L2 ACQUISITION OF SPANISH TELIC *SE* CONSTRUCTIONS

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This thesis examines the acquisition of the aspectual properties of the Spanish *se* in transitive constructions by L2 learners of Spanish. Based on a parameterized distinction of the telic features in English and Spanish, this study investigates whether second language (L2) learners are able to reset the aspectual value of the English parameter to that of Spanish in their interlanguage grammar. Results indicate that L2 learners' responses to a picture interpretation task vary according to proficiency levels. Low-intermediate and intermediate learners did not differentiate between telic and atelic constructions whereas advanced learners successfully acquired the telic properties of the transitive *se* constructions. Results were interpreted in the light of current theories of second language acquisition and the mental representation of aspect in interlanguage.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Recent research into variation between languages has focused on functional categories (FC) and features related to them. Functional Categories are instantiated in each language and includes features like grammar (AgrP), tense (TP), and aspect (AspP). Learning a language requires learning these features that vary from language to language. Thus, learning a second language (L2) would require learners to build a new structure by either adding or resetting different features.

This thesis looks into the acquisition of the Spanish clitic *se* in transitive constructions as a telic marker by L2 learners of Spanish. It examines how the aspectual properties of the Spanish clitic *se* are acquired by adult English L2 learners of Spanish to determine what aspects of the acquisition are constrained by the learners' native language (NL) specific properties. It also looks into how the typology of the target language (L2) may play a significant role in the L2 acquisition process. Ultimately, this study attempts to explain the nature of the learners' interlanguage (IL) development as observed in the process of acquiring the Spanish telic morpheme *se* as a result of the combination of NL and L2 properties constrained by Universal Grammar (UG). Basically, it focuses on the questions of UG availability and the mechanisms through which L2 learners have access to aspectual constraints. Finally, this study investigates whether L2 learners' interlanguages (IL) diverge from both the target and the native

language and whether the endstate of an L2 grammar could be a grammar that is constrained by UG but which differs in certain respects from the learners' NL and the L2 grammar.

The motivations for this research were that the telic reflexive *se* construction constitutes an interesting area of study in relation to the issue of UG availability for aspectual constraints. This work analyzes the semantics of measuring-out constraints in transitive sentences with *se* as a compositional predicate, that is, a predicate with aspectual constraints that relate internal and external arguments (i.e., objects and subjects) with the morphological marker *se*. The measuring-out constraint in the event structure of transitive verbs has a temporal and spatial delimitedness expressed by the specificity of the internal argument. Verbs with these characteristics are called telic. Telicity can be morphologically, syntactically and lexically marked, and it varies crosslinguistically. Spanish telic *se* is a morphological aspectual marker that co-occurs with agentive subjects and delimited objects . There is also a relationship between the internal argument and the external argument. The latter absorbs the role of originator and benefactive of the event; that is, the external argument is affected by the completion of the event itself. This compositional predicate can be syntactically represented in an AspP projection by an event measuring feature [EM] and by a second higher projection with the [+originator] feature.

Second, this study assumes the view that Universal Grammar constrains the development of interlanguage grammars. One of the fundamental questions within this perspective is whether L2 learners are capable of acquiring any language property that

is not instantiated in their NL. The first research question refers to the impossibility of resetting parameters for L2 learners who have not been exposed to the L2 input long enough so as to be able to recognize the telic values of clitic *se* construction. A second research question addresses the ability of L2 learners with long exposure to L2 input to reset new parametric options. The assumption is that intermediate and advanced learners have access to the new parametric setting as instantiated in functional categories and their related features. This study examines whether advanced L2 learners may be able to map features from the functional categories in their NL to the new L2 morphological material. They may recognize the morphology of the target language, but the feature specification may be valueless at their stage of acquisition. In this work I assess whether L2 learners' mental representations of the new aspectual features encode all the aspectual properties of telic *se.* In other words, while L2 morphology might be acquired, L2 learners may not acquire the formal features and syntactic implications associated with these features.

Chapter I analyzes the compositional nature of aspectual properties of a sentence providing a brief review of the semantics of the aspectual constraint, namely, the measuring-out constraint. It refers to how the aspectual notion of change-over-time has been analyzed in event semantics. It discusses the definition of 'delimitedness' in event semantics as depending on the nature of the verb and on the features of the object [+specific] that makes it eligible to 'measure-out' the event expressed by the verb. Then, it reviews how telic constraints can vary crosslinguistically and presents a detailed analysis of the Spanish telic reflexive se construction and the compositional

property of the predicate that can be represented syntactically in the functional category AspP. For the purposes of the study, the English verbal particles and Spanish telic *se* are compared as two different ways of encoding telicity to conclude that both languages have Aktionsart aspectual markers in transitive sentences with verbs of accomplishment with different features. The feature [+telic] is strong in Spanish, whereas [+measure] is strong in English.

Chapter 2 also presents a review of the current research on second language acquisition and UG, specifically the Fundamental Difference Hypothesis (Clahsen and Muysken 1986, Bley-Vroman 1989, 1990, Schachter 1990, 1996), that postulates that UG is not available in L2 acquisition. By contrast, the theory of direct access to UG (Flynn and Martohardjono 1991, 1994, Epstein, Flynn and Martohardjono, 1996) states that NL parameters do not influence L2 learners' initial analysis of L2 grammar. What is not clear in this approach is whether NL values ever play a role in L2 acquisition. Finally, the Full Access/Full Transfer Hypothesis (Schwartz and Sprouse, 1994,1996) that assumes that NL constitutes the initial grammar for L2 learners. Finally, this chapter analyzes the role of transfer in L2 acquisition, namely, in the acquisition of aspectual parameters, and the result of the interaction of the learners' NL grammar and the typology of the L2. In the final part of this chapter I postulate the research questions that motivate this work and the specific hypotheses for this experimental research on telicity effects.

Chapter 3 describes the underlying assumptions for the design of the experiment and the use of a picture judgement task as test instrument. It describes the type of

predicates selected to design the test and the characteristics of the experimental research. It provides examples of test items and summarizes the criteria followed in the design of the comic strip sequences. Finally, it describes the participants and the procedure followed to implement the test. An analysis of the collected data and their statistical treatment is also included.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the experimental research on the acquisition of telic *se* constructions in Spanish. In an initial stage, low intermediate and intermediate learners showed significant differences in their responses compared to advanced learners. Low proficiency learners failed to identify the telic properties of the transitive construction with clitic *se* . This failure to draw distinctions between telic and atelic features may indicate that these learners do not recognize L2 over morphological markers for telicity such as telic *se*. Advanced learners, on the other hand, showed significant differences in their performance in relation to low proficiency learners. They were able to differentiate between telic and atelic properties of the sentences and showed a near native competence in the picture interpretation task.

Finally, Chapter 5 brings together the conclusions of this experimental research and relates them to the hypotheses tested. This final discussion addresses the role the language typology in determining learners' differences in the interpretation task. Chapter 5 also presents the implications of the findings in relation to current theories of L2 acquisition and possible areas of further research related to this study.

CHAPTER 2

TRANSITIVITY AND AKTIONSART: TELIC CLITIC *SE*

2.1 Measuring-out constraints and Semantics

In Davidsonian logical form, events are parts of the logical representation as variables but they have no internal structure. Parson (1985) introduces predicates that represent delimitedness and non-delimitedness of the event but without making reference to an internal temporal structure. Consequently, endstate entailments are not possible in a Parsonian representation. Dowty (1979) proposes the notion of predicate [BECOME] representing a change of state over time. However, this change can not be represented as gradable. So, the measuring-out constraint has no internal representation in the event.

Putejovsky (1991) introduces an internal structure within the event structure that he calls 'transition events', that is, events that show change of state and that can be decomposed into temporarily ordered sub-events. However, this system lacks a representation of the notion of change-over-time as a gradable parameter associated with the object. Verkuyl's (1985) and Hinrich's (1985) semantic models propose a representation of change-over-time as temporal substages of events where events can be analyzed into temporal subparts related to the object.

Krifka (1992) (see also Verkuy 1972, 1993, Dowty 1991, Tenny 1987, 1994) develops a compositional approach to the interpretation of measuring-out constraint by

introducing the notion of 'homomorphisms' from objects to events and the mapping between events and objects. Krifka (1991) proposes a correlation between objects and events that determines telicity. Two conditions are necessary: 1) the uniqueness of the object, that is, that the event refers to only one object; and 2) the mapping to objects and events, that is, a condition of homomorphism that exists between the event and the object involved in the event. If the event denoted by the verb is *drinking* and the object involved is *a glass of water* the telic reading indicates that the event comes to an end when the *glass of water* is totally consumed. Only verbs of accomplishment allow this reading because their semantics indicate duration of the event until the endpoint is reached (Tenny, 1994).

Finally, Jackendoff's (1993) notion of 'Conceptual Structures' is based on the categories [EVENT], [STATE, THING] and [PLACE, PATH] and the rules governing them. Drawing on Krifka's homomorphisms, he adds a time component and presents a set of primitive meaning categories and structures –conceptual structures- that have an explicit aspectual component: the distinction between [EVENT] and [STATE]. Jackendoff also introduces the feature [+/- BOUNDED] which represents the delimited quality of an event. Also, he indicates aspectuality by breaking down an event by using the a-thing-moving-along-a-path rule and the path-to rule that represent an event progressing as a measuring-out to a terminus.

In Jackendoff's approach, conceptual structures represent the syntactically relevant portions of lexical semantics. Thus, we observe how an aspectual (and event) representation is implicit in the conceptual structure which, in turn, is also organized

around the aspectual structure. There is a correlation of both structures, but they are not identical. An aspectual structure is a highly concise and precise representation that contains only a subset of the information contained in the corresponding conceptual representation. Thus, this specific information allows us to represent classes of conceptual structures having the same aspectual structures. Also, due to its conciseness, aspectual structure can be formally defined and represented.

Taking Jackendoff and Krifka's approaches, Tenny (1994) proposes a set of universal principles of mapping between the thematic structure and the syntactic argument structure. In her Apectual Interface Hypothesis (AIH) she claims that constraints on the aspectual properties associated with internal and external arguments in syntactic structure determine the kind of event participants. Tenny also claims that there are very general cross-linguistic linking principles organized around the aspectual properties of measuring-out, but, that there is as systematic structured semantic representation of events as temporal entities that is grammatically and linguistically defined. The event structure is built into the verbal representation and the aspectual constraints are a syntactic projection of this semantic event structure. For Tenny, events can have an internal argument -the 'locus' or 'event nucleus' of the aspectual structure-- which comprises a culmination, a preparatory and a consequent state as shown in sentence (1):

(1) a. John cut the bread.

b. [John] = external argument

c. [Cut the bread] = the change in the bread = event nucleus.

d. [X CAUSE [Y CHANGE]

This work analyzes the properties of aspect from the perspective Aktionsart(i.e., how the type of the event conveys information about temporal aspects of situations, such as beginning, end, and change of state and duration). This notion of temporality is different from temporal location aspect (i.e., viewpoint aspect), though both can be related. Therefore, the aspectual meaning of a sentence can be interpreted as a composite of the information from the components of viewpoint aspect and situation type aspect. This study deals with the Aktionsart properties of the *se* construction in Spanish, which are analyzed as compositional properties of the predicate of verbs of accomplishment.

2.1.1 The measuring-out constraint in transitive sentences

Hopper and Thompson's (1980) Transitivity Hypothesis predicts that whenever an obligatory pairing of two transitive features occurs in the morphosyntax or semantics of a clause, the paired features will have matching high or low transitivity characteristics (p.254). Their hypothesis also predicts that in all languages, transitive features are concomitant. Therefore, there are no languages in which the object of a telic verb must be marked as non-referential or mass count or plural. Hopper and Thompson also propose a list of relevant components for transitivity, such as aspect and its [+telic] feature, volitionality (i.e., the effect of transitivity on the patient when the agent acts purposefully), agency (i.e., the action performed by an agentive subject), affectedness of the object (i.e., the degree to which an action is transferred to a patient and affects it), and individuation of the object (i.e., the distinctiveness of the patient from the agent).

In Hopper and Thompson's (1980) framework, telicity is determined by the properties of the predicate and aspect is correlated with the degree of transitivity of the predicate.

Tenny's (1994) Direct Internal Argument hypothesis introduces a new role for the internal argument (object) in the aspectual structure. It is the internal argument that measures out the event to which the verb refers. By measuring-out we mean marking the temporal endpoint of the event. Consider the example in (2) below.

(2) Mary ate up the apple.

In (2), the object *apple* measures out the event of *eating*, as the complete consumption of the apple marks the end point of the eating event.

Following Tenny's (1994) observations on verb meaning and aspectual interpretation, we can classify verbs that allow this measuring-out of the event into two classes: incremental–theme verbs (following Dowty, 1991), and change-of-state verbs. Incremental-theme verbs are those verbs that take an incremental theme (i.e., an object that can be divided into subpart, each of them being understood as part of the verb event). This property of the object determines the telic aspect of the predicate. There is a homomorphic relation between the structure of the theme argument (object) and the event denoted by the verb. For instance, in the expression *mow the lawn,* the state of the lawn reflects the parts of the event of *mowing.* By looking at the state of the lawn one can deduce the aspect of the event (i.e., whether it has started, whether it is partly done or completely finished, etc) (Dowty, 1991)

In this first group are verbs of consumption as in *eat an apple*, where the eating event is understood as a progressive consumption of the internal argument, *the apple*. These verbs are incremental because some quantity is consumed during each interval of the *eating* event, and they mark a temporal progress of the event. The final consumption of *the apple* marks the temporal endpoint of the event.

The measuring-out constraint contains two properties: a measuring scale, associated with the nature of the argument, and a temporal delimitedness. By measuring scale we mean the specific quality of the object that allows us to interpret it as delimited or non-delimited. For example, in the following example in (3), the same predicate produces sentences that are interpreted as delimited or non-delimiting, depending on the object.

(3) a. watch a movie (delimited)

b. watch a bird (non-delimited)

The object in (3a) has the property of being measurable in a scale. The event of *watching* progresses through time until the endpoint is reached. The sentence is then interpreted as limited. As opposed to this, the object in (3b) is not measurable in scale. The parts of the bird are not seen one at the time until the whole bird is in sight. This type of object does not measure out the event, which is interpreted as non-delimited.

The delimitedness of an event is also determined by whether the direct argument is spatially delimited or not. Mass count nouns or bare plural objects have a non-delimited reading, whereas specific or count noun objects yield a delimited interpretation. Compare the examples in (4) taken from Dowty (1991).

(4) a. John drank a glass of beer (perfective, delimited)

b. John drank beer (for an hour) (imperfective, non-limited)

Therefore, spatial and temporal delimitedness is seen to have the same aspectual interpretation in two different domains: the spatial and the temporal. A temporally delimited situation involves a spatially delimited entity.

2.1.2 Telicity and measuring-out constraints

In event semantics, those dynamic situations based on the verb's aspectual properties are referred to as telic and atelic. Telic situations are temporarily delimited and have an endpoint beyond which they cannot continue. Atelic situations can continue indefinitely. Vendler (1967) classifies verbs of accomplishment and of achievement as telic, and verbs denoting activities as atelic. Smith (1991) postulates that all dynamic verbs are specified for telicity in the lexicon, but the properties of the predicate will determine the telic/atelic features of the verb complex.

2.1.3 Telic constraints crosslinguistically

In the following section I refer to the telic markers in different languages. In most languages, syntactic processes denoting telicity are sensitive to the event structure and the presence of aspectual properties in the object indicated by a notion of delimitedness or measuring out (Tenny, 1994). There are languages in which the morphology directly expresses the delimited/non-delimited distinction. Telic markers can be preposition-like elements, such as *ba* in Chinese or preverbal particles such as *pře-* in Czech, or *pro-* or iz- in Bulgarian. In some other languages, like in French, pronouns can be aspectual markers, such as *Ce.* In English, the combination of verbal

particles and verbs of accomplishment yield a telic reading; like in *eat up the apple.* Finally, in Spanish the telic reflexive *se* marks telicity in transitive sentences with verbs of accomplishment

2.1.3.1 Chinese

Mandarin Chinese has a construction with a preposition-like element *ba*, which combines specific syntactic and aspectual properties. It always precedes the logical object of the verb and it co-occurs with affected (or delimiting) arguments and with resultatives and markers of perfective aspect or constructions indicating that a change of state has taken place. Hopper and Thompson (1980) also point out that this particle denotes volitionality, that is, that the agent is behaving actively upon a definite or referential object. Compare the examples in (5), provided by Li Yang (p.c.)

