences in language proficiency. However, operationalising the concept of developmental stages based on the language class attended by the students at the moment of data collection made it impossible to identify a developmental pattern in the data, given that the groups showed high heterogeneity with respect to tense and aspect marking.

For this reason, instead of identifying acquisition stages, narratives were divided into proficiency groups according to the appropriateness of verbal morphology in the foreground. Appropriateness of verbal morphology has been adopted as a criterion for the identification of proficiency levels in several studies such as Bardovi-Harlig (1998), Bardovi-Harlig and Bergström (1996, p. 311); while Wiberg (2002a, p. 3) also defined the participants' proficiency in her study in terms of verb form appropriateness rate in "obligatory cases according to the target language". Several scholars (e.g., Shirai, 2007; Giacalone Ramat & Rastelli, 2013) point out that confronting the interlanguage with target-language norm risks comparative fallacy because it does not respect the autonomous nature of IL. However, in

the present study, the criterion of appropriateness was primarily used to divide the narratives into more homogeneous groups than the groups created based on language course level.

Based on OOA, the narratives were divided into four proficiency groups: low, intermediate, upper-intermediate and high. Given the cross-sectional character of the present study, and the impossibility of carrying out independent proficiency measures, it cannot be claimed that the proficiency levels identified on the basis of OOA represent acquisition stages. However, this division enables the identification of a developmental pattern in the data, which suggests that the development of tense/aspect marking in the interlanguage is influenced by lexical aspect, i.e. the semantic affinity between lexical aspect and verbal morphology, and its interaction with discourse grounding.

The influence of these factors on tense/aspect marking in the interlanguage has been extensively researched in the last decades, against the background of two leading hypotheses: the Lexical Aspect Hypothesis (LAH) (Andersen & Shirai, 1994), which emphasises the influence of lexical aspect, and the Discourse Hypothesis (DH) (Bardovi-Harlig, 1994a), which focuses on the effect of discourse grounding principles. On one side, all the studies on the acquisition of tense and aspect in Romance languages reported here agree that these two factors influence the IL development. On the other side, there is some disagreement about their role as a triggering factor of tense/aspect acquisition and how their role changes during the acquisition process. The developmental pattern found in the present study suggests that, consistent with findings on L2 Spanish (Salaberry, 2011) and L2 French (McManus, 2013), the effect of both factors increases alongside proficiency. This is observable in Table 9.1, which summarises the results presented in the previous chapters concerning the distribution of verbal morphology within lexical aspectual classes and across levels of discourse grounding in the four proficiency groups.

Table 9.1. Distribution of verbal morphology within lexical aspectual classes and across proficiency levels

Low proficiency narratives (N=17)				
	PERF in FG	PERF in BG	IMP in BG	IMP in FG
TELIC (N=106)	35% (37)	0% (0)	10% (11)	55% (58)
ACTIVITY (N=22)	23% (5)	4% (1)	18% (4)	55% (12)
STATE (N=69)	9% (6)	10% (7)	76% (52)	5% (4)
Intermediate proficiency narratives (N=31)				
	PERF in FG	PERF in BG	IMP in BG	IMP in FG
TELIC (N=180)	81% (146)	2% (3)	9% (16)	8% (15)
ACTIVITY (N=42)	60% (25)	0% (0)	24% (10)	16% (7)
STATE (N=150)	8% (12)	9% (13)	64% (97)	19% (28)

Upper-intermediate proficiency narratives (N=74)				
	PERF in FG	PERF in BG	IMP in BG	IMP in FG
TELIC (N=471)	96% (447)	0% (0)	2% (12)	2% (10)
ACTIVITY (N=122)	78% (94)	3% (4)	17% (21)	2% (3)
STATE (N=294)	26% (76)	5% (15)	62% (181)	7% (22)
High proficiency narratives (N= 29)				
	PERF in FG	PERF in BG	IMP in BG	IMP in FG
TELIC (N=263)	95% (250)	0% (0)	4% (9)	1% (4)
ACTIVITY (N=59)	61% (36)	0% (0)	31% (18)	8% (5)
STATE (N=168)	14% (24)	2% (4)	82% (137)	2% (3)

The following sections will discuss the emergence of this developmental pattern from the distinguishing features of the four proficiency groups, against the background of studies conducted on the acquisition of L2/L3 Italian, and other Romance languages such as French, Spanish, Catalan and Portuguese.

9.2 The low proficiency group

The distribution of past tense morphology in the low proficiency texts contradicts the predictions of both the LAH and the DH. In most of these narratives (14 out of 17), the prevalent tense is IMP, used independently of the discourse function of the clauses. It marks both events in the main story line, that are in chronological order and answer the question "What happened?"; and events that seem to be chronologically overlapping or simultaneous with the main story line, referring to descriptions, scene setting, etc. Thus, it cannot be said that learners use verbal morphology to mark discourse grounding, given that both foreground and background information tends to be marked by the same tense.

Contrary to the predictions of the LAH, there is a limited semantic bias in the data. IMP is not only applied to a high proportion of stative verbs (81%) and activities (73%), which imply temporal unboundedness at the lexical level and are therefore prototypically associated with IMP. The same morphological marking is also applied to the majority of telic predicates (65%), which imply an inherent endpoint at the lexical level, and are therefore semantically dissonant with imperfectivity.

Occasionally, learners switch to a perfective past tense. The aspectual bias in the distribution of PERF marking is limited. PERF morphology is applied to 35% of telic predicates, 27% of activities and 19% of states. The lack of a clear semantic bias in the data, together with the use of past tense morphology regardless of discourse grounding principles

suggests that learners use past tense morphology to locate events on the time axis before the moment of speech, while their aspectual characterisation remains unclear.

The use of a past tense forms with underspecified aspectual meaning has been observed by Salaberry (2003), who collected data from L1 English learners of L2 Spanish. The data showed that during early stages of acquisition, learners used perfective and imperfective tense forms independently of the lexical aspectual value of predicates, and selected a default tense form according to the type of narrative. In personal narratives, the default tense was Spanish Imperfect, while in the impersonal narratives, it was the Preterit. A similar pattern was found by McManus (2013), who investigated L2 acquisition of French, and observed that the narratives collected from low proficiency learners did not show a significant semantic bias. Both studies showed that, contrary to the predictions of the LAH, the effect of semantic prototypes on the selection of verbal morphology increased with proficiency. The use of the perfective past tense PP as unmarked tense has been observed in both native speakers and Swedish-Italian bilinguals by Wiberg (1996).

9.2.1 Prominence of tense marking in low proficiency texts

As pointed out in Chapter 4, the lack of a semantic bias in early acquisition stages may be connected to the absence of preconditions necessary for the LAH to take effect. In order to recognise semantic affinities between lexical aspect and verbal morphology, learners need to map perfective and imperfective aspect into verbal morphology, and to have a fairly developed awareness about the lexical aspectual properties of target language predicates.

The first precondition may not be present in low proficiency learners; especially in cases when their first language does not mark aspect explicitly. Most of the participants in the present study (94%) have L1 German, a language that lacks morphological aspect, and conveys aspectual information by means of lexical aspect and contextual features (Bohnemeyer & Swift, 2004). Thus, L1 German learners of Italian have to isolate perfective and imperfective aspectual meanings, and map them into the target language verbal morphology. Several studies (e.g., McManus 2013, 2015; Salaberry 2003; Wiberg, 2009) show that the establishment of new form-function connections is a challenging task for the learners, which is unlikely to be completed at a low proficiency level.

With respect to the second precondition, the studies conducted by Giacalone Ramat and Rastelli (e.g., Giacalone Ramat & Rastelli, 2013; Rastelli & Vernice, 2013) show that learners develop the target-like representation of lexical aspectual properties gradually. This

observation questions the triggering role of lexical aspect in the acquisition of tense/aspect distinctions.

To sum up, semantic underspecification of predicates observed in the IL, together with the assumption that mapping grammatical aspect into verbal morphology requires the establishment of new form-function connections, suggest that aspect marking may enter the IL at a slower pace than predicated by the LAH.

