BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

What is verbal aspect?
This is one of three important dimensions of any verb: Mood, Tense, Aspect.
• Mood provides the most general information regarding the use of the type of verb (e.g., infinitive, indicative, imperative).
• Tense provides the timeframe (derived from the Latin tempus, meaning time).
• Aspect provides a perspective to indicate with more precision the status (e.g., ongoing vs. complete within the narrative).

Why do learners struggle with verbal aspect?
• There is no one-to-one correspondence (between English and French) of the forms and aspectual perspectives.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES
1) Recall morphological features of two forms used for past tense: imparfait (imperfect) & passé composé (present perfect).
2) Understand (as a precursor to internalizing) verbal aspect as a concept (not as a set of rules/exceptions).
3) Justify the use of imparfait vs. passé composé in the writing of others (e.g., newspaper articles, literary texts).
4) Apply the concept of verbal aspect to other contexts (specifically, the formulation of a narrative that includes past tenses).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
Concept-Based Instruction (also known as Systemic-Theoretical Instruction)
Galperin (1989, 1992) proposed an educational model using a concept as the organizing feature of instruction:
• Scientific, theoretical concepts are preferred over rules of thumb (or everyday, spontaneous concepts).
• A didactic model (e.g., flowchart, diagram, images) must be developed to represent the (scientific, theoretical) concept.

How is CBI different from models developed within traditional language acquisition frameworks?
• In a traditional model of language acquisition, an unknown amount of input may or may not result in acquisition.
• In a CBI model, learning a concept promotes cognitive development as it is related to second language acquisition.
• According to the CBI model, instruction (and the quality of it) can make a difference (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

TASKS & ASSESSMENTS
1) Review of forms used to express past tenses (specifically imparfait and passé composé) [SLO 1]
2) Verbalization 1: Explanation of verbal aspect in French based on previous learning [Pre-Test]
3) Presentation and discussion of various concept diagrams representing verbal aspect (e.g., Figure 1) [SLO 2]
4) Explanation and justification of past tense forms used by others (i.e., journalists, novelists) [SLO 3]
5) Verbalization 2: Explanation of verbal aspect based on CBI [Post-Test]
6) Apply the concept of verbal aspect to the creation of a narrative including past tenses based on the film Unknown [SLO 4]
7) Verbalization 3: Explanation of verbal aspect based on CBI [Delayed Post-Test]

RESULTS
FALL 2011 PILOT STUDY
Why are there results from only 10 participants (out of 26 students in this class)?
• Absences
• Web browsers not configured/used correctly for Wimba Voice Board

What do the results suggest?
• In one or two class periods, students can learn a concept that has alluded them for one or more years.
• Learning and cognitive development do not take place at the same rate for all learners.
• Some learners are unable/unwilling to “replace” previous instruction with new instruction, which leads to the mixing of models and possibly a skewing of results.
• The Spring 2012 follow-up study requires additional feedback from learners in order to know whether or not they understand the difference between traditional models and CBI.

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Figure 1. Concept diagram representing verbal aspect in French