(5) Wo *ba* zhe ge xiangjiao chi le

I *ba-ASP* this banana eat *le-COMP*

In (5) the preposition-like *ba* is related to the object of the predicate *this banana* which is specific and acts as an aspectual marker delimiting the event. The aspectual marker *le* marks the completion of the event of the verb *eat.* The marker *ba* cannot occur with non-specific objects (mass nouns), as shown in example (6).

(6) a. *Wo *ba* shui he *le*

* I *ba* water drink *le*

b. Wo *ba* zhe bei shui he *le*

I *ba-ASP* this glass water drink *le-COMP*

However, in imperative constructions *ba* can appear with non-specific objects. Compare example (7).

(7) *Ba* shui he *le*

Ba-ASP water drink *le-COMPL*

Zhang (1995) points out that aspectuality in Chinese relates to verb meaning and verb-complement. Chinese, a language rich in aspectual markers grammatically separates termination from completion. The sense of completion, if it is not implicated in a sentence wit the aspectual marker *le*, it is explicated by a set of perfective markers. Compare examples in (8).

(8) Wo *ba* na ge xiangjiao chi (*wan)* *le*

I *ba-ASP* that banana eat (*wan-PERF)* *le-COMPL*

In (8) the completive marker *le* is obligatory whereas the perfective marker *wan* is optional. The perfective marker *wan* is obligatory to indicate the action has not been completed, as shown in example (9).

(9) Wo mei chi *(*wan)*

I not eat *wan-PERF*

I have not eaten

In (9) the completive marker *le* is not allowed since the action is not completed. The notion of completeness is related to the object, which has to be specific, as a measuring out element of the verb event. The preposition-like marker *ba* co-occurs with the delimiting object, indicating that the event of verbs measured out by the object. The marker *le* indicates the completion of the whole event and refers to the whole sentence.

2.1.3.2 English

English has one type of telic markers that are verb particles used with verbs that do not yield a telic reading. Verbs that ambiguously specify a direct argument, which may or may not measure out the event, may be converted to verbs that do take a measuring direct argument by the addition of a particle (Tenny, 1994). Aspectual particles such as *through, up, down* exhibit the syntactic traits of being able to appear on either side of the object noun in transitive constructions. Observe the examples in (10).

(10) a. He read *through* the whole book.

b. He read it *through.*

Also, the aspectual semantics of particles can be understood in terms of spatial and temporal domains (i.e., in terms of a source/a start, a goal/an end, and a path/ a situation), and thus be categorized into two general categories of boundedness and unboundedness (Zhang, 1995). Particles such as *up, down, out, off, through* and *over* mark telic aspectual distinctions, by expressing an end or a goal. Particles such as *on, along* and *away* mark atelic distinctions.

2.1.3.3 French

In French, Reed (1997) argues that the French demonstrative *ce* (D-ce) is used to encode the aspectual notions of perfectivity and non-habituality .She calls this function 'pronominalized aspect' and argues that *ce* is an example of an aspect that is encoded in the pronominal system of the language. *Ce* is analyzed as a pronoun that lexically specifies the aspectual features and is licit only in those environments where

the [+consequent state] lexical feature is implied in the verb semantics. Compare the following example in (14), taken from Reed (1997).

(14) Jean, *il/*c(e*)' est devenue/ était/ sera un homm instruit.

Jean, he has become/ was/ will be an man educated

In (14) *ce* lexically specifies the aspectual features [+consequent state], which are the properties, attained by the logical subject at some point in time and which the subject maintains at a given point in time. The use of *ce* is preferred to the pronoun inflected for number and gender (*il*) because of the aspectual constraint [+consequent state] that the verbs *(être/devenue)* impose on the whole predicate. Compare these constraints as shown in example in (15), taken from Authier (1998).

(15) a. Si Max commettait un meurtre, il/*Ce serait alors un homme traqué par la justice.

If Max committed a murder, he/*Ce would then be a man haunted by law enforcement agencies.

b. Si Max était bel et bien un meutrier, *il/Ce serait un homme traqué par la justice.

If Max was pretty and good a murderer, *il/Ce would be a man haunted by the law enforcement agencies.

Authier and Reed (1998) assign c*e* clitic–like properties, having person and number features and NOM case feature. But they note that the distribution of c*e* differs

from that of other subject pronouns in that *ce* is licensed in predicates that have an event structure denoting consequent state.

Following Moens and Steedman's (1988) conceptual framework, Authier and Reed argue that the feature [+/- consequent state] is used to distinguish event predicates whose achievement in some way affects and changes their arguments, from those predicates that have no such lasting effects. Observe the example in (16).

(16) a. Jósephine détestait Napoleon parce qu'il était en train de devenir un vainqueur impitoyable.

b. *Jósephine détestait Napoleon parce que C'était en train de devenir un vainqueur impitoyable.

Josephine hated Napoleon because he/*Ce was in the process of becoming a merciless conqueror.

In the example in (16), *ce* is disallowed because the effect of the expression *être en train de* (to be in process of) refers to the steps Napoleon was taking to become a merciless conqueror, not to the consequent state of actually being a merciless conqueror, as shown in (17).

(17) Napoleon, C'était un vanqueur impitoyable.

Napoleon, *ce* was a merciless conqueror.

2.1.3.4 Slavic languages

In Czech, verbal prefixes describe delimited events, adding an aspectual content to the verb without changing its lexical meaning. Compare the example in (18) provided by Iva Kôrinkova (p.c.).

(18) a. V□era Petr □etl knihu

Yesterday Peter PV-read book

b. V□era Petr *p□e□*etl celou knihu

Yesterday Peter PV-read the whole book

In (18b) the preverbal particle *pře* has an aspectual interpretation of accomplishment. Unlike Spanish *se*, the object can be specific or non-specific, as shown in (18 ab). Also, the cardinality of the object is not important. Compare examples in (19).

(19) a. Petr *p□e□*etl dv□ kniny.

Peter PV-read two books.

b. Petr *p□e□*etl kniny.

Peter PV-read books

In Slabakova's (1999) crosslinguistic analysis of the aspectual related constructions in Slavic and English she compares how verb morphology in Slavic languages signals aspectual interpretations through perfective preverbs (PV). Unlike English, the cardinality of the nominal argument is not important. Compare examples in (20)which were taken from Slabakova (1999).

(20) a. Ivan □et-e knigi

Ivan read-3sg/aorist books

Ivan read books

b. Ivan *pro-*□et-e knigi

Ivan PV-read3sg/aorist books

Ivan read (a specified quantity of books)

These preverbs encode telicity by implying completion of the event or providing an additional meaning relating to the manner or means of executing the event. Slabakova points out that telicity at the preveb (PV) level is signaled by perfective preverbal particles. She distinguishes between the notion of telic-atelic and bounded-unbounded. Compare examples in (21), again taken from Slabakova (1999).

(21) a. Ivan *iz-* jade po edin sandvi□

Ivan PV-eat-aorist one sandwich

Ivan ate a sandwich

b. Ivan *iz-* ja□da-▮e po edin sandvic vseki den

Ivan PV- eat - *IMP* a sandwich every day

Ivan eats a sandwich every day

In (21a,b) the preverb *iz-* signals telicity independently of the tense in the sentence: the events of *eating a sandwich* are complete in both sentences, though in different times. In the following examples in (22), the events are atelic (i.e., the events are not completed though the action may be terminated).

(22) a. Ivan jade sandvi□

Ivan eat-aorist sandwich

Ivan eats a sandwich

b.Ivan jadeše sandvi kogato go vidjax

Ivan eat-imp sandwich when him saw-1sg

Ivan was eating a sandwich when I saw him

As we observe in (22a,b) there are no PV that mark telicity. As a rule, we can say that in Bulgarian well as in Czech, adding a perfective PV onto the atelic verb stem marks telicity.

2.2 Spanish morpheme *se* as an telic marker

2.2.1 Telic *se*

In this section I analyze the properties of a construction in Spanish that involves a transitive verb with a direct object and a clitic that is homophonous with the reflexive *se*. The clitic agrees in φ-features (person and number) with the subject of the sentence. The clitic can be optional. However, those sentences without *se* can be interpreted as not being telic. Sanz (1996) argues that this interpretation is the result of not considering the object as a measurer of the event. Compare the sentences in (23).

(23) a. Mi hermano leyó un libro.

My brother read a book

b. Mi hermano *se* leyó un libro.

My brother *se*-TCL *read* a book.

In (23a) we can interpret that my brother finished the entire or did some book reading. When the clitic is present, such as in (23b) the interpretation is unambiguously that of an accomplishment: he read the book all the way till the end. Therefore, the presence of

the clitic *se* (*se*-TCL) makes the sentence less ambiguous in favor of an accomplishment interpretation.

Some of the verbs that enter in this type of construction with the telic reflexive *se* allow null subjects. (1)

The reflexive clitic *se* can appear in transitive constructions such as the one in (24).

(24) Juan *se* comió dos bananas.

However, there are some constraints in the characteristics of the objects in the sentences containing the telic reflexive *se.* Mass nouns and bare plural yield ungrammatical constructions when the telic reflexive *se* is present. Compare the examples in (25).

(25 a. Lucía (**se)* comió pochoclos/ naranjas

b. Lucy (**se*-TCL) ate popcorn / oranges

However, the notion of specificity of the object will not suffice to describe the characteristics of the objects that appear with the telic reflexive *se* either. Sentences with indefinite object, such as (26a) or with a non-specific object, such as (26b) are allowed in this construction.

(26) a. Pedro *se* comió una manzana (singular, indefinite object)

Pedro *se*-TCL ate an apple

b. Pedro *se* tomó algunos/unos vinos (plural, non-specific object)

Pedro *se*-TCL drank some wines

As we observe, it is neither the specificity nor the plurality of the object that can best describe the properties of the object in this telic construction. Evidently, the object acts

as a delimiter, which has some particular properties such as being affected by the verb event. In the following section I analyze how the main property of the object in this telic *se* construction is that of being the delimiter of the event as part of a compositional aspectual relation between verb event and characteristics of the object.

2.2.2 Affectedness, delimitedness and the object as a delimiter

Tenny (1994) defines 'delimitedness' as 'the property of an event's having a distinct, definite and inherent point in time' (2). Her analysis involves only those sentences in which delimitedness is achieved through an object. To illustrate this distinction, Tenny uses adverbial expressions that indicate an end point events and durative events. Compare the following examples in (27), taken from Tenny (1994).

(27) a. Delimited: destroy the city (in an hour/*for an hour)

b. Non-delimited: like jazz (*in a day/for a day)

In (27a), the delimitedness is indicated by the limited spatial in nature of the object *the city*. This property combines with the semantics of the verb *destroy* that denotes an accomplishment. This relationship between the object and the verb is referred to as affectedness (i.e., the class of verbs and the arguments they take) and implies a homomorphic (i.e., the event comes to an end when the object is consumed) relation between the theme argument and the event.

Tenny proposes that that affectedness is a semantic property of the verb that describes a situation, which can be measured out by its direct argument (object). There are three aspectual roles that can have this measure-out property in transitive

constructions: Measure, Path, and Path and Terminus. These roles are exemplified in (28) (examples from Tenny).

(28) a. build a house (Measure: it provides a scale and an end point of that scale)

b.walk the Appalachian Trail (Path: It signals a scale without endpoint)

c. walk the trail to the end (Path and Terminus: It signals an event and its end)

Regarding the properties of the telic *se* construction in the light of the previous observation, we can state that objects in these constructions can be of the three types mentioned by Tenny. Compare examples in (29)

(29) a. Federico *se* pintó la pieza (Measure)

Federico *se*-TCL painted the bedroom

b. Josefina *se* corrió el circuito (Path)

Josefina *se*-TCL ran the circuit

c. Eduardo *se* recorrió el camino desde el principio hasta el fin (Path and Terminus)

Eduardo *se*-TCL walked along the path from the beginning to the end

In (29a,b, c,) the presence of the clitic makes the event telic. In (29a) the measure of the event of *painting* is the nature of the object *bedroom.* In (29b) the verb is a route type of verb with a path object that measures out the event over time and make it telic. In (29c) the verb is a route verb also, with a path object that has a signal that marks the terminus of the event. In both examples the object does not undergo any change of state or motion, but it provides a kind of scale that indicates when the event is completed.

To conclude, we can state that it is the properties of the object that make the event telic in telic *se* constructions. When the predicate has a theme of the right kind

(i.e., that delimits the event) the presence of the clitic is grammatical. The internal argument (object) acts as a delimiter of the event.

2.2.3 On the nature of the subject in telic *se* constructions

The appearance of the telic reflexive *se* in transitive constructions is contingent on the presence of an overt direct object. This object holds the theta role of measure and it checks the feature [+measure] in the functional projection AgrP. Although some authors have referred to this clitic *se* in transitive constructions as a reflexive (Fernandez Ramirez 1986, Molina Redondo 1974, Strozer 1976, Nishida 1994) its properties are those of a telic clitic (Sanz 1996). Although it is morphologically similar to the reflexive Spanish *se,* when it appears in transitive constructions it is licensed by specific aspectual (Aktionsart) properties of the sentence that contains it and it expresses some kind of subject-affectedness related to the subject of the sentence.

This notion of affectedness can be explained by considering the subject of the transitive sentence as the originator of the event, in Borer's (1994) terms. The originator can participate in the event in a direct or indirect way. In a direct participation, the originator is understood as the active agent that has some bearing in how the event came about. It is also affected by the event itself. The subject is responsible for the event and the change of state that affects her or him for good or bad. (Sanz 1996). Compare the example in (30).

(30) Mi hermano *se* gastó todo el dinero (y ahora esta seco)

My brother *se-TCL* spent all the money (and now he is broke)

In (30) the originator of the event of *spending* is an agent who, at the same time, is being affected by the event of *spending all the money*. In this type of telic *se* construction, the subject has to be agentive and it has to be affected by the event. This affectedness does not imply the role of experiencer or recipient. Telic *se* can not occur in constructions where the subject has either of these roles. Compare example in (31).

(31) Pedro (* *se*) recibió una carta

Pedro (**se*-TCL) received a letter

Examples of the subject as originator in an indirect way can be found in the sentences proposed by Nishida (1994), although she does not favor this analysis. The non-agentivity that verbs of state denote when used in telic *se* constructions, such as '*saber (se) la lección' (*know the lesson) and *'conocer (se) la ciudad'* (know the city) is not similar to that of real state verbs, such as *'existir'* (exist). In the examples shown in (32), the subject can be considered as being halfway between passive subjects of states and active subjects of dynamic situation (Sanz 1996).

(32) a. Ya *me* sé la lección

Already *me*-TCL knew the lesson

I have already learned the lesson

b. Pedro ya *se* conoce la ciudad

Pedro already *se*-TCL knows the city

Both sentences in (32) describe the state of knowing as a result of an accomplishment: learning. The subjects do not have a passive role. The connotation is that the subject *(Yo)*(I) in (32a) and *Pedro* in (32b) are the ones who did the action of

learning. The final state *me sé la lección (*I knew/learned the lesson) in (32a) and *se conoce la ciudad (*knows the city) in (32b) are the resultative state of the accomplishment of the event of learning.

Some verbs of state, namely those denoting intellectual activity, such as the ones already mentioned, can appear with telic *se when* the state they describe is the result of an accomplishment and their subjects have agentive properties. In such cases, the subjects also have a volitional property: they are or were actively involved in the event of learning the lesson or learning how to move around the city.

This volitional property is present in telic *se* constructions. Some authors have interpreted the reflexive-like properties of the clitic *se* as benefactive. That is, the subject of the telic *se* construction is affected by the result of the event he himself generates (Rigau 1994, Sanz 1996) .The benefactive interpretation arises by virtue of the action being completive (i.e., telic) and that the subject is agentive. The presence of the telic reflexive *se* makes the subject be in some way affected by the event. This means that when an agentive subject, in a volitional act performs the event, upon the same argument that started it, the event is telic and the subject is affected by the result of the event. Compare the example in (33).

(33) El tipo se tomó todo el vino (y ahora esta borracho)

The guy *se*-TCL drank all the wine (and now he is drunk)

Even if we omit the bracketed comment, the sentence in (33) implies that the agent *el tipo* (the guy) was the originator of the action of *drinking* which was a volitional act that

affected him. The action of drinking *all the wine* implies the accomplishment of an event that has some effect upon the originator of the event (see also 30).

The benefactive reading also appears when the originator is obliquely affected by the result of the event. Compare example in (34).

(34) El profesor de Historia *se* preparó una clase espectacular.

The History professor *se*-TCL prepared a spectacular class.