The predictions of the LAH have also been challenged by studies on child language acquisition. Examining the development of tense/aspect marking in children learning L1 Italian, Bertinetto et al. (2015) note that assuming one dimension of temporality or aspectuality as a triggering factor of acquisition presupposes an extensive knowledge of the given domain on the part of the learner. Since this presumption seems to be unrealistic, Bertinetto et al. propose an alternative account, based on morphological evidence offered by the target language. Given that Italian verbal morphology is "temporality-prominent", it might be easier for the children to develop sensitivity to temporal distinctions.

Contrary to Bertinetto et al. (2015), Shirai and Andersen (1995) claim that child language acquisition is influenced by semantic prototypes. Instead of assuming that children are able to recognise prototypical combinations of lexical aspect and verbal morphology, they claim that children tend to use prototypical combinations because of their high frequency in the input. Shirai (2015, p. 312) confirms this assumption by claiming that "input frequency is a better predictor" for distributional biases in language acquisition than prototypicality.

The present data do not seem to support Andersen's and Shirai's account. Low proficiency narratives in the present corpus contain a great amount of non-prototypical combinations (e.g., 65% of telic predicates marked with IMP), which can cannot be accounted for in terms of input frequency. Low proficiency texts seem to support the view advocated by Bertinetto et al. (2015), which may be extended to L2 learners of Italian. Since both German (L1of the majority of learners) and Italian (the target language) are temporality-prominent languages, it seems plausible to assume that the function of tense marking is mapped into Italian verbal morphology earlier than the function of aspect marking.

The significant tendency to overuse IMP was also observed by Giacalone Ramat (2002), who examined the L2 acquisition of Italian, by learners with L1 English and L1 German. According to the data analysed in her study, L1 English learners were the most likely to overextend IMP, probably due to the formal similarity between IMP and the *Past Simple*. For the same reason, L1 German learners tended to overuse PP, formally similar to

German *Perfekt*[52]. However, in the case of one learner with L1 German, a strong tendency to overextend IMP was observed, at the stage when IMP entered the IL. At the beginning of the data collection, the learner's IL was characterised by the presence of a temporal opposition between PP and PRES, and the absence of aspectual distinctions. The integration of IMP into the IL was marked by a "sudden spread of imperfects to mark perfective aspect in narrative contexts" (Giacalone Ramat, 2002, p. 233). This phenomenon was attributed to a stage of hypothesis testing, where the learner was trying to find out whether IMP fulfils the same function as PP. This may be the case of low proficiency narratives in the present corpus, where tense forms do not seem to assume the function of aspect marking.

The hypothesis that in the low-proficiency sub-corpus, IMP is used as a tense marker rather than aspect marker is substantiated by the observation that most of the texts classified here are impersonal narratives (i.e. Little Red Riding Hood), produced in written format. In German, speakers would have used the simple past, *Präteritum*, formally similar to IMP. In fact, in Rosi's (2009a) study, conducted on oral production data collected from L1 German learners, the most frequently overused tense was PP, formally similar to *Perfekt,* used in spoken language.

To summarise, the results of previous studies on the acquisition of Romance languages, especially Italian as L2 and L1, suggest that low proficiency learners might not be aware of the aspectual value of Italian tense forms, given that both the target language and their L1 are temporality-prominent languages. In order to integrate aspectual distinctions into their interlanguage, learners have to isolate the perfective/imperfective distinction, only implicitly present in their L1, and integrate it into the target language verbal morphology. The establishment of these form-function connections seems to be a challenging task for the learners, and is unlikely to be completed at a low proficiency level. This assumption is substantiated by the distribution of tense forms across levels of grounding and within lexical aspectual categories in the low proficiency group, which cannot be accounted for either in terms of input frequency, nor in terms of prototypicality.

9.3 The intermediate proficiency group

As pointed out in the previous chapters, the defining property of the intermediate proficiency group seems to be the integration of aspect marking into the IL. This can be inferred from the semantic bias in the data, in the sense that semantically congruent

[52] Participants in this study were in fact recruited from the south of Germany, where *Perfekt* is generally used for past marking, while the *Präteritum*, formally similar to IMP, is limited to *sein* "be" and modal verbs (Giacalone Ramat, 2002, p. 230).

combinations of lexical aspect and verbal morphology are given preference over semantically non-congruent combinations; and from the emergent tendency to use morphological marking according to the principles of discourse grounding. The most evident property of intermediate proficiency texts is the tendency to use telic predicates marked with perfective morphology in the foreground of the narratives. The background presents prevalently IMP, while being more susceptible to variation of tense forms. The tendency to use imperfect morphology in the foreground persists in the intermediate group, although it is less pronounced than among low proficiency texts.

The transition from prevalently tense marking, that characterises the low proficiency group, to tense and aspect marking in the intermediate group is consistent with the three-stage model proposed by Ayoun and Saleberry (2005). According to this model, learners with a tense-based L1 map temporal information into the target language verbal morphology before integrating aspect into their IL. The second stage is characterised by aspect marking, when "past tense marking gradually starts to correlate with the values of lexical aspectual classes" (Ayoun & Salaberry, 2005, p. 271). Congruent with the three-stage model, lexical aspect seems to be the most prominent feature that defines the intermediate proficiency texts. The prominence of lexical aspect does not exclude the presence of grounding effects, especially in cases, when learners use semantically congruent combinations of lexical aspect, verbal morphology and grounding; for instance, they use telic predicates marked with perfective morphology in FG. However, in other cases, the effect of lexical aspect seems to override grounding principles (e.g., when atelic predicates are used with imperfect marking in FG).

9.3.1 The foreground of intermediate proficiency narratives

The foreground of intermediate proficiency narratives contains events presented perfectively, meaning that they form a recognisable narrative sequence, where the completion of an event is often necessary for the subsequent event to start. The effect of completion is conveyed by the use of perfective marking, which presents events as points on the time axis, with no reference to their internal complexity (Dry, 1983). The perception of completeness and temporal delimitation conveyed on the morphological level is often reinforced by the feature of telicity on the lexical-semantic level. In fact, there is a semantic bias in the data, meaning that telic predicates show a stronger tendency to be marked with perfective morphology than atelic predicates. Furthermore, there are also some non-prototypical combinations with high frequency and appropriateness rates in the foreground:

60% of activities, semantically congruent with imperfectivity, are associated with PERF marking and occur in the foreground. This pattern emerges frequently in studies on tense/aspect acquisition, and will be discussed in greater detail in the following section, dedicated to the upper-intermediate group, where perfective marking on activities is even more pronounced.

9.3.2 The background of intermediate proficiency narratives

The background is characterised by the absence of sequentiality constraints, which implies that events may be located at any point on the time axis, and do not have to be presented as temporally bounded. Backgrounded clauses may refer to open-ended time spans, to events with undetermined duration, or situations valid for a vaguely defined time interval. The perception of temporal unboundedness is semantically congruent with atelicity. Among atelic predicates, statives show a significant tendency to be marked with IMP and occur in the background of intermediate proficiency texts (64%). Consistent with the present data, a significant association between statives and IMP characterises the second stage in Ayoun and Salaberry's (2005) model, and the same tendency has been noted in several studies on tense/aspect acquisition in Romance languages (e.g., Bernini 1990b; Giacalone Ramat, 2002; Salaberry, 2005; Comajoan, 2006; Wiberg, 2009). Wiberg (2009) points out that advanced learners may also be affected by this phenomenon.

Salaberry (2005) accounts for this phenomenon in terms of rule-based and association-based processing. Given that the category of statives includes a limited number of high frequency items occurring mostly with imperfect marking in the input, they are processed differently from dynamic predicates, which form a significantly wider category. Due to cognitive efficiency, the morphological marking of dynamic predicates is likely to be rule-governed, while the morphological marking of statives may be association-based.

The present data are partially congruent with Salaberry's account. On one side, intermediate proficiency narratives show a close association between imperfect morphology and stativity (83%). In some cases, the strong association between stativity and IMP overrides the effect of discourse grounding: 19% of statives are marked with IMP, despite being part of the narrative sequence. However, the next sections will show that, as proficiency develops, learners not only strengthen the association between stativity, imperfective morphology and background, but also improve their ability to use statives with PERF marking in the foreground. This suggests, that the morphological marking of statives may be rule-governed.

