The acquisition of telicity markers in L2 German

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In the last decades, telicity has been the focus of much theoretical research, however, the full extent of its role in grammar is still not fully understood. One of the fundamental properties of this aspectual category is its compositionality, i.e., the way telicity can be obtained through the combination of distinct and complex linguistic elements. Many researchers have made impeccable progress in the understanding of how telicity is obtained and how it relates to event structure, spanning from Dowty's (1979) aspect calculus to Verkuyl's (1993) theory of aspectuality and Krifka's (1998) mereological approach. These theories, however, are not without their shortcomings and more recent accounts attempt to provide formal semantic descriptions of telicity in terms of event individuation (Landman & Rothstein, 2012; Rothstein, 2004) and maximalization (Filip, 2008). Some researchers have also studied telicity at the syntax-semantics interface, but there is no consensus as to whether its behaviour can be described by a functional projection approach (e.g., Borer, 2005; Travis, 1992) or by a derivative lexical-syntactic approach (e.g., Harley, 2005), among others.

In language acquisition, the amount of research concerned with telicity is relatively scarce, compared to the numerous theoretical accounts dedicated to its description. Since semantic categories with very little or no grammaticalization are much harder to study empirically, experimental linguists tend to shy away from this endeavour. Most experimental studies on the acquisition of telicity target languages in which telicity is marked (e.g., German), either by means of resultative particles or secondary predicates, and focus primarily on L1 acquisition (e.g., Schulz, 2018; Schulz & Penner, 2002; van Hout, 2008, 2018), with only a few studies focusing on telicity acquisition by L2 speakers (e.g., Slabakova, 2001, 2005).

Schulz (2018) argues that, although children seem to understand the differences between event types from an early age, they adhere to the production of the most transparent subevent of telic particle verbs, i.e., resultative particles (e.g., *auf* 'open'), before they start producing full particle verbs (e.g., *aufmachen*, 'open') or even simple inherently telic verbs (e.g., *öffnen,* 'open'). Several other studies (Schulz & Ose, 2008; Schulz & Penner, 2002; Schulz, Penner & Wymann, 2002; van Hout, 2008, 2018) suggest that telic particles are *strong telicity markers*, since native speakers tend to be more reluctant in accepting cases of event cancellation when a particle verb is involved (cf. (1a)), while certain quantized DPs in derived predicates are classified as

weak telicity markers, as they allow this cancellation via conversational implicature (cf. (1b)).

(1)
    a. Er hat   *auf*-gegessen,   (# aber es ist noch was übrig).
        he has   up-eaten.PST.PTCP   (# but it is still some left)
        'He ate up the apple, (#but there is still something left).'

    b. Er hat   *den* Apfel   gegessen,   (aber es ist noch was übrig).
        he has   the apple   eaten.PST.PTCP   (# but it is still some left)
        'He ate the apple, but there is still something left.'

(Schulz, 2018: 128; adapted)

Given these assumptions, the question arises of whether second language speakers display the same patterns as native speakers in their judgement of telic event cancellations. In other words, are L2 speakers sensitive to telic markers in determining whether a culmination point can be annulled?

The present study was conducted with 129 speakers (M = 33.9; SD = 10.5) of German, divided into four groups according to their acquisitional contexts: (i) 46 Portuguese speakers of L2 German (M = 34.5, SD = 11.7), (ii) 28 HL speakers of German with Portuguese as their majority language (M = 35.3, SD = 12.5), (iii) 34 HL speakers of Portuguese with German as their majority language (M = 35.4, SD = 8.5) and (iv) 21 German native controls (M = 28.7, SD = 6.6). The participants were asked to rate 40 sentences, such as those of (1a) and (1b), by means of a 4-point Likert-type acceptability scale (cf. Slabakova, 2001). The items were divided into four conditions: (A) resultative particles; (B) resultative adjectives; (C) quantized DPs and (D) atelic partitive PPs. An additional questionnaire (based on the LEAP-Q; Marian, Blumenfeld & Kaushanskaya, 2007) provided information about the L2 speakers' sociolinguistic background. Proficiency of the L2 group was determined by means of a C-Test.

Statistical analysis was performed in the RStudio software. To check for effects of condition and group, a Bayesian ordinal regression model was conducted with prior predictive simulations and regularizing priors. Multiple model refits were conducted

with interactions and nested contrasts. The final model confirmed that there are statistically credible differences between the L2 speakers' acceptability of event cancellation with telic particles and resultative adjective, while no such differences arise for HL and L1 speakers (β = -0.69, 95% HDI = -1.34, -0.08). L2 speakers seem to have more difficulty rejecting cancellations with telic particles than with resultative adjectives, which may be explained by effects of lexical transparency. Relative to particle verbs, verbs with quantized DPs are widely accepted in the L2 group (β = 1.55, 95% HDI = 0.85, 2.17) and the remaining groups follow the same pattern.

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