In (34) the originator of the event of *preparing the class* is indirectly affected in a positive way by the event (i.e., his spectacular class affected his renown as a good professor), though the class was not prepared for himself, as a recipient.

2.2.4 Aktionsart aspect vs. view point aspect: The case of Spanish telic *se*.

In this section I argue that the aspect marked by the telic reflexive *se* is compositional and Aktionsart (i.e., action type). The presence of the clitic is not sensitive to inflectional markers. It can appear in constructions marked both for imperfective and perfective aspects, as shown in (35). (Examples taken from Nishida, 1994).

(35) a. Juan *se* leía el periódico todos los días. (imperfect, past)

Juan *se*-TCL read-imp the newspaper every day

Juan used to read the newspaper every day

b. Juan *se* leyó el periódico ayer (perfect, past)

Juan *se*-TCL read the newspaper yesterday

Juan read the newspaper yesterday

In (35a), the expression *todos los días* every day) triggers an iterative reading and it can be interpreted as a habitual action in the past, consisting of repeated subevents, each of which must be perfective (Sanz 1996).

Telic reflexive *se* can also be used with a progressive aspect, as shown in example (36).

(36) En este dibujo, el lobo *se* está comiendo a Caperucita.

In this drawing, the wolf *se*-TCL is eating Red Riding Hood

However, the clitic *se* will yield an ill-formed sentence when used with the preterite progressive, as shown in (37).

(37) Juan (**se*) estuvo leyendo el periódico esta mañana

Juan (**se*TCL) was reading the newspaper this morning.

Clearly, the difference in the aspect expressed by this clitic is not dependent on the inflectional aspect of the sentence. The Aktionsart properties of the clitic *se* are determined by the properties of the verb and its complement, and do not relate to the imperfective or perfective morphology of the verb.

However, some verbs of activity (e.g. *oler (smell), drive* (manejar)) which are atelic by nature, can be turned into verbs of accomplishments (i.e., denoting telic events) when they have an incremental theme as an internal argument. In that case, telic reflexive *se* is allowed. Compare the examples in (38)

(38) a. Juan (**se*) olió el perfume

Juan (**seTCL)* smelled the perfume

b. Juan *se* olió todos los perfumes del Free-shop

Juan *se*TCL smelled all the perfumes in the Free-Shop

The nature of the objects is what makes (38a) ungrammatical and (38b) grammatical. In (38b) the object is an incremental theme, and it can measure out the even of *oler* (smell). Therefore, the compositional characteristics of the Aktionsart aspect license the presence of telic clitic *se,* not the lexical entry of the verb.

As regards verbs of achievements where telicity is not measured out by the object, the telic reflexive *se* is predicted to be ungrammatical. Consider the examples in (39).

(39) a. Lucía (**se)* llegó última en la carrera

Lucía (**se*-TCL) arrived last in the race

b. Marcos (**se*) ha empezado a estudiar Inglés

Marcos (**se*-TCL) has started to study English

In neither (39a) nor (39b) do the verbs take incremental themes as objects. The lexical properties of the predicate (i.e., events that do not have internal steps and take a single moment to occur) make the event atelic.

In conclusion, we can say that all transitive sentences in Spanish that allow the telic reflexive *se* are accomplishments. With these verbs, telicity must be the result of a compositional property of the predicate (i.e., a combination of a verb and an object that measure out the event of the verb). This compositional property is neither related nor dependent on the inflectional aspect of the sentence.

2.2.5 Syntactic properties of telic *se* constructions

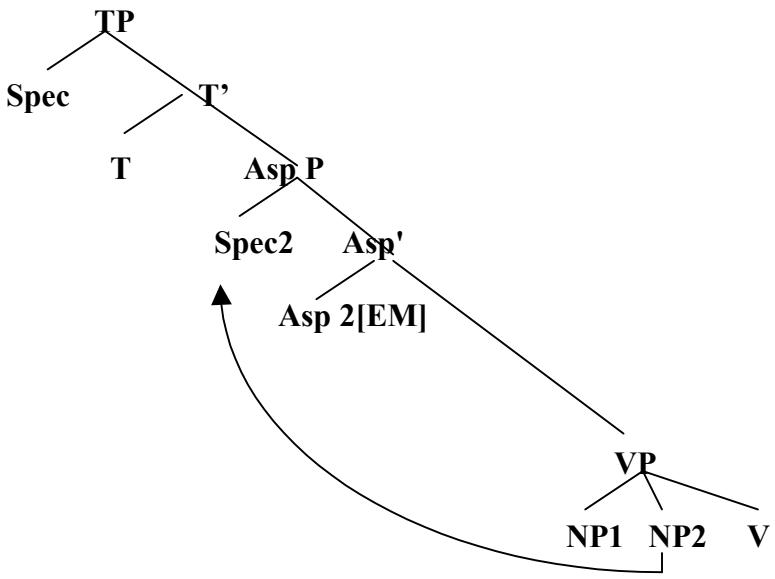
2.2.5.1 Borer's syntactic framework for telic predicates

Borer's (1994) proposes a syntactic analysis of telic predicates that offers a suitable framework to complete Nishida's explanation. She assumes that all verbs are

intransitive, and that their aspectual and syntactic properties are determined by the nature of their predicates. She also proposes that arguments be base-generated within the local scope with no hierarchy -no thematic roles- and that phrase structure be constructed on the basis of the projection of these arguments, which have to move to a Specifier position of a functional projection for Case assignment. In the case of transitive constructions, the Accusative Case is available at the SPEC position of a functional projection which she calls [AspP], which is optional and depends on the specificity of the Direct Object NP.

For telic interpretations, Borer assumes that the head of AspP, namely, Asp, includes a feature Event Measurement [EM], as shown in the representation in (37) below. Thus, in telic predicates, the NP acting as direct internal argument, in Tenny's (1994) terms, moves to Spec, AspP and because it then stands in Spec-Head relationship with the [EM] feature under Asp, it receives a telic interpretation. Consider (40):

(40)



In transitive constructions the movement of NPs to [Spec, AspP EM] is not motivated by case assignment but by the need to move the definite/specific quantified NPs outside the nuclear scope. Diesing's (1990, 1993) Mapping Hypothesis, states that any material in the [IP] area of a clause (external to [VP]) maps onto a restrictive clause, and that material remaining in the [VP] maps onto the nuclear scope motivated by the semantics of the predicate.

Following Borer, I argue that accomplishment verbs, namely, those denoting consumption of the object (e.g. *eat (an apple)*, gaining information (e.g. *learn (the lesson),* experiencer's performance (e.g., *take away (the gifts), prepare (a sandwich)*), or gaining an object (e.g. *win (the lottery))* have a complex VP structure with an Event Measurement [+EM] marker in the AspP. Borer's (1994) Condition on aspectual

Realization (CAR) states that verbs of accomplishment have two arguments that are neither internal nor external until they rise to the Spec of a functional category. Accusative case is assigned in the specifier of a phrase AspP with a [+Event Measure] feature. One of the arguments moves to Spec, Asp P to check Accusative case and triggers an [+EM] reading, the other moves to Spec, TP to receive Nominative case. The measure argument in Spec, AspP relation is interpreted as measuring the change and is associated with an 'internal argument' interpretation (Borer, 1994).

2.2.5.2 Syntactic representation of telic *se* constructions

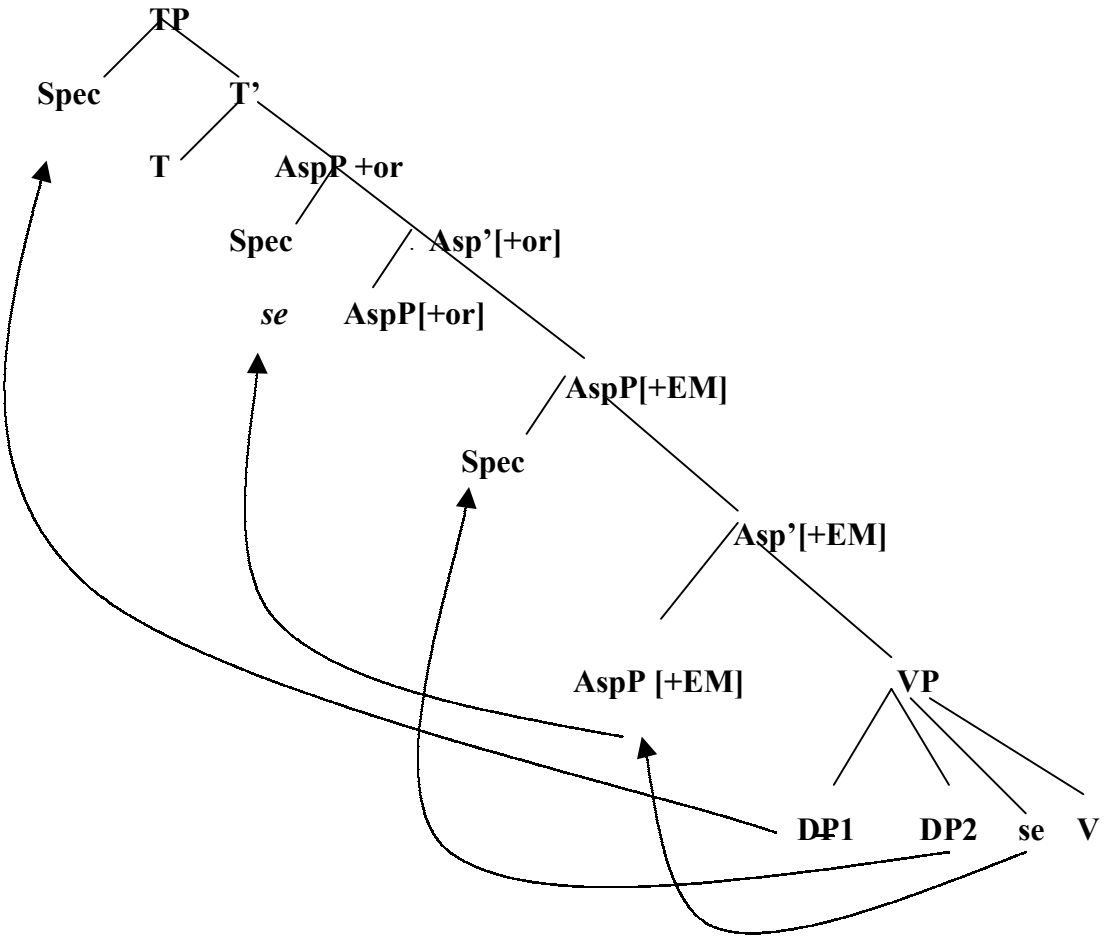
I propose that the Spanish clitic *se* take part in the aspectual composition of the predicate as a [+telic] marker that triggers an [+EM] interpretation. I hold that the object DP moves to Spec, AspP position to check accusative case, and the verb with the morpheme *se* [*se*+verb] raise to a Spec- head position in AspP picking up the [+EM] aspectual features. Following Borer, I argue that if the AspP [+EM] is specified, then there is a [+EM] interpretation and it must be fully realized, i.e., it must have a filled Spec position. In my analysis, this Spec position must be filled with the morpheme *se*, which I propose, should be base-generated in an underlying head position. (Borer, 1994). To realize the [+EM] interpretation, it raises to a clitic-like position, Spec, AspP. Then, it moves up together with the verb to t IP to check nominative case in a Spec-Head position with the subject DP. It is in this position that the feature [+subject-affectedness] is specified.

Within Borer's framework, I propose that Spanish *se* has reflexive-like properties such that, when in Spec/Head relation with the external argument, it forces a

volitional reading on the whole proposition. I base my analysis following Borer's account on the distributional properties of the possessor dative in Hebrew, which exhibits binding-like properties with respect to the possessed NP. She assumes the dative possessor is in a c-commanding position of all the VP-internal material, excluding the external argument, so it can bind its internal argument both post-and pre-verbally. To the purposes of syntactic representation, Borer suggests a higher aspectual node associated with propositions, which, when specified, is responsible for assigning to the argument associated with it a reading of 'originator', similar to Van Valin's (1995) 'actor' or Dowty's (1991) 'proto-agent'. The originator acts as an agent or subject of a state predicate

Within this framework, Spanish *se* can occupy the higher aspectual Asp P or node, which is fully specified due to the reflexive-like properties of *se,* and give a volitional reading to the proposition. This interpretation can be combined to the Telic [+EM] properties of *se.* Consider the representation in (41).

(41)



2.2.5.3 Summary

In the previous sections I have analyzed the semantics of measuring-out constraints in transitive sentences with *se* as a compositional predicate, that is, a predicate with aspectual constraints that relate internal and external arguments and the morphologial marker *se*. The measuring-out constraint in the event structure of transitive verbs has a temporal and spatial delimitedness expressed by the specificity of the internal argument. Verbs with these characteristics are called telic. Telicity can be

morphologically, syntactically and lexically marked and it varies crosslinguistically. Spanish telic *se* is a morphological aspectual marker that co-occurs with agentive subjects and delimited objects . There is also a relationship between the internal argument and the external argument. The latter absorbs the role of originator and beneficiary of the event (i.e., a person that is indirectly affected by the completion of the event itself.

This compositional predicate can be syntactically represented by an AspP projection with an [Event Measure] feature and by a second higher projection with the [+originator] feature.

2.2.6 Telic events in English

English has three types of Aktionsart constructions, namely the resultatives, middles and the verb-particle construction. For the purposes of my work, I consider the third type, the verb-particle combination, because of the similarities this construction has with the of Spanish telic *se.*

2.2.6.1 English verbal particles

In English there are some particles (ref. to 2.1.3.2 for details on types of particles) which , when attached to a verb, can turn the verb type of achievement or activity into one of accomplishment. Compare the example in (42)

(42) a. He tried to think up an answer in an hour/*for an hour

b. He thought it up in less than an hour /*for an hour

c. The rocket was seen flying to the moon *in an hour/ for an hour

d.*The rocket was seen flying the moon to fon an hour

Adverbial expressions such as *in an hour* have the meaning of delimitedness, and they can only occur with verbal particles. In (42a,b) the event of *thinking up* has a clear termination: the object *the answer* measures it out. In (42c,d) the preposition does not require a measure out argument, though the whole prepositional phrase may be interpreted as delimiting the event of *flying*. Therefore, the main difference between the notion of delimitedness that verb particles and preposition yield is that verbal particles measure out the event: the action of *thinking up* is completed and achieved through the obeject. When the event of *thinking up* is accomplised , *the answer* is the result. In (46c,d) *the moon* is not the result of the event of *flying.* Comparing these examples with Spanish telic *se* we can observe a similar pattern in both construction. Observe the examples in (43).

(43) a. Trató de pensar*se* la respuesta en una hora/*durante una hora

He tried to think *up* the answer in an hour/*for an hour

b. El cohete fue visto volando hacia la luna *en una hora/ durante una hora

The rocket was seen flying to the moon *in an hour/ for an hour

The existance of verbal particles shows that the feature [+measure] is present in transitive constructions of this type. Mainly, we can argue that particles such as *up* can only appear with some kinds of verbs that indicate completion of an action, such as *break (up), eat (up), open (up).* The particle *up* can also be used in transitive constructions indicating completeness.

Also,there are some semantic restrictions that apply to the verbal particle *up.* As a norm, *up* does not occur with verbs indicating dispersion without boundary, as shown in (44).

(44) *spread *up* the news

*scatter *up* the seeds

It does not occur with verbs that denote movement, like oscillation without agitation, such as it is shown in (45).

(45) *He nodded *up* his head

* She rocked *up* the craddle

Verbs of psychological reaction (*hate, loathe,detest),* verbs that denote aggressive physical activity (*slam, stab, wrestle)* do not allow the particle *up.* Compare examples in (46)

(46) a.* He hated her *up*

b.* He slammed *up* the book

c.* He stabbed her *up*

Verbs of direct motion, such as *move,raise, lift, pull, push, etc.* can occur with the verbal particl*e up* when the whole predicate has a directional meaning and it can be optional, such as it is shown in (47)

(47) a. He lifted (up) the weights

b. She raised (up) her hand

We can conclude from the previous examples that the particle *up* expresses telicity, namely the notion of telicity achieved through measure. Verbs that express activity,

such as *spread* , verbs that express states, such as *hate*, or verbs that express achievement, such as *slam*, do not allow the verbal particle *up.*

Therefore, we can state that some English particles, such as *up*, have an aspectual role similar to that of the Spanish telic *se.* Both are overt markers of a strong feature. In the case of the Spanish *se* the feature is [+telic], in the case of the English verbal particles, the feature is [+measure]. The feature [+telic] in Spanish is strong (i.e. triggers movement) and it gets checked by the insertion of the clitic *se* because the clitic has an inherently [telic] feature. In English, there is no evidence of any overt operation to check telicity.However, the evidence denoted from verb-particle combinations suggests that the [+measure] feature is strong in English.