9.3.3 The influence of lexical aspect

In the present sub-corpus, the influence of lexical aspect on the distribution of verbal morphology seems to be stronger that the effect of discourse grounding, especially in the case of imperfect morphology. Looking at the overall distribution of verbal morphology within lexical aspectual classes reveals an aspectual pattern for both perfective and imperfective morphology (Table 9.1). 83% of telic predicates are marked with PERF, while the proportion drops to 17% in the case of statives. Conversely, 83% of states are marked with IMP, while it is rarely applied to telic predicates (17%). This distribution suggests that morphological marking tends to be selected according to its semantic affinity with the lexical aspectual class of the predicates. However, including the criterion of appropriateness into the analysis, operationalised as use of verbal morphology according to discourse grounding principles (Comajoan, 2006), reveals that telic predicates with perfective marking tend to be used more appropriately than statives with imperfective marking. The overextension rate of telic predicates and activities with perfective marking is 2% and 0% respectively. The use of IMP generates more uncertainty: 19% of states and 16% of activities with IMP marking are overextended to the FG. The tendency to overextend prototypical combinations of atelic predicates marked with imperfect morphology might be connected to difficulties in identifying the discourse functions of IMP. As pointed out by Giacalone Ramat (2002, p. 241), "Some uses of imperfect morphology (…) clearly show that learners are struggling to identify a recognisable function for the imperfect. (…) Such oscillations seem typical of the imperfective aspect and do not have a clear counterpart in the perfective aspect, which is more straightforwardly encoded by the *passato prossimo*". Learners' difficulties in identification of contexts for IMP marking may be connected to the plurality of aspectual meanings conveyed by IMP. Isolating these meanings and mapping them into a single form may be a challenging task for the learners, especially if the perfective/imperfective distinction is not present in their L1 (McManus, 2015).

9.3.4 Imperfective aspect as a scalar category

From the point of view of aspect marking, IMP conveys different subdomains of imperfectivity. According to Rosi (2009a, pp. 111-113) and Wiberg (2009), the imperfective subdomains can be located along a continuum of prototypicality, and they are mapped into imperfective morphology gradually, following the pattern predicted by the LAH, from the

most prototypical meaning to the least prototypical. Thus, the acquisition runs as follows: continuous aspect > progressive aspect > habitual and iterative aspect. Rosi (2009a) points out that L1 German speakers learning Italian integrate only the first two meanings into their IL, while the last subdomain, habituality, is "never correctly conveyed by imperfective past in the German speakers' data" (p. 117). However, as pointed out in Chapter 2, Bertinetto and Lenci (2012) propose incorporation of the habitual meaning into the larger category of gnomic imperfectivity. This category includes the uses of imperfective aspect that fulfil a "characterising function" by expressing a "generalisation of some kind" about a referent (Bertinetto & Lenci, 2012, p. 860)[53]. Thus, in the present study, imperfective aspect was differentiated into the following sub-domains: continuous aspect, progressive aspect and gnomic imperfectivity. As pointed out in Chapter 8, gnomic imperfectivity seems to enter the interlanguage at the same time as the continuous aspect. Both aspectual meanings already appear in the intermediate proficiency group, when learners start integrating aspect marking into their interlanguage.

This difference in the outcome of the present study compared to Rosi (2009a) may be connected to the different conceptualisation of imperfective subdomains, and to the effect of the elicitation instrument. Rosi's data were based on retelling of three excerpts from the silent film Modern Times (Charlie Chaplin 1936). This task may have induced learners to focus on the narrative sequence and may not have given much occasion to talk about permanent characterisation of the referents. Furthermore, Rosi's study is mainly based on oral production data[54], therefore the unmarkedness of Passato Prossimo for "Italian past contexts in oral speech" (Wiberg, 1996, p. 1100) may also have played a role in learners' selection of verbal morphology. On the other hand, writing the story of Little Red Riding Hood in the present study induced participants to ascribe defining properties to the main characters, especially to Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother. In fact, gnomic imperfectivity was less common in the narratives about participants' school leaving examination, where learners focused on the description of mental states and circumstances within the time frame of a day, rather than providing a permanent characterisation of referents.

[53] As pointed out in Chapter 2, the category of gnomic imperfectives does not necessarily involve pluractionality. The different sub-classes of gnomic imperfectives can be distributed along a continuum of pluractonality, where habituals represent the highest, and generic predicates the lowest degree of pluractionality.

[54] Participants in Rosi's (2009a) study were asked to retell the film excerpt, and to write it down afterwards. Rosi points out that "no constant difference is revealed between oral and written narratives, since learners tend to replicate in written text the same aspectual marking of predicates that they produce in oral retelling" (p. 144).

The last-subdomain of imperfective aspect entering the IL in the intermediate group seems to be the progressive aspect; there are only four occurrences of progressive marking. The delayed acquisition of this aspectual meaning by L1 German speakers may be related to factors such as prototypicality and learners' L1. As pointed out by Rocca (2005, p. 137), progressive aspect is not a core feature in Italian, given that the progressive/non-progressive distinction is not grammaticalised, and its linguistic marking is fulfilled by various linguistics means (e.g., IMP, progressive periphrasis). Furthermore, participants' L1 does not encode the progressive aspect in a systematic way. The convergence of these factors may cause a late integration of progressive aspect into the IL.

To summarise, the distribution of verbal morphology in the intermediate proficiency group seems to be affected primarily by lexical aspect. However, an emerging effect of discourse grounding is particularly observable in the association between perfective morphology and foreground. In some cases, the criterion of lexical aspect seems to prevail over discourse grounding principles and leads to the overextension of prototypical combinations, especially in the case of imperfect marking with statives and activities.

9.4 The upper-intermediate proficiency group

The upper-intermediate group is characterised by a more advanced incorporation of discourse grounding principles into the IL. This is inferred from the low rate of overextensions for telic predicates and activities, both prevalently marked with perfective morphology. Furthermore, the tendency to use atelic predicates marked with imperfective morphology in the foreground shows a significant decrease. This suggests that the influence of discourse grounding principles on the selection of verbal morphology increased compared to the intermediate group.

The only lexical aspectual class that seems to generate some uncertainties concerning their morphological marking are statives. This is consistent with Salaberry's (2005, p. 193) assumption that states are a marked category that causes acquisitional challenges. In fact, the rate of appropriate use of statives marked with IMP does not change significantly compared to the intermediate group. A more significant change within this lexical aspectual category concerns the decreasing tendency to use states marked with IMP in the foreground (it decreases from 19% to 7%), and the increasing tendency to use statives marked with PERF in the FG (increases from 8% to 26%). The increasing use of stative verbs marked with perfective morphology in the foreground contradicts Salaberry's assumption that the

association between statives and imperfective marking is based on associations, and increases alongside proficiency. However, it might indicate that the learners reached the third stage of acquisition predicted by Ayoun and Salaberry's (2005) model, where they start using non-prototypical combinations, in accordance with discourse grounding principles.

Another distinguishing feature of the upper-intermediate group is the strong tendency to use activities with perfective morphology in the foreground (78%). In fact, activities seem to generate the highest proportion of non-prototypical combinations in the present corpus. They tend to occur in the foreground of narratives, and are therefore more likely to be marked with PERF morphology, despite being semantically congruent with progressive marking and background. The reason for this tendency may be that progressive marking is integrated into the interlanguage at a slow pace, and this may slow down the extension of imperfective morphology to activities.