2.2.6.2 Telicity in English and Spanish: A comparative analysis

This reverse pattern (i.e., in Spanish the feature[+telic] is strong whereas in English it is [+measure]) can be interpreted as an example of how Aktionsart properties are encoded in different languages. As a rule, telic eventS are marked in all languages but the features each language uses to encode telicity are different. In Spanish , the clitic *se* marks telicity and the object marks measure. Both are related and both need a position in the strcuture of the sentence. The clitic has theta-features (3) and checks them with the subject in a Spec-Head relationship. The presence of this clitic is also contingent on the presence of an object with the [+measure] feature. In other words, the clitic cannot be present unless an object that measures out the event also appears in the sentence.

In English, the feature [+telic] is weak, which means that there is no overt movement for telicity and no overt marker is present. However, the verbal particles act as measuring-out elements and trigger a [+measure] feature in transitive constructions that is checked at the Transitive phrase.

Comparing how Aktionsart properties are encoded in languages, we observe, in the case of Spanish and English, that only one of the two interpretable feature (i.e., [+measure]and [+telic]) can be strong. If [+measure] is strong, [+telic] needs not to be because it would be redundant at LF. Therefore, we can postulate that both languages, Spanish and English , have strong Aktionsart features in transitve constructions which are overtly marked at Asp P ([+telic] in Spanish) and at Tr P ([+measure] in English). The parametric variation that we observe between these languages is namely reduced to two different interpretable features that encode Aktionsart in each of them.

The following section analyzes how these two features interact in the acquistion of the telic *se.* Generally, advanced learners of L2 can interpret derivational morphology much better than learners who have had little exposure to the target language grammar. Also, studies on the acquistion of aspectual constraints have shown that L2 learners can learn overt morphological marking even when this feature is not present in their NL. However, at an initial stage, they tend to disregard morphological markers. Some studies show that at this initial stage they resort to their NL parameters to interpret telicity (Slabakova, 1999; Montrul, 1997)

2.3 Second language acquisition and UG

While principles of Universal Grammar (UG) have proved to hold true for every human language, parameters are properties of the grammar that have different values, or settings, for different languages. The Theory of Parameters in L2 acquisition has been a useful framework to analyze whether the learning device used by children to learn their NL might or might not be available to L2 acquisition.

The theories advanced for and against access to Universal Grammar (UG) in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) can be classified into three positions. Proponents of the Fundamental Difference Hypotheses (Clahsen and Muysken (1986), Bley-Vroman (1989, 1990), Schachter (1990, 1996)) postulate that UG is not available in L2 acquisition. Even though NL and L2 acquirers may exhibit similar performances due to other cognitive mechanism activated in the adult learning process, such as problem-solving strategies, their competence are not the same.The key question for this perspective is whether L2 acquirers are different from NL acquirers with respect to their grammatical competence. Evidence that mental representations of some grammatical property is different or missing in the L2 learner's grammar as compared to that of the NL learner, would suggest that SLA is not guided by UG, i.e., that grammar in L2 data show 'unnatural forms' resulting from violations of UG. Researchers who favor this approach propose a restrictive hypothesis based on parameter setting as the cause of no access to UG. Once the child has reset a parameter value, none of the other possible values are accessible at any later date. They argue that parameter resetting would also be impossible in SLA for the same reason, that is, learners will 'fossilize' at the NL parameters.

The other two approaches share a common assumption: UG is still accessible in adulthood. The approaches differ as regards the characteristics of the initial state. For those who favor a 'direct access to UG' (Flynn and Martohardjono (1991, 1994) Epstein, Flynn and Martohardjono (1996) among others), the parameter already set to the learners' NL values would not influence their initial analysis of a second language. They sustain a full and continued access to UG without any parameter setting. To support this perspective it would necessary to show that at the early stages of acquisition learners do not entertain NL values of UG parameters but they acquire the L2 values by direct access to UG.

A third and more moderate position, argued in the works of White (1985, 1986, and 1989), Brown (1993), Schwartz and Sprouse (1994, 1996), and Montrul (1996, 1999) states those NL grammar functions as the initial hypothesis for L2 acquisition. The Full Access/Full transfer hypothesis proposed by Schwartz and Sprouse (1994, 1996) assumes that NL constitutes the initial grammar for L2 learners. However, in the subsequent developmental stage, when input data can no longer be analyzed through NL grammar values, L2 learners restructure their interlanguage and resort to principles and operations constrained by UG. This process explains variation in interlanguage development as well as fossilization processes at different stages of acquisition. The proposal assumes that Full Transfer of NL precedes Full Access to UG. It also predicts that transfer errors should precede developmental errors. Yet, similarities of stages and development among L2 learners of different language backgrounds, as well as similarities in their error patterns, cannot be easily explained following this full Transfer

/Access approach . One main reason is that learners may assign different analysis to the same grammatical function based on their NL, where this specific function may or may not be present (Montrul, 1999).

2.3.1 L2 acquisition of Aktionsart parameters

Slabakova (1999), citing Verkuyl (1972, 1993), argues that aspectual meaning derives from combining a property of the verb and a property of the object NP that brings forward an aspectual interpretation of the whole predicate. Language transfer plays a crucial role in the semantic variations found in different languages due to changes in derivational morphology and argument structure. When dealing with aspectuality, L2 learners have to guess at the way in which the target language expresses argument structure or morphologically marks aspectual properties.

Studies in English show that if the learner's NL has overt morphological distinctions to indicate aspectuality, and the target language has zero morphology, L2 learners initially assume their NL morphological marking and either reject structures that are not overtly marked or resort to surrogate morphological forms in L2 that carry a meaning similar to that expressed by the L2 morphology (Adjemian, 1983; Slabakova, 1999a, 1999b; Montrul, 1997). These studies support Schwartz and Sprouse's (1994,1996) Full Transfer/Full Access Hypothesis, which predicts that NL transfer errors occur at all levels of grammar, whereas developmental errors emerge later. They tend to occur when L2 learners can no longer analyze the input they are being exposed to by using the parameters of their NL, and have to resort to other operations licensed by UG.

Montrul (1997) argues that once learners have realized that a particular morphological pattern is important in a given language, they use it correctly, with the relevant verbs, but they also tend to produce developmental errors, such as overgeneralization of a morphological form to the wrong class of verbs (Montrul, 1997:261)

Research on L2 competence should be able to determine which aspects of L2 knowledge are constrained by UG and which ones are largely dependent on the interaction of the learners' NL and the typological features of L2. Montrul (1997) suggests that errors in derivational morphology in L2 are largely due to NL influence and L2 language typology. (See also Slabakova, 1999).

2.3.2 On the acquisition of Spanish telic *se:* Research questions

One of the fundamental questions in L2 acquisition has been whether parameters can be reset, that is, whether learners can acquire language properties that are not instantiated in their NL. One option, following Clahsen and Muysken (1996) is that at the end of NL acquisition, all used parameter values are pruned down, and thus, not available for resetting. Another option would be that adult L2 learners have access to parameter values not present in their NL. In both cases, the crucial question is: what is the nature of the initial hypothesis for L2.

A second critical issue to address is how the resetting of parametric values correlates with the actual acquisition of the related grammatical function. If we assume that the knowledge of the grammatical cluster relates to the parameter value and that

both appear together, then we could argue that parameter resetting is possible, because the appearance of one predicts the appearance of the other (See Slabakova, 1999).

A third crucial point is the effect of NL constraints on L2 acquisition. Under the assumption that NL knowledge plays a prominent role in early stages of acquisition (see Schwartz & Sprouse's (1994, 1996) Full Transfer/Full Access Hypothesis), the question is how transfer might constrain the acquisition of aspectual constraints that have overt morphosyntactic properties in the target language (e.g. telic marker *se)*.

Both languages English and Spanish share a similar morphological marking for telicity. Both languages use aspectual markers -Spanish *se*, English verb particles *up*, *down, through*-, which have a measuring-out function. Theoretically, following Schwartz and Sprouse's hypothesis, English NL learners acquiring Spanish would have a similar background and would have NL parametric values for telicity in their initial L2 grammar. We might assume that in their interlanguage they would be able to relate Spanish *se* telic properties to those of English verbal particles. And, in a subsequent developmental stage, they would restructure their interlangue and have Full access and reset the Spanish *se* to its parametric values. However, the critical point of this assumption is that studies on L2 Spanish (see Toth 1997, Montrul 1997, 1999, in press) show that English learners have serious difficulties with the Spanish reflexive morphology, especially in intransitive alternating verbs because they tend to produce forms without overt morphological markers.

2.4. Hypotheses

The acquisition of the *se* aspectual marker by English speakers learning Spanish as L2 involves the acquisition of feature values determined by aspectual interpretation. These values vary from English to Spanish, and that variation implies that learners have to set or reset their NL parameter value and be aware of which morphological features mark aspectuality. Following Smith (1991), I argue that the mental representation of the aspect parameter can be transferred from the English NL value, but that evidence of the learners' acquisition of the L2 Spanish parameter has to combine the notion of telicity and the acquisition, or identification, of the complex predicate construction [*se*+V+definite DP]. The co-occurrence of these two features indicates that learners must master both aspect and aspectual related predicate properties.

The following specific hypotheses are put forward to investigate the research questions stated above:

Hypothesis 1: Learners start out with the NL value of the proposed parameter. Low-intermediate English learners will not be aware of the morphosyntactic properties of *se* as a telic marker. They will treat sentences as 'precise', interpreting all instances as a completed action in the past. They will not be able to relate the presence of *se* and the specificity of the object. Telic sentences will initially be interpreted as atelic. Students will not be able to notice the significance of the object as a measure-out argument and its relation with the presence of the telic clitic *se.*

Hypothesis 2: At an advanced level, learners will have an IL grammar that will have specific features. They will be able to identify the morpheme *se* as a L2

morphosyntactic marker. They will mark more atelic sentences as 'imprecise' than will happen at the intermediate level

Based on the previous hypotheses, this study investigates whether transfer will occur, especially when the parameter values of NL and L2 diverge with respect to telic features. This lack of structural congruity between the two languages may prevent transfer into the learners' IL. However, those learners that have attained certain level of development in their L2 structure may tend to relate the value features of telic *se* to those of the reflexive morpheme *se*. At this stage learners may have a functional projection to account for the position of *se* as a reflexive, but the features [+telic] and [+measure] may be unspecified.

This deficiency in NL grammar can also be lexical. Learners may not yet correctly associate the appropriate lexical item with its grammatical category. Therefore, advanced level L2 learners' grammar may have functional projections but the feature value of the lexical item is underspecified. Epstein, Flynn and Martohardjono (1998) argue that items that are crosslinguistically idiosyncratic must be learned over time, by data-driven exposure.

CHAPTER 3

TESTING L2 ACQUISITION OF TELIC CLITIC *SE*

3.1 Underlying assumptions for the experimental research

The underlying assumptions in this research are that UG is available in L2 acquisition, and that it allows L2 learners to reset their NL aspectuality parameter as regards aspectuality to L2 value. The first specific hypothesis posited was that, in an initial stage, the NL value of the parameter would be the learners' initial analysis of the L2 input. Therefore, the transfer of their NL value would result in an inaccurate performance on identifying telicity in Spanish *se* constructions. In English, the [+measure] feature that encodes Aktionsart properties relates to the object properties (i.e., cardinality and specificity) and does not involve a morpheme with theta features. In Spanish, telicity is overtly marked by the telic reflexive *se* with theta features to be checked by the subject of the sentence. Also, the appearance of the clitic is contingent on the presence of an object with [+measure] properties. Although the presence of the clitic is also related to the subject, this study does not test subject affectedness or the possible interpretations given to the clitic as a reflexive marker.

For Spanish native speakers, the use of *se* as a telic marker is allowed in transitive sentences that have verbs of accomplishment and objects with a [+measure] feature. For L2 learners, on the other hand, the notion of delimitedness (i.e., [+measure]) will be the strong feature, and it will determine telicity. Note that the

presence of verbal particles in transitive sentences in English can be optional since the strong feature is [+measure]. Given these two different aspectual values, L2 learners in an initial stage would not be able to recognize clitic *se* as a telic marker, and would not be able to distinguish between telic and atelic sentences. Consequently, they would judge all sentences as telic relying on their NL parametric value for aspectuality (i.e., [+measure]).

The second specific hypothesis predicted that L2 learners would show a different performance in identifying the clitic *se*. Their performance would show variation between those who have acquired the L2 parameter, being able to reset their NL value to the L2 value, and those who have reset the parameter to an IL value. Both groups would show a greater accuracy in identifying telic sentences from atelic ones than the intermediate level. However, their stage of acquisition of the aspectual properties of the clitic *se* would not be like that of a native speaker. The basic assumption for this hypothesis is that L2 learners with a greater exposure to Spanish have access to some functional projections that allow them parameter resetting via UG. However, these functional projections may not be fully developed as for native speakers.

The following chart presents a summary of syntactic and morphological properties of the aspectual parameter in Spanish and English in transitive constructions with verbs of accomplishment.

English

a. [+measure] feature strong

b. [+telic] morpheme null

c. telicity depends on [+measure]feature of the object.

d. Verbal particles can be optional and do not have theta features

e. [+measure] feature is in Asp P head

Spanish

a. [+telic] feature strong

b. [+telic] morpheme overt

c. telicity depends on specificity of the object and the presence of the telic clitic *se*

d. telic reflexive *se* has theta features which are checked by the subject of the sentence

e. [+telic] feature is checked in two Asp P: a lower Asp P [+EM] and an upper Asp P [+originator] projection

3.2. Description of the experiment

A new type of test was designed for the aspectual interpretation task. Most recent studies on the acquisition of aspectual parameters crosslinguistically (Montrul, 1999, Slabakova, 1999) point out that judgement in the area of aspect sometimes results in murky interpretation from control groups and L2 learners. To avoid this potential problem, a test based on visual interpretation (i.e., comic strip sequences) was designed. The criteria followed were that the test items have to show clear telic/atelic situations,

all involving one character and an object. Extra clues such as adverbials or the use of adverbial 'todo/toda' were excluded, since they give extra aspectual information.

3.2.1 The picture judgement task

The purpose of this task was to see how learners judge how well sentences containing verbs of accomplishment and the clitic *se* describe telic situations. The criteria for judging sentences were focused on object affectedness (i.e., how telic/atelic events were presented as complete or incomplete actions in the picture sequences). The affectedness of subjects affected and the reflexive properties of the clitic *se* were not tested. Participants were presented with a series of 20 comic strip sequences that describe telic and atelic situations. Below each picture sequence there was a sentence referring to the situation that contain one of the verbs listed below. The verb complexes used in the experiment have been taken from Nishida's (1994) semantic classification of dynamic verb complexes with *se* (p. 437).

Types of verbs and their objects

1. Consuming an object

   A. Spatial object

      1. *tragarse (la comida)*
         To swallow-TCL (the food)

      1. *beberse (las cervezas)*
         To drink-TCL (the beers)

      2. *comerse (un sandwich)*
         To eat-TCL (a sandwich)

   B. Temporal object

      3. *pasarse (la noche) despierto*

To spend-TCL (the night) awake

1. Gaining an object

A. Material object

4. *ganarse (un millón) de dólares*
   To win-TCL (one million dollars)

5. *robarse (el dinero)*
   To steal-TCL (the money)

B. Gaining knowledge or information

6. *saberse/aprenderse (la lección) de memoria*
   to know/learn-TCL (the lesson) by heart

C. Experiencer's performance

7. *leerse (un libro/un poema)*
   To read-TCL (a book/a poem)

8. *aguantarse (el sermon)*
   To sit through-TCL (the sermon)

9. *mirarse (su programa favorito de TV)*
   To watch-TCL (one's favorite TV program)

10. *prepararse un sandwich*
    To prepare-TCL (a sandwich)

11. *llenarse (una taza) de café/de azucar*
    To fill-TCL (a cup) of coffee/with sugar

12. *llevarse (los regalos/la plata)*
    To take away-TCL (the gifts/the money)

.