9.4.1 Spread of imperfective morphology to activities

The slow spread of imperfective marking from statives to activities has been observed by several scholars. Rosi (2009a, p. 103) points out that German speakers associate IMP with statives, and mark both telic predicates and activities with perfective morphology. The same tendency emerges in Salaberry's (2005) study, examining the acquisition of L3 Portuguese. As anticipated in 9.3.2, he explains this phenomenon in terms of association-based and rule-based processing. He claims that the semantic affinity of statives with imperfective morphology, together with the frequency of this combination in the input, may lead learners to automatically associate stativity with imperfectivity. This may hamper the spread of imperfective morphology to other lexical aspectual classes. On the other hand, [+dynamic] predicates "constitute a much more open-ended class of verbs" including a large variety of lexical items (Salaberry, 2005, p. 208). By the morphological marking of [+dynamic] predicates "it would be less efficient, cognitively speaking, to rely on associations rather than some form of rule-like generative system" (ibid.). This favours the spread of perfective morphology from telic predicates to activities. This distinction between a rule-governed core system and an association-governed subsystem is also advocated in the comprehensive model of tense/aspect acquisition proposed by Ayoun and Salaberry (2005), and in studies examining the development of L2 Catalan (Comajoan, 2006), and L2 Spanish (Salaberry, 2011). However, despite the relatively infrequent use of activities with IMP marking (17%), learners seem to be aware of the temporal unboundedness conveyed by this combination on both a lexical and a morphological level. In fact, the tendency to use

activities marked with IMP as part of the narrative sequence decreases compared to the intermediate group, from 16% to 2%. This tendency may suggest that learners extend the feature of temporal unboundedness to activity predicates, and do not automatically associate imperfective aspect with stative predicates.

The high proportion of activities in the foreground, consistently marked with perfective morphology, may not be entirely explicable in terms of linguistic development. Such tendency may be at least partially connected to the elicitation instrument and to the distribution of narrative types in this sub-corpus. Similar to the intermediate group, in the upper-intermediate sub-corpus personal narratives (N=55) outnumber impersonal narratives (N=19). The background of personal narratives (The Day of my School Leaving Examination) is dedicated to scene setting (e.g., *la sala in cui si svolgevano le prove mi faceva piuttosto tremare*), and description of mental states (e.g., *avevo paura*; *ero molto nervosa*, etc.). It rarely induces students to present on-going situations that overlap with the main story line. Thus, progressive marking is often not required by the narrative context. The situation is different in the case of impersonal narratives (Little Red Riding Hood), where students tend to describe on-going events in the background and to focus on a single moment within those events in the foreground (e.g., *Mentre la bambina camminava si trovò con un lupo cattivo*). In fact, as the next paragraph will show, the proportion of activities marked with imperfect morphology increases in the high proficiency group, where impersonal narratives outnumber personal narratives.

To summarise, the distinguishing feature of upper-intermediate proficiency texts is the evident tendency to associate telicity, perfective morphology and foreground. In addition, activities also tend to be used in the foreground and be marked with perfective morphology. The association between atelicity, imperfect marking and background seems to be less consistent. In fact, as pointed out in Chapter 7, the background is functionally more complex than the foreground, and contains a large variety of tense forms in addition to IMP. Some of these tenses (e.g., PRES) are aspectually ambiguous and are used with a variable degree of appropriateness. Thus, tendencies of tense/aspect marking in the background are more difficult to capture. As observable in Table 9.1, statives are the most likely to carry imperfective marking and occur in the background, conveying the continuous aspect and gnomic imperfectivity. However, the morphological marking of stative verbs across levels of discourse grounding suggests that this category may be challenging from the point of view of aspect marking. While the morphological marking of telic predicates and activities seems to follow the principles of discourse grounding, this is not always the case for statives. 7%

of statives are marked with IMP, despite being part of a narrative sequence, while 5% of statives are marked with PERF and occur in the background. This is consistent with Salaberry's (2005) hypothesis about their markedness. This feature, together with the functional complexity of the background, may account for less clear associations between atelicity, verbal morphology and background.

9.5 The high proficiency group

High proficiency narratives present the most evident preference for prototypical combinations of verbal morphology, lexical aspect and discourse grounding. Telic predicates are clearly associated with perfective marking and foreground (95%), while statives show a strong tendency to be marked with imperfective morphology and occur in the background (82%). Thus, congruent with the pattern found by Salaberry (2011) in the acquisition of L2 Spanish, and McManus (2013) in the acquisition of L2 French, the preference for prototypical combinations increases alongside proficiency. In this proficiency group, discourse grounding, the more challenging level of aspectual representation according to Salaberry (2011, p. 199), seems to be fully integrated into the IL, in the sense that the tendency to use verbal morphology regardless of grounding is nearly absent (it amounts to 0% up to 2% for telic predicates and statives).

Activities with IMP marking are the only combination that displays a small likelihood of being used regardless of discourse grounding principles in the high proficiency narratives. This unexpected finding is hard to account for on the basis of previous research. According to Salaberry (2005), the processing of activities is rule-based, meaning that the choice between perfective and imperfective marking on activities is made "according to input factors (e.g., input biases associated with lexical aspect) and discursive factors (e.g., foreground versus background)" (p. 208). Furthermore, the association between temporal boundedness and foreground seems to be well established at this stage of IL development. The texts present a clearly recognisable narrative sequence, with events presented in chronological order. Confronting the cases when the narrative sequence is interrupted by activity predicates marked with IMP reveal that these cases reflect the learner's attempt to mark the beginning of a process with no inherent endpoint. As pointed out in the previous chapters, marking the inchoative aspect on the lexical level seems to be a challenging task for the learners, who probably try to compensate for the lack of a predicate with inchoative meaning in their lexicon by using a generic verb and imperfective marking. This finding affects a very restricted number of lexical items; however, it suggests that tense/aspect

marking involves a "deep interplay between lexical and grammatical development, which gives rise to various types of non-linear dynamics" (Bertinetto et al., 2008, p. 1). In fact, corresponding to Ayoun and Salaberry's (2005) model, the present data reflect a developmental tendency from tense marking towards aspect marking, with the progressive incorporation of discourse grounding principles. However, this development does not seem to be linear, due to the complexity of the phenomena under investigation, and the presence of multiple factors that may influence learners' choices.

Despite the strong association between stativity, background, and imperfective morphology in the high proficiency group (82%), the data do not provide a univocal support for Salaberry's (2005) account on association-based processing of statives. When required by the context, learners apply perfective marking on statives, even if this tendency decreases compared to the upper-intermediate group (from 26% to 14%). The ability to mark states as temporally bounded when required by the context, together with the tendency to extend imperfect marking to activities in the high proficiency group, suggest that the morphological marking of statives may be rule-based, rather than the result of automatic association between stativity and imperfectivity.

To summarise, high proficiency narratives are characterised by the most extensive presence of semantically congruent combinations of past tense marking, lexical aspect and discourse grounding. If proficiency groups identified in the present study are conceptualised as acquisition stages, and the variation in tendencies across proficiency groups is interpreted as a developmental pattern, the data suggest that both lexical aspect and discourse grounding affect the acquisition of tense/aspect marking, as predicted by the LAH and the DH. However, the present pattern is not congruent with the developmental component of the two hypotheses, namely that lexical aspect and discourse grounding reach their highest level of influence in early acquisition stages, and their influence decreases as learners gain more experience with the target language. On the contrary, the data suggest that the effect of both factors increases alongside proficiency. This has been observed by Shirai (2004, p. 100), who pointed out that "the prediction that beginning learners are more restricted by inherent aspectual value than more advanced learners (…) may need to be revised, because cross-sectional and longitudinal studies that involve production data do not necessarily show such a restriction".

9.6 Implications and further research

Lo Duca (2003) and Blyth (2005) point out that results of language acquisition research, particularly the possibility of foreseeing acquisition stages, may be exploited in language instruction, especially when planning lessons and designing learning materials to overcome acquisition challenges. According to the present study, learners are expected to go through four developmental stages in the acquisition of Italian tense/aspect marking. This developmental sequence is expected to be characterised by a progressive incorporation of aspect marking into the IL. First, learners are expected to map temporality into Italian verb forms. According to Blyth (2005, p. 221), at this stage, "the goal of instruction should be to help learners overcome the past default marker, and to acquire the prototypical uses" of lexical aspect and past tense morphology. At this stage, narrative input should present a clear foreground and background distinction, which enables learners to observe the discourse function of verbal morphology. The integration of aspect marking will become evident starting from the second stage, when the prevalent criterion in the selection of morphological aspect marking will be the lexical aspectual class of the predicates. The weight of discourse grounding principles is expected to increase alongside proficiency, while the prevalence of lexical aspect over discourse grounding is likely to decrease. A balanced application of the two criteria is expected in the fourth acquisition stage, characterised by the prevalence of prototypical combinations of lexical aspect, discourse grounding and verbal morphology. When prototypical combinations are consolidated in the IL, instruction may target non-prototypical uses, possibly applying discourse analytical approaches (Blyth, 2005, p. 222).