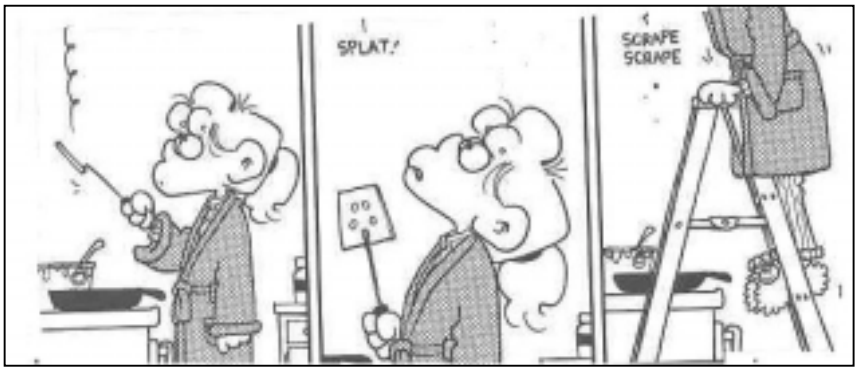
As noted above, subject affectedness is not tested, even though the clitic *se* is homophonous with the reflexive clitic *se* and the impersonal marker *se.* For this reason unaccusative verbs (e.g. *morir* (to die), *caer* (*to fall))* as well as reflexive type of verbs

(e.g. *peinar* (to comb)) are not used as test items. All sentences include verbs of accomplishment and vocabulary items of high frequency for intermediate and advanced level. All test items focus entirely on object affectedness by presenting telic and atelic situations. To avoid misinterpretation key words were translated.

The object affectedness involves sequences in which the focal event of the comic strip is either complete or incomplete. Below each comic strip sequence is a stimulus sentence with *se*. This sentence is predicted to be true for sequences in which the event is completed, that is, telic (ten test items). The sentence is predicted to be false when the event is not completed, that is, atelic (ten test items). An example of a test item describing atelic situations where the use of the clitic *se* was considered incorrect is shown in (48), and an example of a test item depicting a telic situation where the use of *se* is considered correct is shown in (49). Copies of the complete instrument including native speakers and non-native speakers' versions are available in the Appendixes A and B.

(48)

Test item number 7



Clara se preparó un panqueque.
(preparar= to prepare) (pancake)

←Imprecisa-Precisa→

(49)
Test item number 15

Pedro se preparó un sandwich
(preparar: prepare)

←Precisa-Imprecisa→

Participants were asked to decide whether the sentence was accurate or not in describing the situation depicted in the comic strip sequence.. They were asked to make a mark on the line below the sentence in proportion to how well the sentence describes the situation shown in the picture. If the sentence was perceived as very accurate (i.e., precise) participants were told to place the mark farther to the right than to the left, or farther to the left if they perceive it to be inaccurate (i.e., imprecise). The terms 'precise' and 'imprecise' were used to avoid grammaticality judgements from all participants since all the sentences were grammatically correct. Participants were told to judge the sentences according to how good they 'sound' to them . The test items relevant to the study were the ones that elicited the 'imprecise' answer, that is the atelic ones. The expected results for these test items were that learners would identify the incorrect use of the telic marker in atelic situations.

3.2.2 Subjects

A total of 53 L2 speakers of English (33 female, 20 male; age range from 20 to 51; M= 25) were tested. All subjects were matriculated at the Spanish Department , at the University of North Texas (UNT) during spring 2000 . Participants were divided into three groups: low intermediate, intermediate and advanced level. The low-intermediate level included subjects who were enrolled in an intensive undergraduate class during Spring 2000 . They had been meeting 5 days a week for 3 hours and had reached an intermediate level by the time of the experiment. Their exposure to Spanish ranged from 1 to 6 years. Only four of them had visited or studied in a Spanish-speaking country for a period of no longer than 12 weeks (see Table 1).

The intermediate level included undergraduate students who were attending their third semester of Spanish at UNT. They met 3 days a weeks for an hour. Their exposure to Spanish ranged from 2 to 7 years. Only 6 subjects had visited or studied in a Spanish speaking country for a period no longer than 16 weeks (see Table 1).

The advanced group were graduate students at UNT during the spring semester. Their exposures to Spanish ranged from 5 to 7 years. All of them have visited or lived in Spanish-speaking countries for about six months (see Table 1).

The control group was 43 native speakers of Spanish. 10 of them were graduate students at the University of Illinois, and 33 were native speakers from Argentina. Table 3 summarizes background information on the L2 participants.

Table 1 : Information on L2 learners

	Age (Mean)	**Sex M**	**F**	**Years of Spanish (Mean)**	**No Participants Studied/lived Abroad**	**Time of Residence (range)**
Low-Intermediate Level (n= 21)	24	10	11	3	4	1 to 12 weeks
Intermediate Level (n= 20)	22	6	14	4	6	1 to 16 weeks
Advanced Level (n= 11)	27	3	8	5	11	1 to 13 months

3.2.3 Procedure

Subjects were tested in their classroom environment during their class time. Participants were instructed orally; written instructions, in English, were also provided

for the L2 learners. L2 learners were told to fill out a background questionnaire that included information on their age, sex, native language, major, fluency in other languages, and years of exposure to Spanish in institutional environment. To divide the subjects into different levels of proficiency, the following criterion was used: low-intermediate level between 0-3 years of English, intermediate between 3.50-4 years of English, advanced between 4.50 to 6 years of English. For the picture judgement task, subjects were instructed to place the mark on the line to represent their intuitions about the preciseness of the sentences. The time it took to complete the background questionnaire and the picture judgement task was 10-15 minutes for L2 learners and 5-7 for the control group.

3.2.4 Analysis

A total of 10 sentences marked as 'imprecise' were computed as test items for the statistical analysis. Due to unexpected variations in the control group's responses, the test items were reduced to 5. These test items represent atelic situations in which the clitic *se* is not allowed. Therefore, subjects who interpreted clitic *se* as telic marker should mark these sentences as 'imprecise'. Marked responses were converted into interval data by measuring the distance between subjects' marks and the left end of the line in mm.. All statistical analyses involved testing ratio data (mm to the left) with f-tests. Subjects were classified into four different levels (i.e., level 1=low-intermediate, level 2=intermediate, level 3= advanced, and level 4= native speakers). Frequency and descriptive statistics were performed on the three groups and the selected test items (i.e., test items 8, 10, 12, 13, 17,) A one-way ANOVA was used to compare means. An

overall F ratio was calculated for each of the means. A second analysis using one-way ANOVA was performed to compare each group means and significance . Means for each item were calculated and compared to observe group variation and verb type significance in the interpretation of the sentences. Finally, all results were analyzed and discussed in terms of the study specific research questions.

CHAPTER 4

EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

4.1 Group results

In this section I discuss the results of the experimental research in this study. The task consisted of a picture description where subjects had to mark test items as 'imprecise' (i.e. atelic) or 'precise' (i.e., telic) on a line according to their intuition about the picture sequences. Marked responses on a line were measured and converted into ratio data expressed in mm from left to right. From the total number of picture descriptions (20 items) only ten were designed as test items. Analysis of native speakers' intuitions showed that they were not entirely in the line with the expectations as some subjects interpreted some test items in the opposite expected direction. To control for potential effects of this inconsistency from native speakers' performance, only five test items were selected for the study. They were considered relevant to the hypothesis being tested and showed a high percentage of native speakers' acceptance (above 80%).

The results of the study showed that differences between the low-intermediate, intermediate, advanced and control groups were significant ($F=5.177$, $p=0.002$). Differences between native speakers (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS) were also significant ($F=6.018$, $p=0.015$) Figure 2 shows the results of descriptive statistics and f-statistics for the four groups.

Table 2: Mean responses for each group

Group	Mean	Standard deviation
Native speakers (N=42)	34.08 *	31.5
Advanced (N=11)	28.83 *	27.3
Intermediate (N= 21)	44.00 *	31.4
Low-intermediate	43.26 *	31.3

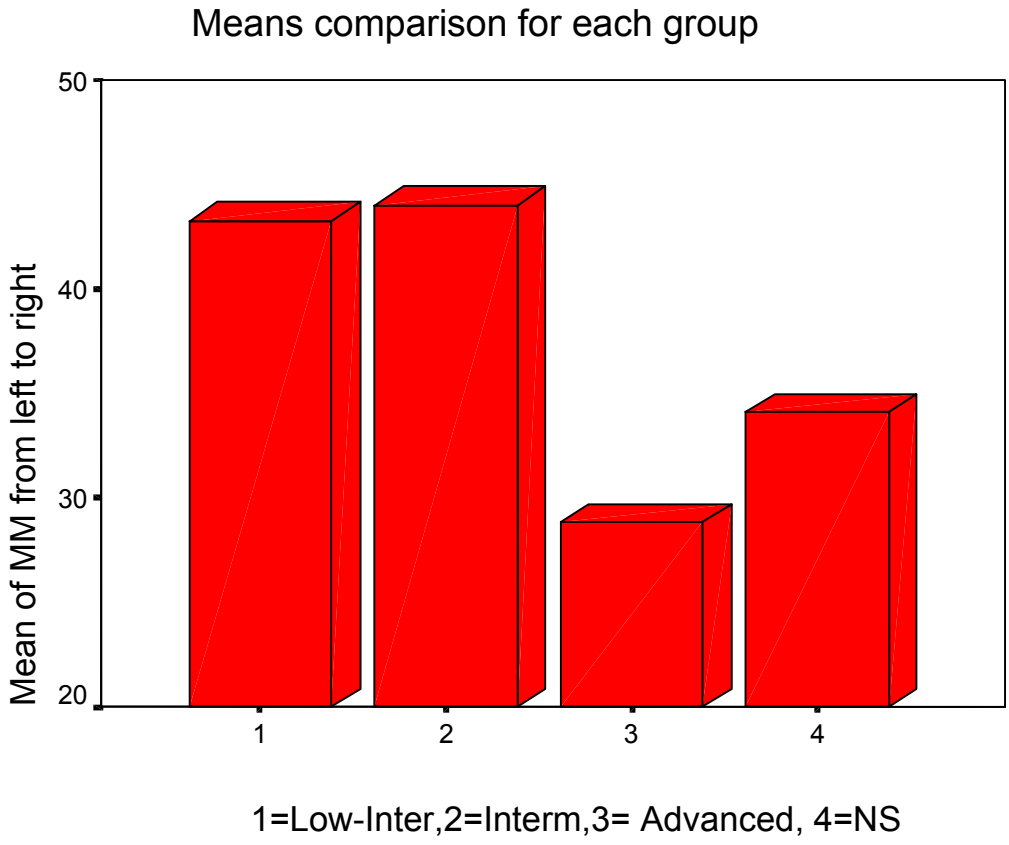
* ANOVA: (F=5.177, p= 0.002)

Results of a Post Hoc (Scheffe) test show that there was no significant difference between the low intermediate and the intermediate levels (p=0.999). That is, both levels showed not variation in marking telic or atelic sentences. Their means (see Table 2) show that their answers were skewed towards the 'precise' marking. Note that test items presented atelic situation in the picture sequences as incomplete events. The failure to draw a distinction between telic and atelic events may suggest that in an initial stage L2 learners do not recognize overt morphosyntactic markings (i.e., clitic *se*) as telic .

By contrast, there was a significant difference between advanced and low-intermediate levels (p=0.037) Significant difference was also found between advanced and intermediate levels (p=0.024). These differences suggest that advanced learners were more likely to draw a distinction between telic and atelic picture sequences. A bar chart comparing the performance of the three levels to the control group, as shown in

Figure 1, reveals a clustering effect for both intermediate groups and both advanced and control groups.

Figure 1: Means chart for all four levels



Recall that what we are looking for is a significant difference between means that accounts for subjects' intuitions about the use of clitic *se* as a telic marker in transitive constructions. Variations in the subjects' performance, as observed between the advanced level and the two intermediate groups, suggest differences in their underlying linguistic competence. Low-intermediate and intermediate learners were

more likely to mark sentences as 'precise' (i.e., telic) than advanced learners. By contrast, advanced learners were able to differentiate between telic and atelic sentences and showed no difference in their intuition when compared to native speakers ($p=0.698$). These results suggest that advanced learners were much more consistent and precise in the interpretation of telic vs. atelic sentences..

One of the main goals of this study was to investigate how L2 learners represent aspectuality and morphosyntactic markers, such as clitic *se*. The underlying assumption was that L2 learners whose NL does not employ overt morphosyntactic markers for aspect (e.g., English) would not interpret over markers in L2 at an initial level. A closer look at the type of verb used in each test item may indicate whether subjects based their interpretation of the sentences on the sentence verb type.

By analyzing L2 learners' mean judgement for each test item in detail we can observe how this assumption play out. Figure 4 shows each group's mean value for each of the five test items and a description of the type of verb used in each test items.Note that these mean variation is a comparative table based of no statistical analysis. Significant differences between groups as regards test items were not evaluated for the reduced number of subjects.

Table 3: Mean judgement for each item for all levels.

Test item	Verb type	Low-Interm	Intermediate	Advanced	Native sp.
Item 8	Gaining knowledge	44.85	53.09	27.45	38.02
Item 10	Consuming temporal object	47.45	40.14	30.09	36.50
Item 12	Experiencer performance	61.50	63.14	30.18	51.50
Item 13	Experiencer performance	44.65	43.23	21.72	25.66
Item 17	Consuming spatial object	19.71	22.00	16.72	13.04

The mean judgement shows groups' performances for each item. If we relate variation in the learners' interpretation to the type of sentence we can observe how different items trigger different interpretation. Verbs that refer to consuming a spatial object (e.g., item 17) were interpreted as telic by all groups (see Figure 4 item 17). This similarity in the responses suggests that those test items where there was no sequence but a clear endpoint indicating incompleteness (i.e., item 17)were more easily interpreted as 'imprecise' by most L2 learners in all groups. In those items where there was a sequence followed by an incomplete endpoint, suggesting an atelic event (i.e., item8, item10, item12, and item13), low-intermediate and intermediate learners were not accurate in interpreting the atelic effect .

A closer look at intermediate level subjects and their performance shows that these learners tend to disregard the presence of the clitic *se* and the event endpoint as a mark of telicity. An example is item 10 (i.e., *se pasó la noche despierta* (she spent the

night awake)) where the picture presents a two-sequenced ongoing situation (i.e., the character being awake) and a last sequence (i.e., the character sleeping) to indicate the endpoint to the situation. The stimulus sentence (i.e., *Lucía se pasó la noche despierta* (Lucía spent the night awake)) indicates that the sentence is 'imprecise' (i.e., atelic) to describe the situation because the sequence indicates an interruption of the event (i.e., incompleteness). Both low-intermediate and intermediate learners interpret item 10 as telic (see Figure 3). This result suggests these learners' interpretation of the sentence may be influenced by the semantic characteristics of the predicate *pasar (a noche)despierta* which refers to a period of time over which the character perfoms and action. Intermediate learners failed to intepretet the endpoint of the ongoing event, which is indicated by the final state of the sequence: the character is sleeping,.

By contrast, in those test items where the verb and the event structure converge in showing an incomplete situation such as it appears in item 17 (i.e., a one-sequenced picture of Homer Simpson throwing a half-eaten sandwich through the car window) low-intermediate and intermediate learners' performace was near the range of the advanced and control groups' responses (see Figure 3).

Learners in group 3, on the other hand, performed consistently and accurately. The means response for item in this group suggests that these learners' criteria for judging sentences were similar to native speakers'. This suggests that their underlying linguistic competence may differ from that of intermediate levels. The consistent pattern in their responses may suggest that their grammar have specific functional features that allow them to interpret aspectual differences in Spanish. This results give evidence of

these learners having acquired the morphosyntactic properties of *se* in Spanish transitive sentence. Further research on this area will indicate whether these aspectual properties are actually present in these advanced learners' L2 grammar.

In summary, the results in this study indicate that low-intermediate and intermediate subjects did not make a differentiation between telic and atelic stimuli. This suggests that subjects with a lower proficienncy could not identify *se* as an overt morphological marker of telicity. By contrast, advanced learners were able to interpret the differences between telic and atelic sentences by identifying atelic sentences (i.e., sentences describing incomplete actions where the presence of the clitic *se* was disallowed) as 'imprecise'.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings confirm hypothesis 1 for low-intermediate learners. As expected, these learners did not treat atelic sentences as 'imprecise, which indicate that they were not able to relate the presence of the clitic *se* as a telic marker. These same results applied to intermediate learners who showed an identical performance. The results suggest that the morphosyntactic properties of the clitic *se* were not instantiated in these L2 learners' initial grammar. As for hypothesis 2, results reveal that predictions for advanced learners were correct. They marked more 'atelic'sentences for imprecise test items than the two intermediate groups which indicates they were able to differentiate telic from atelic test items. These results may also suggest that advanced learners were able to identify the clitic *se* as a telic marker.