Consistent with previous studies (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 2000; Comajoan, 2005), the present study found that tense/aspect marking was affected by text type. Learners seemed to achieve higher accuracy rates when they had greater control over the narrative structure, that is in personal narratives. This task gave learners the possibility of focusing on chronologically ordered events in the foreground, and providing essential background information. The structure of impersonal narratives required more specific background information, such as an introduction section containing a description of the main characters; departure from the main story line and reporting of overlapping events (e.g., what did the wolf do while Little Red Riding Hood was walking in the woods), which restricted learners' control over the narrative structure and often represented a challenge. According to Blyth (2005, p. 228), this finding implies that text genre should be taken into account when teaching tense and aspect. As pointed out by Lo Duca (2003), initial learners of a Romance language may be encouraged to focus on chronologically ordered events and narrative

foreground, producing short personal narratives which refer to a single experience. Later, learners may introduce some background information, for instance an essential orientation section at the beginning of their narratives, using a few high frequency statives with imperfective marking, or short descriptions in relative clauses (Blyth, 2005). Narration of fairy tales represents the third step towards a more complex narrative structure, given that fairy tales typically require an evaluation section, in addition to foreground and background information. Spontaneous conversations and short stories are adequate to high proficiency learners, because they contain "mutually contextualising foreground and background with multiple episodes", and often require departure from the main story line and evaluation (Blyth, 2005, p. 227).

9.6.1 The influence of the student's linguistic background

The developmental pattern found in the present data is similar to the pattern that emerged in studies on L2 acquisition of Romance languages (e.g., McManus, 2013; Salaberry, 2011). Even though participants in the present study are multilingual learners, and 55% speak another Romance language in addition to Italian, they seem to go through similar interlanguage development as learners acquiring a Romance language as their first non-native language (e.g., L1 English speakers learning L2 French or L2 Spanish). This is consistent with the observation made by Müller-Lancé (2003) and Jessner et al. (2016), who note that multilingual learners are not automatically able to benefit from their multilingualism and, in instructional settings, they tend to behave like monolinguals. However, this research outcome is in contrast with the results observed by Salaberry (2005) in the acquisition of L3 Portuguese. He notes that learners, who have already developed a conceptual representation of aspectual distinctions due to the advanced knowledge of another Romance language, are able to transfer that knowledge to L3 Portuguese. Further research is needed to examine the relationship between multilingual competence and the acquisition of Romance tense/aspect distinctions, since the present data do not shed light on this question. As pointed out in Chapter 6, the data do not reveal any systematic difference between learners who speak another Romance language in addition to Italian, and learners whose linguistic repertoire does not contain any other Romance languages. Several texts suggest that learners activated their competence in other Romance languages during the writing process, however, other texts suggest the opposite (see 6.1.2). The examination of factors influencing the activation of previously learned languages awaits further research. Among the factors identified by Hammarberg (2001, p. 23), namely recency of activation,

status and proficiency, only the latter could be taken into account in the present study[55]. However, including the criterion of proficiency in additional Romance language(s) does not alter the overall trend. In each proficiency group, there are both learners who are highly proficient in another Romance language (i.e. B2 up to C1 proficiency according to self-rating) as well as learners with limited proficiency in another Romance language (i.e. A1 up to B1 proficiency according to self-rating). This research outcome implies that learners may not be able to automatically transfer their conceptual knowledge from one Romance language to another, as pointed out by Jessner et al. (2016). This finding corroborates the importance of cross-linguistic awareness and explicit reflection about form-function relationships in different languages (Jessner et al. 2016; McManus & Marsden, 2016). Cross-linguistic awareness might be particularly fruitful in the presence of several Romance languages in the learner's linguistic repertoire, given the considerable similarity of tense/aspect marking in these languages, and their function in marking discourse grounding in narratives.

9.6.2 The influence of the student's first language

The results presented in the previous chapters substantiate the influence of L1 on the development of IL tense/aspect system. Most of the participants in the present study (94%) are native speakers of German, a language that does not explicitly mark aspect. The developmental pattern found by comparing different levels of proficiency suggests that learners gradually reconfigure form-function relationships. The gradual reorganisation of form-meaning relationships in the IL has also been observed by Giacalone Ramat (2002), Rosi (2009a) and Wiberg (2009), investigating L1 German and L1 Swedish speakers learning L2 Italian; and by McManus (2013, 2015), investigating L1 German users acquiring L2 French. Congruent with these studies, the developmental pattern found in the present study confirms that the influence of L1 decreases as learners gain more experience with the target language.

In order to foster the reorganisation of form-function mapping in the IL, learners may benefit from explicit reflection on form-function differences between L1 and L2, as suggested by McManus and Marsden (2016). The utility of explicit reflection on cross-linguistic similarities and differences is confirmed by Rosi's (2010) study. The study shows

[55] As pointed out in Chapter 5, students completed a short questionnaire about their linguistic background before writing the narratives. The questionnaire did not ask about recency of additional languages; however, it can often be inferred from the student's indication of studying a given language within a university curriculum. Thus, in the majority of the cases, it may be assumed that additional Romance languages were actively used by the students.

that, when requested to motivate their morphological choices, semi-spontaneous learners of Italian with L1 Spanish are not able to explicitly capture the similarities between their L1 and the target language, while semi-spontaneous learners of Italian with L1 German "creano dei parallelismi inesistenti fra la funzione delle forme di passato in italiano e in tedesco" (p. 172). Thus, explicit reflection on L1-L2 differences and similarities "may lead to new or more efficient L2 processing routines" (McManus, Marsden, 2016, p. 5). Furthermore, explicit reflection on the structure of other languages in learners' linguistic repertoires may guide students to rely on supporter languages when integrating aspectual features into their IL. A common supporter language in the context of the present study (i.e. university language students of Romance languages in Austria) may be English. In fact, 96% of the participants declared that they could speak L2 English, a language that, contrary to German, displays explicit aspect marking. Thus, reflection on aspect marking in English may support the conceptualisation of this category in Romance languages. Further research may investigate how multiple languages in the learner's repertoire could be linked to each other, in order to develop multilingual awareness, and exploit its catalytic effect on language acquisition (Jessner et al., 2016).

9.6.3 The influence of input

As pointed out in the previous sections, the present data suggest that the influence of lexical aspect on morphological marking increases alongside proficiency, a pattern which is in contrast with the developmental prediction of the LAH. This incongruence might be related to differences in L2 input learners are exposed to. The LAH has been developed on the basis of data from L1 acquisition, and prevalently untutored L2 acquisition. Both types of learners, exposed to unstructured input, are likely to be influenced by distributional biases in native speaker input, where semantic prototypes occur frequently (Bertinetto, 1986, p. 109). The present data have been collected from instructed university learners, exposed to classroom input, which may be biased in a different way. For instance, Swain (1991, p. 243) noticed that classroom input in an L2 French immersion class was highly biased towards perfective morphology, and contained limited imperfective marking, occurring in only a few types of high frequency items. Consequently, classroom input may have a modifying effect on the acquisition process observed in L1 and untutored L2 acquisition. In fact, Blyth (2005, p. 220) notes that the developmental pattern observed in instructed tense/aspect acquisition is a "cautionary counterexample to the once widely held notion that developmental stages are immutable". However, in the present research context it was not possible to take into

account the role of input, because students' exposure to Italian varied greatly. Firstly, they were attending different language courses at the moment of data collection (from Italian 1 to Italian A). In addition, students' exposure to Italian outside the classroom and their opportunities for informal learning varied greatly. Some students reported that they had been studying Italian for several years before entering university, and/or that they had spent time in Italy within exchange programs and language courses. Others started learning Italian at the beginning of their university education, and/or did not report on any informal learning activities. Further research may examine the relationship between distributional biases in the input students are exposed to, and their effect on the interlanguage development of tense and aspect. An innovative research methodology within the connectionist paradigm, which "provides useful tools for investigating the correlation between the frequency of verb forms in the input and in the interlanguage produced by learners" is proposed by Rosi (2009b).