The hypotheses in this study were intended to investigate how typological differences between NL and L2 can affect parameter resetting in L2. The findings demonstrate that the resetting of the parameter to a L2 value occurs at an advanced stage. This evidence is supported by advanced learners' performance. Results are also consistent with the predicted effects of typological differences on L2 parameter resetting. As stated before, Aktionsarkt properties for English and Spanish are different. Recall that in Spanish, telicity is phonologically realized in the clitic *se,* and syntactically related to the presence of a specific object in the predicate. The clitic *se*

encodes the [+telic] properties of the predicate and agrees with the subject. This compositional properties of the predicate determine that in Spanish telic constraints are overtly realized having specific morphosyntactic properties. By contrast, in English, telicity is weak (i.e, it is not overtly realized in a morphosyntactic marker). The question to answer is how these two different features (i.e., two different parametric values for aspectuality) can interact in L2 grammar?

Given these different typological constraints for telicity in both languages, we can assume that results indicate that advanced learners readjusted their English value of the telic parameter (i.e., null marker) to that of the L2 value (i.e., overt morphological marker). Therefore, they were able to differentiate telic from atelic sentences on the basis of the reset feature value for telicity.

The next question to address in this discussion is whether these learners have developed a new functional category that accounts for this representation. As it has been discussed in previous sections, this telic *se* construction in Spanish has compositional properties that requires the clitic *se* co-occurs with a specific object and an agentive subject. If we assume that advanced learners have acquired the properties of the telicity in these *se* construction, as results seem to suggest, we can postulate the presence of some functional category in their interlanguage grammar. In other words, advanced learners have developed, at some stage of their acquistion, an interlanguage grammar that fully projects a functional category that allows them to interpret the properties of this compositional predicate. However, results in this study do not allow us to conclude

whether advanced learners' mental representation of this telic predicate has native-like properties.

The analysis presented seems to support Vainikka and Young-Scholten's (1994, 1996) view of L2 acquistion. Specifically, they argue that in an initial stage, L2 grammars consist only of lexical projections, such as VP, but a subsequent L2 development results in the development of functional projections (FP). These FP are underspecified at first, to later become fully specified as IP and CP. Within this framework, we can assume that L2 advanced learners in this study have a fully specified FP that allows them to interpret the compositional properties of the predicate. The underlying assumption in this analysis is that the lexical properties of clitic *se* as a reflexive are learned by L2 learners as part of the lexicon (Montrul , 1997), and are ruled-governed and compositional in nature. Once learners have acquired how these properties of reflexive *se* apply to the lexical item, they may have a FC instantiated in their L2 grammar that accounts for the lexico-syntactic and semantic properties of the clitic *se* as a reflexive. As a consequence, high proficiency learners may become sensitive to the presence of the clitic *se* as a predictor of subject-affectedness (i.e., reflexivity) and tend to relate the presence of this clitic to a subject affectedness or beneficiary effect upon the agentive subject of the sentence. Further research is necessary to assess this assumption.

Finally, this study does not show evidence that L1 transfer operates directly in an initial stage. Data gives evidence of learners' failure to identify the telic properties of the clitic *se* in transitive constructions. This fact can be interpreted as a result of

different linguistic properties in these learners' IL. These properties can be consequence of an interaction between UG principles and L1 parameters. If we assume that syntactic structure and morphological structure are interrelated (see Eubank and Grace 1996, Vainikka and Scholten 1994, 1996, Beck 1997, Montrul 1997) , then the lack of overt morphology in L2 production can be taken as evidence for the absence of syntactic knowledge (i.e., functional categories such as AsP for aspectual markers). Although this study did not evaluate learners' production to assess such possibility, results suggest that UG is available at an initial stage of acquistion, and that specific L2 properties, such as morphological markers of aspect can be acquired over time.

ENDNOTES

1.They can also have an intransitive use expressing atelic activities. For instance, the verb *comer* (to eat) can express an intransitive (i.e., atelic event) in a sentence such as :

Juan comió a las cuatro
John ate at four

With the insertion of the clitic *se,* as shown in , the sentence is ungrammatical because it yields a reflexive reading of *Juan ate himself.* Observe example the following example:

*Juan *se* comió a las cuatro.
*John *se*-REFCL ate (himself) at four

2. Haj Ross pointed out that a better definition for 'delimitedness' should consider the notion of 'bounded interval' instead of 'definite point in time'. He suggested that in sentences such as:

It took her four days to eat up the apples

The event is telic but it occurs in a bounded interval of time (four days). This analysis seems to be true for those main verbs of time , like *take* and *spend* when followed by sentential complements. An example taken from Smith (1997) supports Ross's remark:

It took me an hour to write the letter.

However, Smith argues that *spend* is not compatible with telic constellations (i.e., compositional predicates), as it is shown in the following example, again taken from Smith:

I spent an hour writing the letter

She finds this sentence atelic because the event of *writing the letter* does not seem to have been completed. Personally, I don't agree with Smith 's analysis because the presence of the object *the letter* affects the whole predicate and makes the event telic (see Tenny (1994), Sanz, (1996)).

3. Sanz argues that in languages in which telicity is strong the Akt P (Asp P, in Borer's framework) can have theta features which are checked overtly by the subject of the sentence. This explains why the clitic and the subject always agree in theta-features

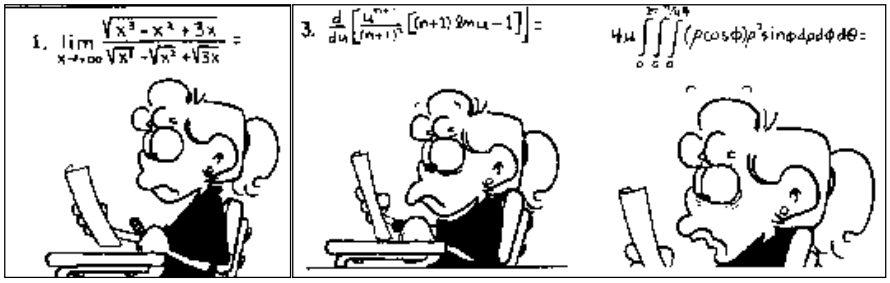
APPENDIX A

PICTURE INTERPRETATION TEST FOR NON NATIVE SPEAKERS

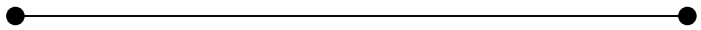
Description of the Project for non native speakers

The purpose of this experiment is to see how native speakers and non-native speakers of Spanish judge how well particular sentences describe situations. You will be presented with some pictures taken from comic strips showing different actions performed by different characters. Below each picture you will find a sentence. Some sentences will strike you as better descriptions of the situations than others.

You will see 20 pictures. Your task is to tell how precise or imprecise each sentence is by making a mark on the line that appears below each picture. For example you might see a picture like the following one:
Example:

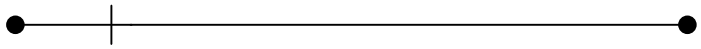


Paula se sabía las expresiones algebraicas
(*knew)* *(algebra)*



←Imprecisa- Precisa →

Imagine that you think this sentence doesn't describe the situation shown in the picture very accurately. You might then choose to make your mark somewhere to the left on the line, as below.



←Imprecisa-Precisa →

Following these criteria, provide marks on each of the lines below the sentences describing the pictures so that the mark you give to each sentence represents your subjective impression of how well the sentence describes the situation.

Remember to make each mark proportional to the accuracy of the sentence, as you perceive it. If a sentence seems very precise, try to mark it so that the position of the mark on the line is far more to the right (precise) than to the left (imprecise). Do the opposite for those sentences that seem not so precise. You are free to go back over your markings and to readjust them, if you feel this would reflect your feelings about the accuracy of these sentences better

If you have any questions, please raise your hand, and we will be happy to try to help you.
If you have no questions, please, fill out the questionnaire below, and then begin the actual experiment.

Thank you!!

Questionnaire

1. My native language is :_____

2. My age is:_____

3. My sex is:

   - ○ Female
   - ○ Male

4. My major is: _____

5. The language that I speak at home with my parents is _____

6. Other second languages that I fluently speak/understand are:

   1. _____
   2. _____
   3. _____

7. Please provide a COMPLETE description of the circumstances under which you learned Spanish.

   a. Did you learn Spanish in High School?_____

      How many years?_____

   b. Did you learn Spanish in College?_____

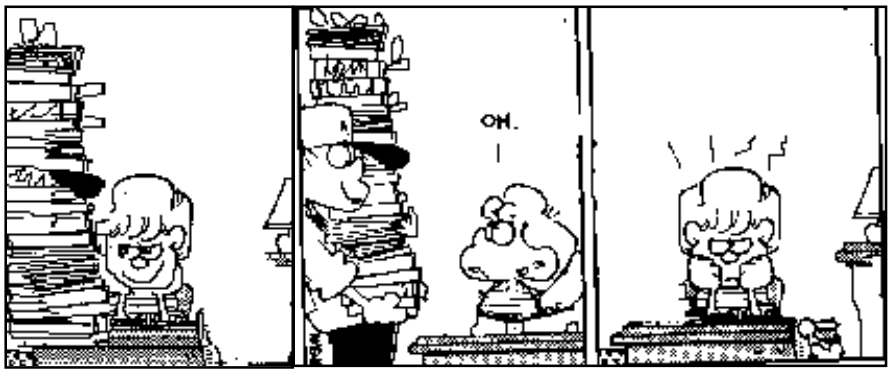
How many semesters?_____

c. Did you study in a Spanish speaking country?_____

How long?_____

d. Did you live/vacation in a Spanish speaking country?_____
How long?_____

1.

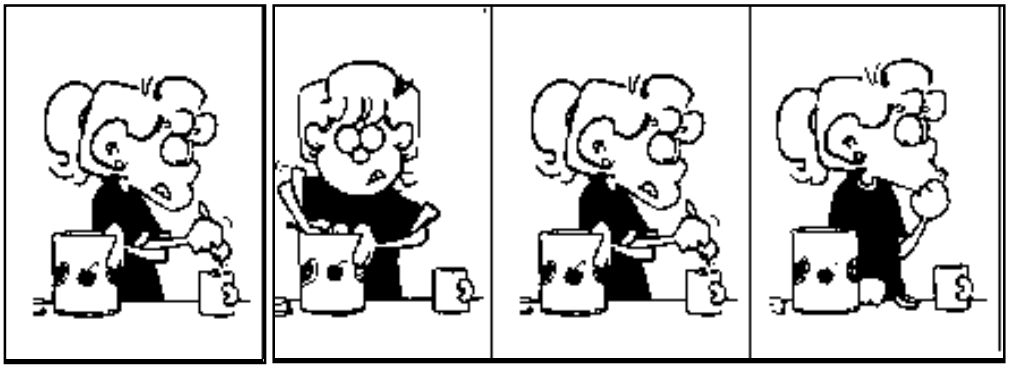


Pedro se llevó los regalos.

(LLevar= to take)*(gifts)*

←Imprecisa-Precisa→

2.



Paula se llenó el café de azúcar.

(llenar= to fill) *(sugar)*

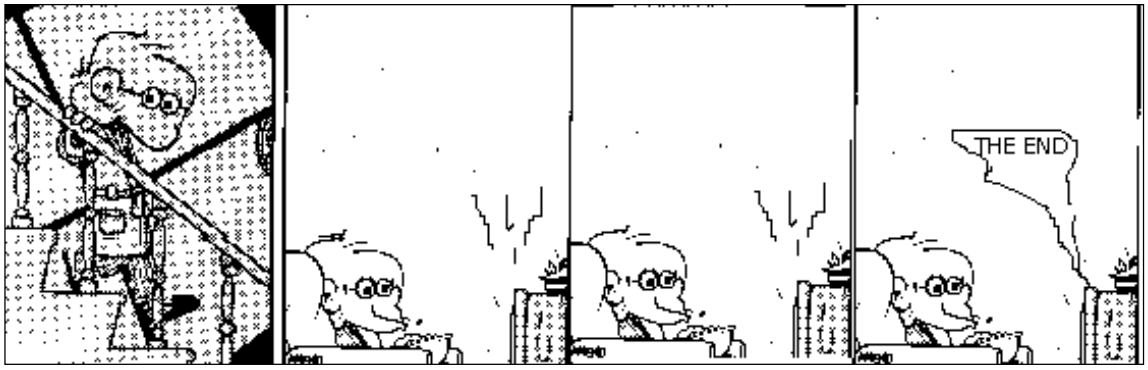
←Imprecisa - Precisa→

3.

Ned Flanders se robó el dinero del banco.
(robar= to rob) *(bank)*

←Imprecisa-Precisa→

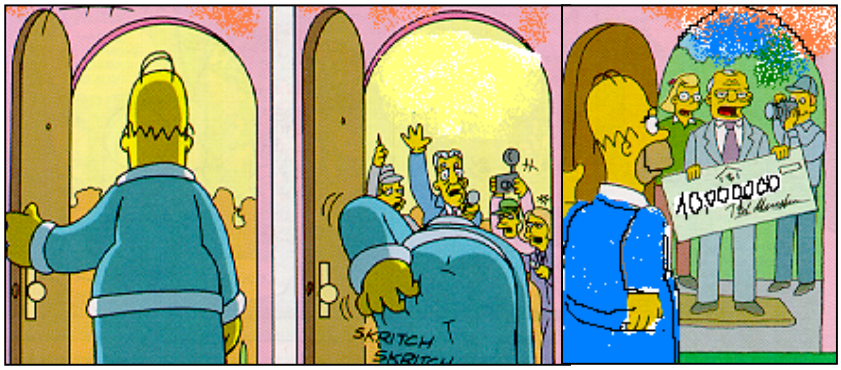
4.



Julián se miró su programa favorito de T.V.
(mirar= to watch)) *(favorite)*

←Imprecisa – Precisa→

5.



Homero se ganó diez millones de dólares.
(ganar= to win) (ten)

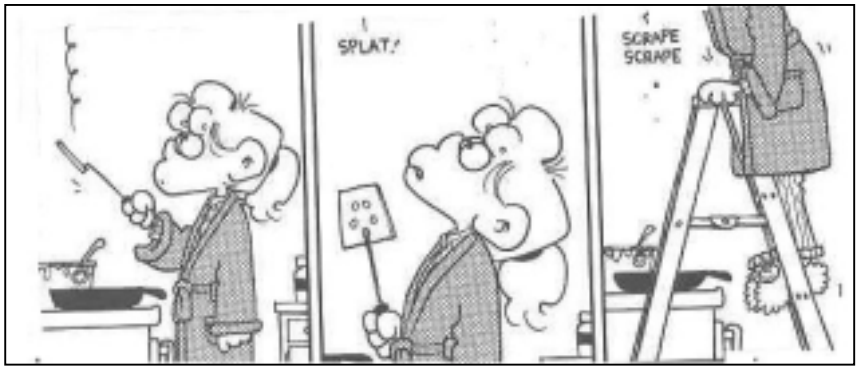
←Imprecisa – Precisa→

6.

El ladrón se robó la rosquilla
(thief) (robar= to steal) (doughnut)

←Imprecisa-Precisa→

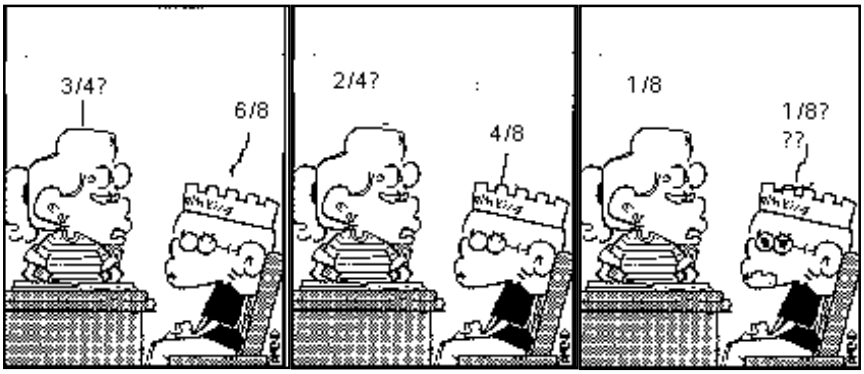
7.



Clara se preparó un panqueque.
(preparar= to prepare) (pancake)

←Imprecisa-Precisa→

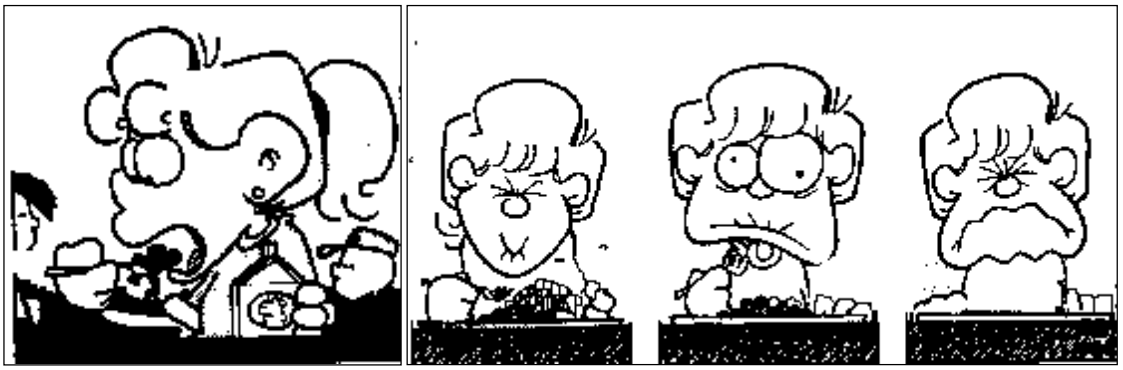
8.



Julián se sabía las fracciones de memoria.
(saber= to know) *(by heart)*

←Imprecisa-Precisa→

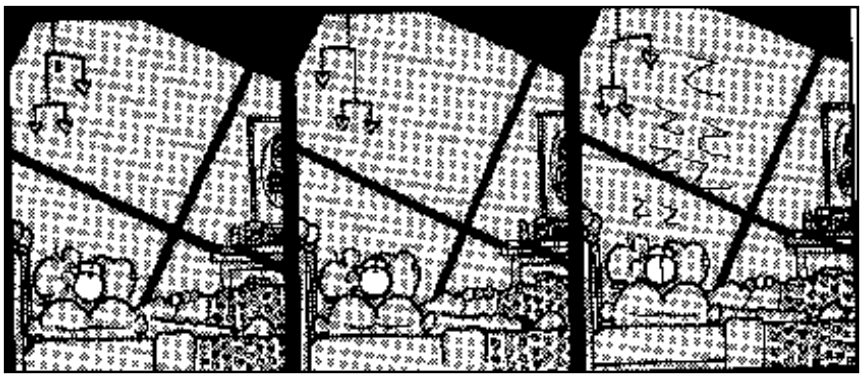
9.



Lucía se tragó la comida .
(tragar= to swallow)(food)

←Imprecisa- Precisa→

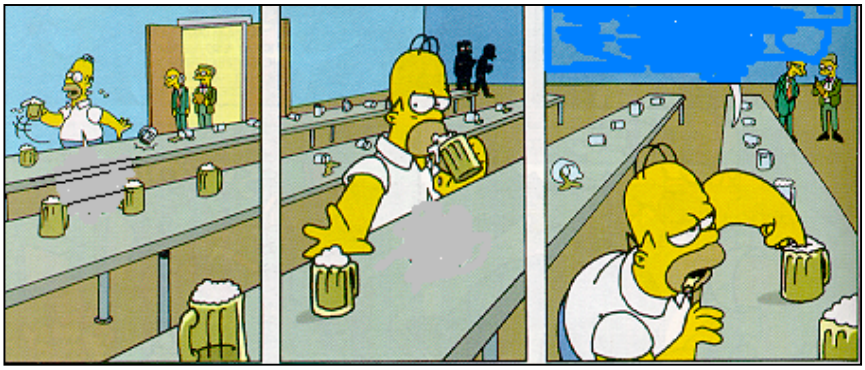
10.



Lucía se pasó la noche despierta.
(pasar= spend) *awake)*

←Imprecisa -Precisa→

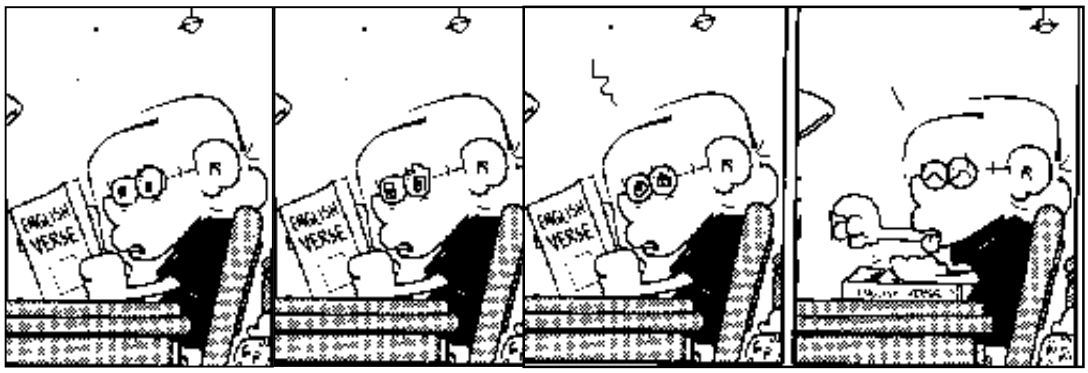
11.



Homero se bebió las cervezas.
(beber= to drink) (beers)

←Imprecisa—Precisa→

12.



Julio se leyó el libro de poesía.
(leer= to read) *(poetry)*

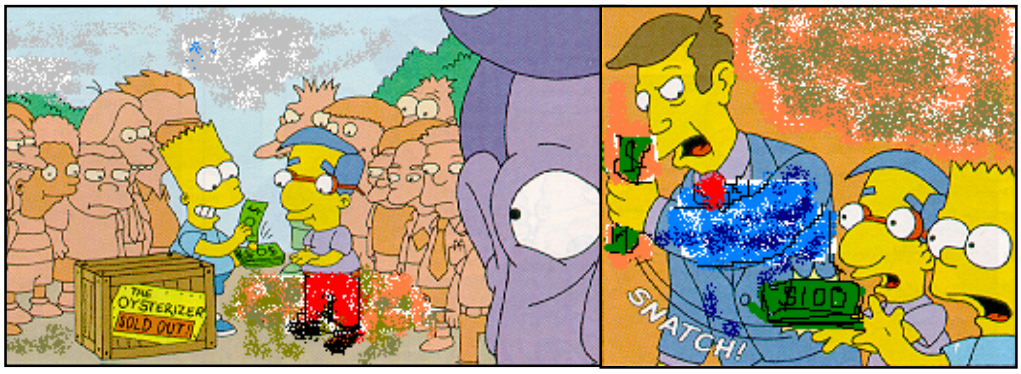
←Imprecisa-Precisa→

13.

Bart se aguantó\ el sermón.
(aguantar= sit through)) (sermon)

←Imprecisa - Precisa→

14.



El inspector se llevó el dinero .
(llevar= to take) *(money)*

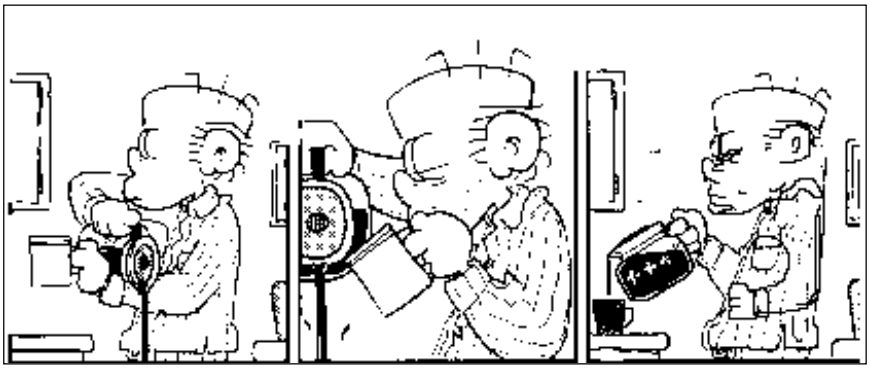
←Imprecisa-Precisa→

15.

Pedro se preparó un sandwich
(preparar= to prepare)

←Imprecisa - Precisa→

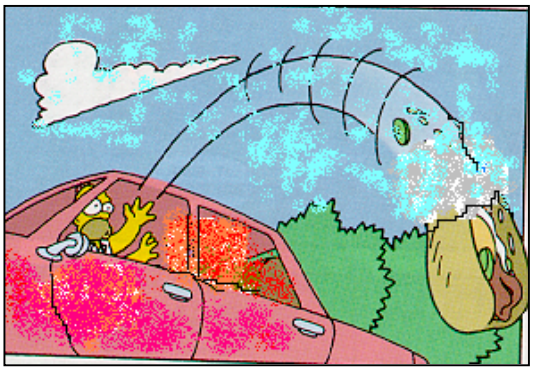
16.



El abuelo se sirvió el café
(servir= to pour) (coffee)

←Imprecisa – Precisa→

17.

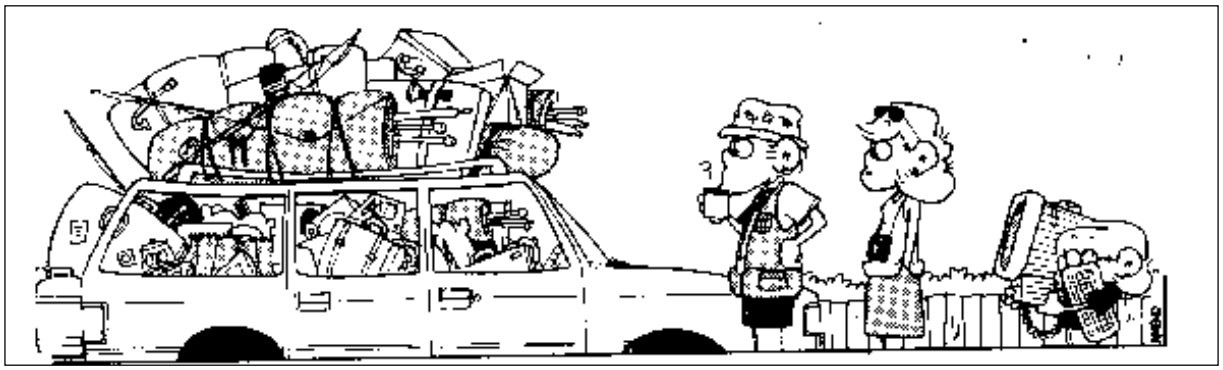


Homero se comió el sandwich.

(comer= to eat)

←Imprecisa-Precisa→

18.



Julián se preparó el equipo de camping .

(preparar= to prepare) **(e***quipment)*

←Imprecisa – Precisa→

19.

La Secretaria se lleyó las cartas
(leer= to read) *(letters)*

←Imprecisa-Precisa→

20.

La policía se llevó a los sospechosos.
(llevar= to take away) *(suspects)*

←Imprecisa – Precisa→

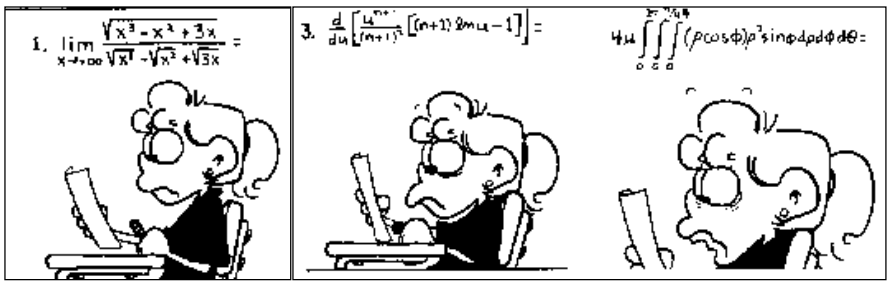
APPENDIX B

PICTURE INTERPRETATION TEST FOR NATIVE SPEAKERS

Descripción del Proyecto

El propósito de este proyecto es observar como los hablantes nativos y no-nativos de Espanol juzgan la precisión de determinadas oraciones para describir situaciones. Para tal propósito, se han seleccionado una serie de cuadros de caricaturas mostrando diferentes personajes realizando diferentes acciones. Debajo de cada caricatura se describe la acción principal. Algunas oraciones oraciones podrán parecer mas precisas que otras en la descripción.

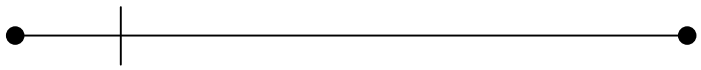
Ud. observará 20 caricaturas. Deberá decir cuán precisa o imprecisa cada oración es haciendo una marca sobre la línea que aparece debajo de cada oración. Por ejemplo, observe la siguiente caricatura:



Paula se sabía las expresiones algebraicas

←Imprecisa-Precisa→

Supongamos que Ud. cree que la oración no describe la situación en forma muy precisa. En tal caso,. deberá colocar una marca hacia la izquierda de la línea, como se muestra a continuación.



←Imprecisa-Precisa→

Siguiendo este criterio, coloque marcas en cada una de las líneas que aparecen debajo de las oraciones de manera que estas representen su impresión subjectiva sobre la precisión de la oración en describir la situación.

Recuerde que cada marca debe ser proporcional a la precisión de la oración. Por ejemplo, si una oración le parece muy precisa, coloque la marca mas cerca del extremo

derecho (precisa) que del izquierdo(imprecisa). Haga lo opuesto con aquellas oraciones que parezcan poco o nada precisas.
Puede volver sobre las marcas y reajustarlas tantas veces como crea necesario.

Por favor, complete el cuestionario a continuación y luego comience con el experimento.

Muchas Gracias !!

Cuestionario

1. Mi lengua nativa es: _____

2. Mi edad es:

   - ○ Menor de 15
   - ○ Entre 15 y 30
   - ○ Entre 31 y 45
   - ○ Mayor de 45

3. Mi sexo es:

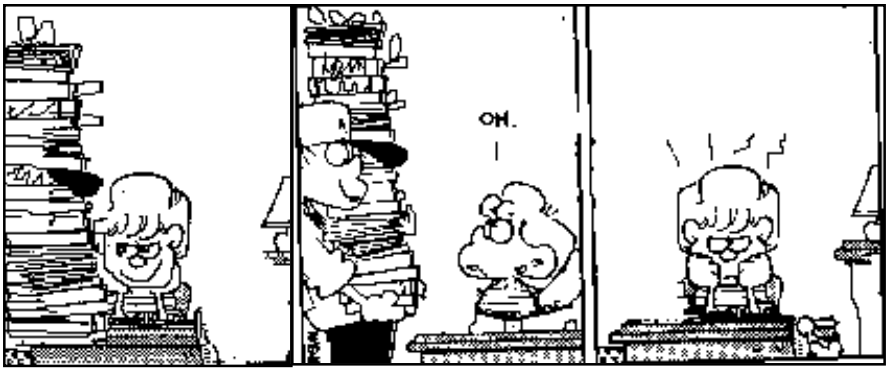
   - ○ Femenino
   - ○ Masculino

4. Mi especialidad es: _____

5. Otros idiomas que hablo/entiendo correctamente son:

   1._____
   2._____
   3._____

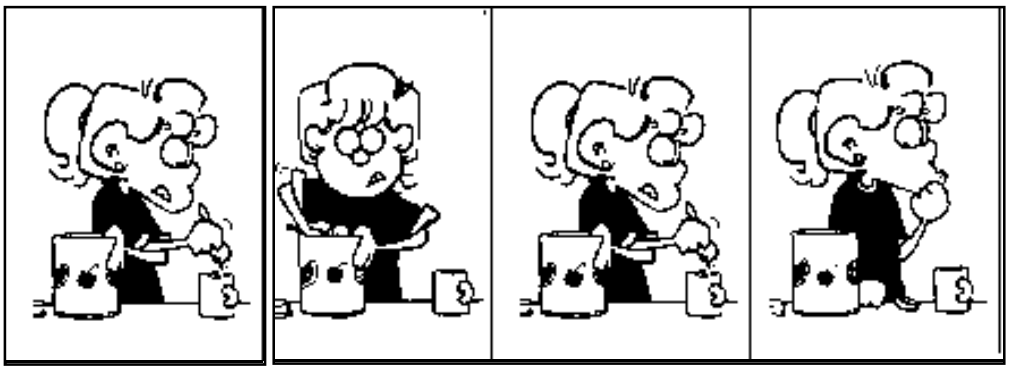
1.



Pedro se llevó los regalos.

←Imprecisa-Precisa→

2.



Paula se llenó el café de azúcar.