9.7 Limitations

Methodological limitations involved in the present study are connected to the research context, and the methodology of data collection and analysis. The decision to conduct a cross-sectional, rather than a longitudinal study was connected to the presence of numerous students with limited temporal availability. The latter reason did not allow for carrying out independent measures of language proficiency, which was operationalised in terms of accuracy in tense/aspect marking. This led to the exclusion of a great number of texts from the analysis, which did not seem to provide enough information about the learners' proficiency in tense/aspect marking, in order to be univocally located within a specific proficiency group. For instance, all the texts that contained only present tense, and those that did not include any background material had to be excluded. Independent proficiency measures or a longitudinal design would offer a better understanding about the relationship between these phenomena and learners' proficiency levels. Although the results of this study show a considerable degree of consistency with previous findings, they require replication in a longitudinal design, or in a cross-sectional design with independent proficiency measures.

Furthermore, the adoption of an SLA perspective, and the consequent focus on common tendencies emerging from IL development independently of students' linguistic backgrounds and individual differences did not favour an investigation of the relationship between students' multilingual backgrounds and the acquisition of tense/aspect marking. Studies with a holistic approach, focusing on the variability of the individual's multilingual

competence are required to investigate how the interdependence of multiple languages shapes the acquisition process.

The present study did not employ statistical analyses on the texts. Studies employing a larger number of texts, or controlled tasks such as cloze-passages may test the statistical significance of the present findings.

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Appendix A

Worksheet used for the collection of impersonal narratives: Little Red Riding Hood

Liebe KollegInnen,

ich heiße Zuzana Toth, bin eine Doktorandin an der Universität Wien, und arbeite an einer Studie zur Erwerbssequenz des Italienischen. Mein Datencorpus stelle ich auf Basis narrativer Texte zusammen. Es wäre sehr hilfreich, wenn Sie einen kleinen Text schreiben würden (wenn möglich mind. 10 Sätze). Die Textanalyse wird im Rahmen meiner Dissertation ausgewertet. Vielen Dank im Voraus und viel Spaß beim Schreiben.

E-Mail-Adresse (bitte geben Sie Ihre E-Mail-Adresse an, falls Sie zu einem Interview bereit wären).

……..

Wie lange lernen Sie schon Italienisch?

……..

Welche ist Ihre Muttersprache?

……..

Welche Sprachen sprechen Sie außerdem noch, und (ungefähr) auf welchem Niveau? Bitte geben Sie für jede Sprache eine Niveaustufe (von A1 bis C2) an.

……

……

……

Bitte erzählen Sie die Geschichte von Rotkäppchen (Cappuccetto Rosso) auf Italienisch. Falls Sie sich nicht mehr so genau an die Geschichte erinnern, können Sie sich von den Bildern inspirieren lassen. Wichtig ist, dass Sie eine Geschichte erzählen (bitte keine Bildbeschreibung).

Appendix B

Worksheet used fort the collection of personal narratives: The day of my school leaving examination

Liebe KollegInnen,

ich heiße Zuzana Toth, bin eine Doktorandin an der Universität Wien, und arbeite an einer Studie zum Erwerb des Italienischen. Mein Datencorpus stelle ich auf Basis narrativer Texte zusammen. Es wäre sehr hilfreich, wenn Ihr einen kleinen Text schreiben würdet (wenn möglich mind. 10 Sätze). Die Textanalyse wird im Rahmen meiner Dissertation ausgewertet. Vielen Dank im Voraus und viel Spaß beim Schreiben.

E-Mail-Adresse (bitte deine E-Mail-Adresse angeben, falls Du zu einem Interview bereit wärst).

……..

Wie lange lernst Du schon Italienisch?

……..

Welche ist deine Muttersprache?

……..

Welche Sprachen sprichst Du außerdem noch, und (ungefähr) wie gut? Wie lange lernst Du schon diese Sprachen?

……

……

……

Erzähle bitte vom Tag deiner mündlichen Matura. Wann bist Du aufgestanden? Was hast Du gemacht? Wie ist es abgelaufen? Wie hast Du dich gefühlt? Wie hast Du gefeiert?

Appendix C

Abstract

The present study aims to investigate the development of temporal and aspectual distinctions in the acquisition of Italian as a non-native language. The conceptualisation of tense-aspect distinctions is seen as a component of the grammatical competence, defined as "knowledge of, and ability to use, the grammatical resources of a language" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 112). Since competence is not directly observable, this study represents an attempt to infer competence from performance (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 6), and is based on the analysis of a learner corpus designed for studying the use of verbal morphology by plurilingual learners of Italian. The corpus is composed of 151 narrative texts, collected from learners enrolled in Italian language courses at the Institute of Romance languages at the University of Vienna.

The questions being looked into are how the tense-aspect system develops in the interlanguage and how the acquisition process is shaped by factors such as the lexical aspectual value of the predicates and discourse grounding, seen as "two manifestations of a single construct: a continuum of aspectual meanings" (Salaberry, 2011, p. 188).

The data presented in this study indicate that both lexical aspect and discourse grounding influence the distribution of verbal morphology in the interlanguage. Semantically congruent pairings of lexical aspect, verbal morphology and discourse grounding (e.g., telic predicates marked with perfective morphology in the foreground) are used more frequently and appropriately than less prototypical combinations (e.g., telic predicates marked with imperfective morphology in the background). The use of prototypical combinations increases alongside proficiency.

Appendix D

Zusammenfassung

Das Ziel der vorliegenden Dissertation ist die Entwicklung der Tempus- und Aspektmarkierung in der italienischen Interlanguage zu erforschen. Die Konzeptualisierung von Tempus und Aspekt wird als Teil von der grammatischen Kompetenz angesehen, die als „Kenntnis der grammatischen Mittel einer Sprache und die Fähigkeit, diese zu verwenden" (Europarat, 2001, p. 113) definiert werden kann. Da Kompetenz nicht direkt beobachtbar ist, wird in dieser Studie Kompetenz durch Beobachtung der Sprachproduktion erschlossen (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 6). Die Studie basiert auf der Analyse der Sprachproduktion von Italienischlernenden. Es werden 151 narrativen Texte untersucht, die von Italienischlernenden des Instituts für Romanistik der Universität Wien geschrieben worden sind.

Die zentrale Fragestellung ist, wie sich die Tempus- und Aspektmarkierung in der Interlanguage entwickelt; und inwiefern der Entwicklungsprozess durch Faktoren wie der lexikalische Aspekt und der Tempusgebrauch als Mittel der Reliefgebung des Textes (d.h. die Unterscheidung zwischen Vordergrund- und Hintergrundereignissen) beeinflusst wird. Dabei werden der lexikalische Aspekt und die Reliefgebung als "two manifestations of a single construct: a continuum of aspectual meanings" angesehen (Salaberry, 2011, p. 188).

Die Daten weisen darauf hin, dass sowohl der lexikalische Aspekt, als auch der Tempusgebrauch als Mittel der Reliefgebung die Tempus- und Aspektmarkierung in der Interlanguage beeinflussen. Semantisch kongruente Kombinationen von lexikalischem Aspekt, Tempus und Reliefgebung (z.B. telische Verben mit Perfektivmarkierung im Vordergrund, oder stative Verben mit Imperfektivmarkierung im Hintergrund) sind häufiger verwendet als nicht-prototypische Kombinationen (z.B. telische Verben mit Imperfektivmarkierung im Hintergrund). Die Häufigkeit der prototypischen Kombinationen steigt zusammen mit der Entwicklung der Sprachkompetenz.