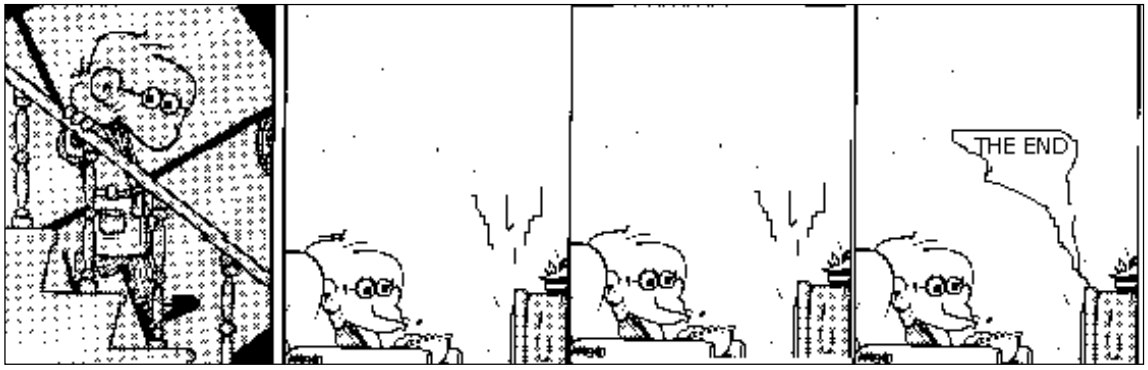
←Precisa - Imprecisa→

3.

Ned Flanders se robó el dinero del banco.

←Imprecisa-Precisa→

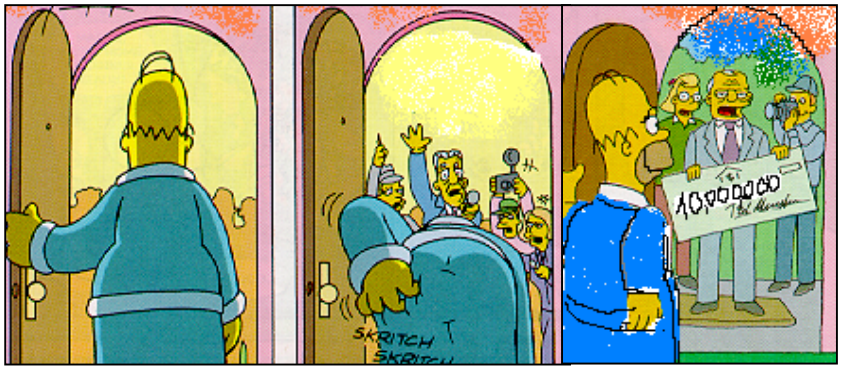
4.



Julián se miró su programa favorito de T.V.

←Precisa – Imprecisa→

5.



Homero se ganó diez millones de dólares.

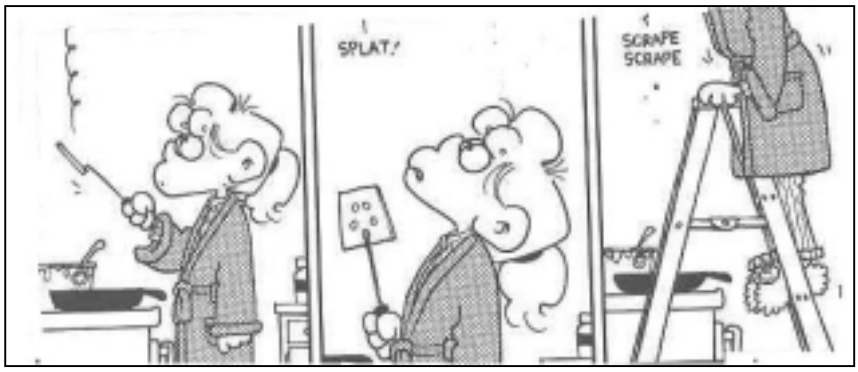
←Precisa – Imprecisa→

6.

El ladrón se robó la rosquilla

←Imprecisa-Precisa→

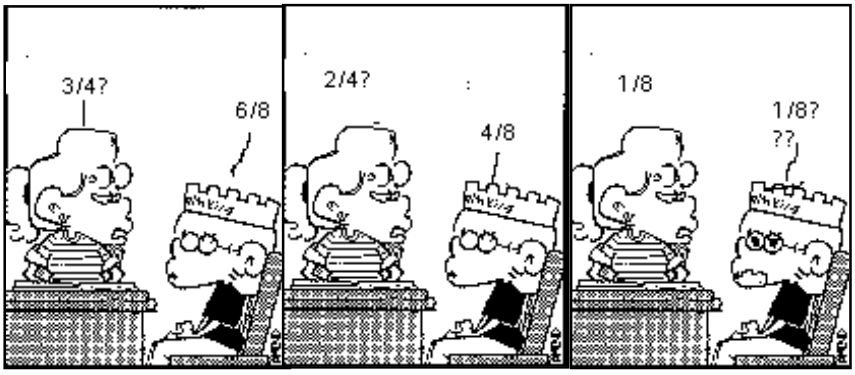
7.



Clara se preparó un panqueque.

←Imprecisa-Precisa→

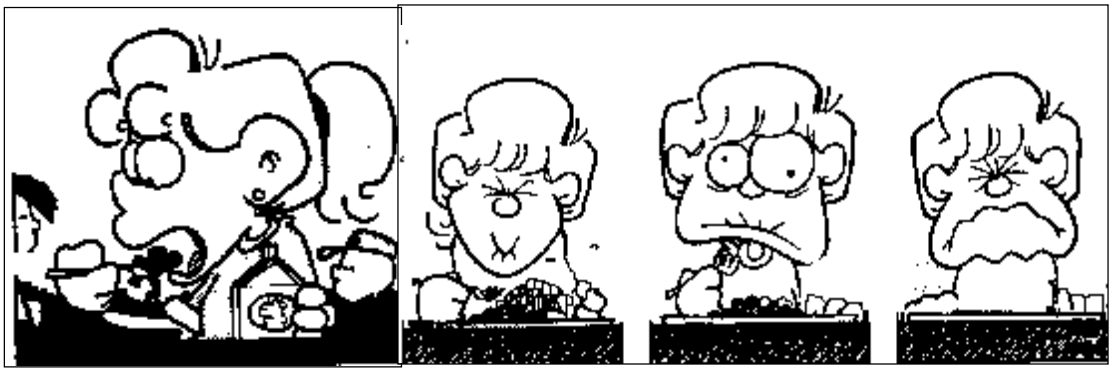
8.



Julián se sabía las fracciones de memoria.

← Precisa-Imprecisa →

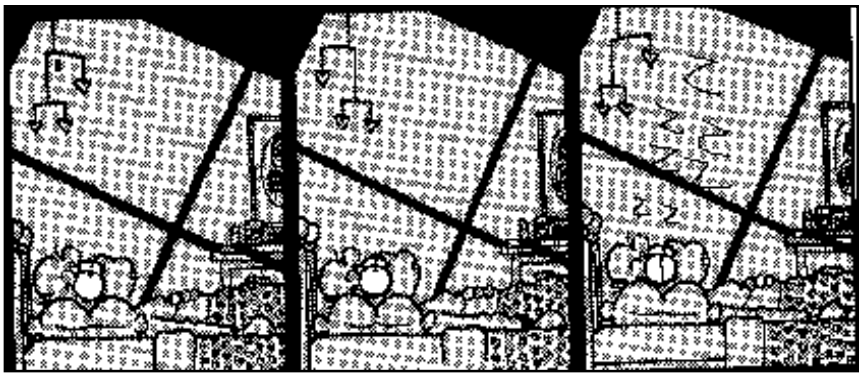
9.



Lucía se tragó la comida .

←Precisa- Imprecisa→

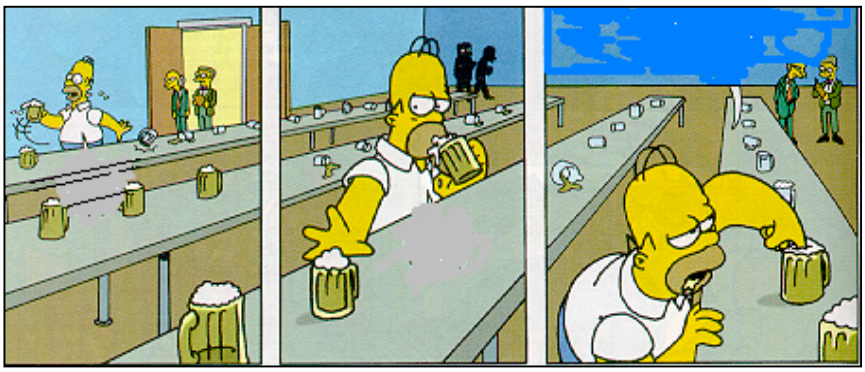
10.



Lucía se pasó la noche despierta.

←Imprecisa-Precisa→

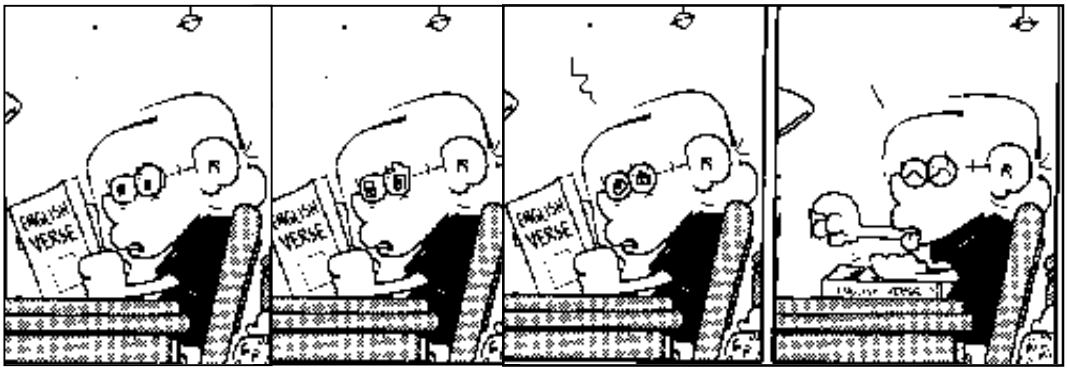
11.



Homero se bebió las cervezas.

←Imprecisa—Precisa→

12.



Julio se leyó el libro de poesía.

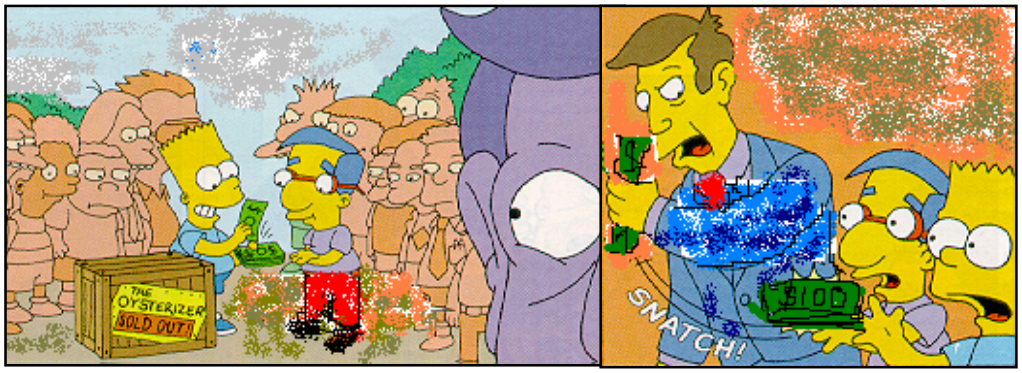
←Precisa-Imprecisa→

13.

Bart se aguantó el sermón.

←Precisa - Imprecisa→

14.



El inspector se llevó el dinero .

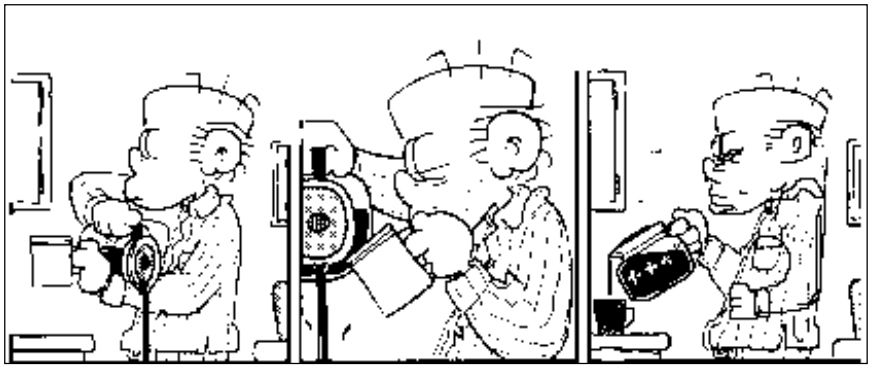
←Imprecisa-Precisa→

15.

Pedro se preparó un sandwich

←Precisa - Imprecisa→

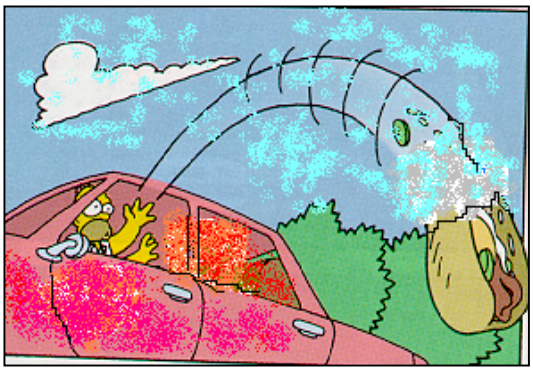
16.



El abuelo se sirvió el café

←Precisa – Imprecisa→

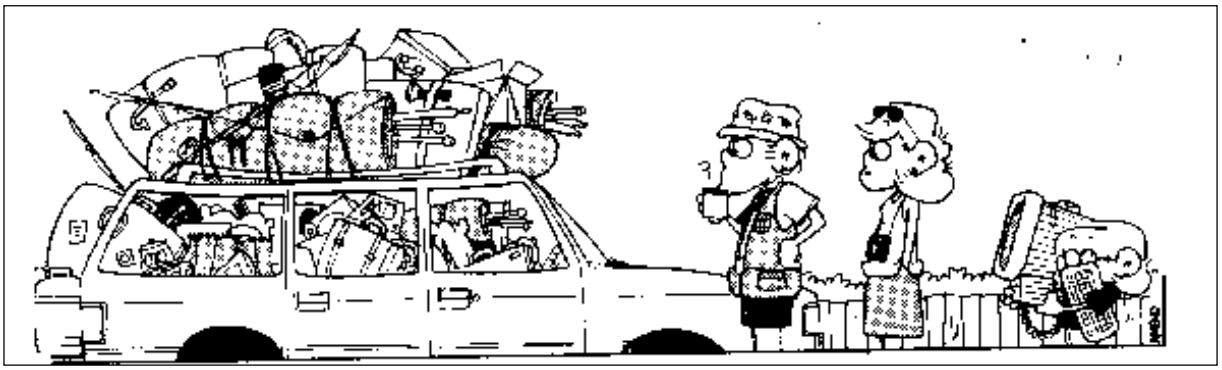
17.



Homero se comió el sandwich.

←Imprecisa-Precisa→

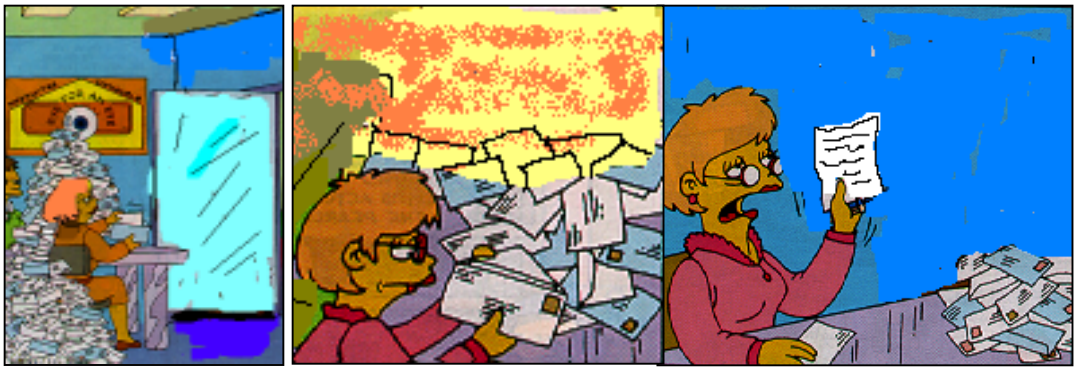
18.



Julián se preparó el equipo de camping .

←Precisa – Imprecisa→

19.



La Secretaria se lleyó las cartas

←Imprecisa-Precisa→

20.

La policía se llevó a los sospechosos.

←Precisa- Imprecisa→

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