Appendix E

Frequency of predicates used in the low proficiency sub-corpus classified into lexical aspectual classes[1]

PERF in FG					
Telic	Freq.	Activity	Freq.	State	Freq.
alzarsi	1	bere (tanto prosecco)	1	essere (copula)	2
andare (a scuola)	1	chiacchierare	1	avere tempo	1
arrivare (a scuola, dalla nonna)	3	festeggiare (molto)	1	dovere	1
bussare (alla porta)	1	lavorare	1	rimanere	1
chiedere	2	celebrare	1	volere	1
cominciare	1				
comparire	1				
dare (del vino, del pane)	1				
entrare	1				
essere all'esame [fare l'esame]	1				
finire	3				
incontrare (il lupo)	5				
nascondersi [sotto la tavola]	1				
pregare (di fare qualcosa)	1				
prendere [tirare fuori]	1				
preparare (un progetto)	1				
presentare	1				
proporre [consigliare]	1				
riuscire [farcela]	1				
scoprire	2				
sparire	1				
svegliarsi	2				
vedere [scorgere]	2				
vestirsi	1				
venire	1				

PERF in BG					
Telic	Freq.	Activity	Freq.	State	Freq.
	0	cercare	1	essere (copula)	5
	0			avere fame	1
	0			volere	1
	0				

[1] In cases when the learner's intended meaning of a verb was privileged over the target-language meaning because it was evident from the context, the latter meaning is reported in square brackets.

IMP in BG					
Telic	Freq.	Activity	Freq.	State	Freq.
andare (dalla nonna, etc.)	4	andare	1	avere	7
attraversare (un bosco)	1	parlare	1	avere bisogno	1
chiamare	1	portare	1	avere paura	1
cominciare	2	visitare	1	chiamarsi	1
fare l'esame [sostenere]	1			dovere	4
portare [dalla nonna]	1			essere (copula)	17
tranquillizzare	1			essere	2
				giacere	1
				portare [indossare]	1
				potere	1
				restare	1
				sapere	3
				sembrare	1
				spaventare (far paura)	1
				vivere	4
				volere	6

IMP in FG					
Telic	Freq.	Activity	Freq.	State	Freq.
andare (dalla nonna, etc.)	3	dialogare	1	avere difficoltà	1
arrivare	3	divertirsi	2	sembrare	1
avere l'idea [venire in mente]	1	fare finta	1	essere	1
bussare	1	festeggiare	1	stare	1
chiamare	1	fumare	1		
chiedere	6	parlare	5		
dare	1	provare	1		
dire	3				
entrare	2				
fare (direct object)	1				
finire	1				
incontrare (un lupo)	5				
lasciare	2				
mandare	2				
mangiare (la nonna)	4				
mettersi (i vestiti)	1				

notare	1				
passare (avanti)	1				
prendere	1				
raccontare (disc.diretto)	1				
rispondere	5				
riuscire	1				
sedersi	1				
tagliare	1				
trovare	1				
uccidere	1				
usare [prendere una scorciatoia]	1				
vedere [accorgersi]	3				
venire	3				

Appendix F

Frequency of predicates used in the intermediate proficiency sub-corpus classified into lexical aspectual classes

PERF in FG					
Telic	Freq.	Activity	Freq.	State	Freq.
[recarsi a scuola]	1	aiutare	1	dovere	2
abbracciare	1	aspettate	1	essere (copula)	5
alzarsi	14	bere (troppo)	1	fare niente	1
andare (a casa)	9	cercare (di studiare)	1	piacere	1
arrivare (a scuola)	6	comportarsi (come se ..)	1	potere	1
avere [fare] (l'esame)	1	dormire	1	sentire niente	1
bere (un caffè)	2	fare (esercizi di yoga)	1	vivere	1
capire	1	fare scherzi [scherzare]	1		
chiamare	1	festeggiare	5		
chiedere	3	godere	1		
cominciare (a chiacchierare)	6	mangiare bene	3		
consigliare	1	parlare	2		
dare	3	passare (le vacanze)	1		
dimenticare	1	perdere tempo [temporeggiare]	1		
dire	8	provare	1		
diventare	2	ripetere [ripassare]	1		
divorare	1	riuscire (a dormire)	1		
entrare	3	suonare	1		
farcela	2				
fare (direct object)	9				
finire	3				
incontrare	8				
lasciare	1				
liberare (la nonna)	1				
mangiare (la nonna)	6				
mettere (pietre nella pancia)	3				
notare	1				
parlare [sostenere l'esame]	1				
passare [finire la scuola]	3				
portare [accompagnare in discoteca]	2				
pranzare	2				
prendere (un voto)	5				
realizzare	2				
ricevere (un voto)	1				
rilassarsi	1				
rispondere	2				
riuscire (a trovare la casa)	1				

salvare	1				
sapere [venire a conoscenza]	1				
scegliere	1				
sedersi	1				
sopravvivere	1				
superare	2				
svegliarsi	5				
tagliare	1				
tornare	1				
uccidere	2				
uscire	3				
vedere [scorgere]	5				
venire	4				

PERF in BG					
Telic	Freq.	Activity	Freq.	State	Freq.
incamminarsi	1			avere (tempo; paura)	4
riuscire (ad addormentarsi)	1			dare fastidio	1
venire	1			essere (cop)	6
				sentirsi	2

IMP in BG					
Telic	Freq.	Activity	Freq.	State	Freq.
andare (dalla nonna)	3	andare [essere diretto]	1	abitare (nel bosco)	2
arrivare	1	avere un tema [occuparsi di un tema]	1	avere	9
attraversare (il bosco)	1	cercare	1	chiamarsi	1
avere una domanda [fare una domanda]	1	dare un'occhiata	1	dovere	5
avere una presentazione [fare una presentazione]	1	dormire	1	durare	1
avvicinarsi (al letto)	1	fare [esercitare un'azione]	1	esserci	16
chiamare	1	fare finta	1	essere (copula)	28
diventare	1	guardare	1	fare (sole)	1
passare [attraversare il bosco]	1	prepararsi	1	interessare	1
passare [superare l'esame]	1	studiare	1	mancare	1
portare (un cesto dalla nonna)	1			pensare	1
rilassarsi	1			portare [indossare]	4
riuscire (a capire)	1			potere	4

spalancare (il muso)	1			ricordare	1
vestirsi [mettersi]	1			rimanere	1
				sapere (che..)	6
				sembrare	2
				sentirsi	4
				vivere (nel bosco; con la mamma)	3
				volere	6

IMP in FG					
Telic	Freq.	Activity	Freq.	State	Freq.
andare (dalla nonna)	1	aspettare	1	andare bene	3
chiamare	1	continuare [continuare a camminare]	1	avere (paura)	2
chiedere	1	divertirsi	1	durare	1
diventare	2	dormire	1	essere (copula)	14
domandare	1	guardare (la TV)	1		
entrare	2	parlare	1	potere	4
incontrare	1	sorprendersi [meravigliarsi]	1	sapere	1
mangiare (la nonna)	1			sentirsi	1
mettere in ordine (la camera)	1			stare (a letto)	1
riconoscere (il lupo)	1			vivere	1
salutare	1				
sedersi	1				
venire [entrare] in scena	1				

Appendix G

Frequency of predicates used in the upper-intermediate proficiency sub-corpus classified into lexical aspectual classes

PERF in FG

State	Freq.	Activity	Freq	Telic	Freq
andare bene	22	aiutare	1	accendere	1
avere	7	andare (a scuola) [frequentare]	1	accompagnare	3
dovere	12	aspettare	2	accorgersi	2
essere (copula)	16	augurare [congratularsi]	1	addormentarsi	1
essere bene [andare bene]	1	avere una festa [festeggiare]	1	alzarsi	28
fare (niente)	1	ballare	1	ammalarsi	2
pensare	1	beneficiare [godersi]	1	ammazzare	1
piacere	4	bere	3	andare (dalla nonna, a scuola, etc.)	42
potere	3	cantare	1	aprire	2
sapere	1	celebrare [festeggiare]	1	arrivare	23
sentirsi	6	cercare	1	ascoltare [rivolgere l'attenzione]	1
servire	1	chiacchierare	1	assassinare	1
volere	1	congratularsi	1	avere [fare], [sostenere]	8
		consolare	1	avere [ricevere]	1
		controllare	1	avere [farsi venire in mente] un'idea	1
		divertirsi	1	avviarsi	1
		dormire	7	bere (un caffè)	5
		fare festa [festeggiare]	6	calmarsi	1
		festeggiare	20	cambiare	1
		gridare	1	cantare (una canzone)	1
		guidare [viaggiare]	1	capire [giungere a una conclusione]	4

		imparare [studiare]	1	chiamare	3
		lavorare	1	chiedere	14
		mangiare	8	colmare [riempire la pancia del lupo]	1
		parlare	7	cominciare	12
		passare	1	consigliare	1
		passare [vicino alla casa]	1	correre (alla casa della nonna)	3
		piangere	2	dare	10
		portare	1	decidere [prendere una decisione]	6
		raccontare [parlare]	1	dimenticare	3
		ripetere [ripassare]	2	dire	12
		scherzare	1	entrare	5
		sostenere	2	fare (direct object)	30
		studiare	7	finire	4
		suonare	2	fumare (una sigaretta)	1
		telefonare	1	imparare	1
		usare	1	incontrare	19
		uscire [festeggiare]	1	ingozzare [ingoiare]	1
				iniziare	7
				lavare	3
				liberare	2
				mandare	2
				mangiare (Cappuccetto Rosso, la nonna)	16
				mettersi	6
				notare	4
				passare [superare] l'esame	6
				portare	3
				portare [accompagnare] (a scuola qc)	7
				pregare di	1

				prepararsi	1
				prendere (un voto, il treno)	12
				preparare	3
				presentare	2
				raccontare	4
				raggiungere	1
				regalare	1
				reperire [incontrare]	1
				ricevere	8
				rilassarsi	4
				rispondere	8
				ritornare	4
				riuscire	2
				salvare	1
				sapere [venire a conoscenza]	2
				sbranare	1
				scegliere	3
				sdraiarsi	3
				sentire [udire]	2
				sparire	2
				spegnere occhio [addormentarsi]	1
				spiegare	1
				superare	4
				svegliare	1
				svegliarsi	15
				svolgere	2
				tagliare (in due)	1
				telefonare (a tutta la famiglia)	a

				tirare [scegliere] (il tema)	1
				tornare	1
				trascorrere (una settimana)	2
				travestirsi	1
				trovare	3
				trovarsi con [incontrare]	1
				truccarsi	2
				uccidere	2
				uscire	11
				vedere [accorgersi]	7
				venire	9
				vestirsi	3

IMP in BG					
State	Freq.	Activity	Freq	Telic	Freq
abitare (in mezzo al bosco)	2	andare	1	andare (a scuola)	2
ambientarsi (la storia, SUBJ)	1	aspettare	3	attraversare	1
andare bene	1	camminare	2	avere [fare] (l'esame)	2
avere	4	cercare di	1	dire	1
avere	13	collezionare	1	morire	1
avere bisogno	3	dormire	1	ricevere	1
chiamare Cappuccetto Rosso	1	fare [essere impegnato in un'attività]	1	stupire	1
chiamarsi	5	giocare	1	tagliare	1
credere	1	leggere	1	venire	1
dimenticare	1	passare	2	vestirsi	1
dovere	10	passeggiare	2		
durare	1	portare	1		
esserci	17	preparare	1		
essere (copula)	66	ripetere [ripassare]	1		
		studiare	1		
essere bene [andare bene]	1	tremare	1		
essere capace	1				
far tremare	1				
fare caldo	1				
fare parte	1				

guardare [sembrare]	1				
interessare	1				
piacere	1				
piovere	1				
potere	9				
sapere	8				
sembrare	3				
sentirsi	7				
stare	2				
svolgersi	1				
vivere (in un bosco)	4				
volere	12				

PERF in BG					
State	Freq.	Activity	Freq	Telic	Freq
andare d'accordo	1	andare avanti	1		0
dovere	1	aspettare	3		0
essere (copula)	4				0
pensare	3				
sapere	2				
sentirsi	2				
vivere	1				
volere	1				

IMP in FG					
State	Freq.	Activity	Freq	Telic	Freq
andare bene	1	leggere	1	arrivare	1
dovere	1	aspettare (CR)	1	chiedere	3
esserci	1	andare avanti	1	cominciare	1
essere (copula)	11			entrare	2
essere bene [andare bene]	2			rispondere	1
potere	4			riuscire [a fare l'esame]	1
sentirsi	2			vedere	1

Appendix H

Frequency of predicates used in the high proficiency sub-corpus classified into lexical aspectual classes

PERF in FG					
State	Freq.	Activity	Freq	Telic	Freq
andare bene	5	aiutare	5	accorgersi	1
avere paura	1	andare	2	affermare	1
avere tempo a disposizione	1	aspettare	5	allarmare	1
dovere	2	dare coraggio [incoraggiare]	1	alzarsi	10
esserci	1	dormire	2	ammalarsi	1
essere	10	fare (alcune cose)	3	andare (dalla nonna, etc.)	20
piacere	2	festeggiare	4	annunciare	1
servire	1	frequentare	1	apparire	1
svolgersi	1	mangiare	2	aprire	3
		parlare	4	arrivare	16
		passare [vicino]	1	assassinare	1
		pensare	1	avere (un'idea) [venire in mente]	1
		provare	2	avere [fare] (l'esame)	1
		ripetere [ripassare]	1	avvicinarsi	1
		telefonare	1	bere	1
		guardare	1	bussare	2
				cadere	1
				camminare (fino alla casa)	1
				chiedere	12
				colpire	1
				cominciare	3
				conoscere [riconoscere]	1
				correre (alla casa)	6
				dare	5
				decidere	5
				dire	10
				diventare	1
				divorare	1
				domandare	3
				entrare	9
				fare [l'esame, etc.]	7
				finire	2
				imparare	1

				imprigionare [la nonna nell'armadio]	1
				incontrare	15
				iniziare	1
				invitare	1
				liberare	5
				mandare	1
				mangiare [la nonna]	16
				mettere	1
				mettersi	5
				partire	3
				passare	1
				perdere	3
				portare [accompagnare]	2
				pranzare	1
				prendere	6
				presentare	2
				raccomandare	1
				raccontare	1
				ricevere	4
				rispondere	10
				riuscire a scappare	1
				salutare	1
				salvare	3
				sbagliare	1
				scappare	1
				scoprire	1
				sedersi	1
				sentire [udire]	1
				sorprendersi	1
				sparire	1
				spaventarsi	1
				superare	1
				svegliarsi	1
				svolgere	1
				tagliare	2
				tornare	1
				trovare	5
				uccidere	3
				uscire	2
				vedere	7
				venire	3

				vestirsi	1

IMP in BG					
State	Freq.	Activity	Freq	Telic	Freq
abitare (da sola)	2	andare	6	andare (dalla nonna, etc.)	2
amare	1	aspettare	2	entrare	1
arrivare (fino alle ginocchia)	1	badare	1	portare	4
avere	19	camminare	3	sentire [udire]	1
chiamarsi	8	cogliere [raccogliere fiori]	1	uscire [di casa]	1
credere	2	dormire	1		
dovere	10	fare [svolgere attività indefinita]	1		
esserci	22	portare	1		
essere	30	tenere (in mano)	1		
fare caldo	1	visitare	1		
indossare	1				
non vedere l'ora	1				
portare [indossare]	9				
potere	3				
sapere	1				
sembrare	5				
sentirsi	1				
stare	3				
trovarsi	3				
vivere (nel bosco, etc.)	6				
volere	8				

PERF in BG					
State	Freq.	Activity	Freq	Telic	Freq
essere	4				

IMP in FG					
State	Freq.	Activity	Freq	Telic	Freq
dovere	2	andare avanti	1	mangiare (la nonna)	1
sentire	1	aspettare	1	andare (dentro la casa)	1
		dormire	3	fare un salto fuori dal letto	1
				mandare	1