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L2 Acquisition of English present perfect semantic and pragmatic conditions

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Abstract

This study investigates L2 acquisition of English present perfect by Greek Cypriot Greek speakers. One hundred Greek Cypriot university students took part in the study, the first part of which examined the sensitivity to grammatical norms (a passage correction task, based on Odlin et al. 2006), and the other part was focused on the production of English present perfect (elicitation of natural discourse, essays about personal experience). The results showed that L2 learners used more non-target tense forms (present simple and past simple) than the target present perfect in typical contexts, which is due to transfer from L1 Cypriot Greek (CG). The data only partially supports the Inherent Lexical Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen and Shirai 1996; Bardovi-Harlig 1999), as L2 learners used perfective and past tense morphology with both punctual-telic predicates (achievements or accomplishments) and atelic or durative predicates (state or activity), though their production of target present perfect improves with more years of exposure to L2 English and there is a decrease in the use of stative and activity verbs with perfective and past tense marking.

Keywords present perfect, resultative, existential, L2 acquisition

1. Introduction

This study investigates L2 acquisition of English present perfect by Greek Cypriot speakers. With regard to current research, semantic and pragmatic conditions compatible with present perfect are different in CG and English, thus L2 learners of English might fail to notice these conditions.

According to Menardos (1969), CG lacks a productive present perfect. Greek Cypriots tend to use past tense instead of present perfect. CG has only present perfect B (formed with auxiliary 'have' or 'be' and an agreeing passive participle, which independently functions as an adjectival participle) and past perfect B forms and lacks present perfect A (formed with auxiliary 'have' and an invariant perfective participle) and past perfect A, while SMG has all four forms. Karyolemou (1995) reports the same situation with respect to present perfect, but observes that contemporary Cypriot Greek has past perfect A, although not as the only option, as past tense can be alternatively used.

Given (a) that the present perfect B form has a limited distribution and (b) that the auxiliary is not always 'have' (namely, it is 'be' with unaccusative predicates and 'have' with agentive predicates), Cypriot Greek speakers

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might not consider the so-called present perfect B forms as perfect forms. Most probably, they might perceive English present perfect and Cypriot Greek present perfect B as unrelated structures/tenses.
They might have a tendency to use past simple instead of existential present perfect due to transfer from L1 CG. L2 learners of English might overlook these semantic and pragmatic conditions related to present perfect, as in their L1 there are no such meanings and conditions and, as a result, would equate the semantics of present perfect with semantics of past simple.
L2 acquisition theories are going to be tested against the evidence based on the collected data (elicitation and natural discourse). The aim of this study is to reveal the cause of non-target/deviant production of L2 English present perfect, transfer from L1 to L2, and the role of semantic/pragmatic contexts of the present perfect, lexical aspect, sentential aspect, transitivity of the verb, type of the sentence, type of the adverbial modification as well as the role of age, age of onset and the length of L2 input on the comprehension and production of English present perfect.
The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 describes different types of present perfect in English and CG, the difference between past simple and present perfect, and provides an overview of L2 present perfect acquisition studies. Section 3 presents the methodology of the experimental study. The results and their interpretation in the light of L2 acquisition theories are provided in Section 4. Conclusions and implications for further study are presented in Section 5.

1.1. Present perfect

1.1.1. English present perfect

According to Comrie (1976), English present perfect has morpho-syntactic properties of both tense and aspect. Tense is responsible for positioning the event in time, while aspect for how exactly this event unfolds in time, showing either continuation or completion. Present perfect is non-deictic, secondary tense with analytical construction. It is formed with the help of auxiliary verb 'have' and the past participle form of a lexical verb and it is incompatible with past time adverbials (e.g. *yesterday*, *last month*).
English present perfect has four main semantic meanings (Comrie 1976; Huddleston and Pullum 2002; Siemund 2004): resultative (e.g. *He has opened the window*.); extended-now or continuative (e.g. *I have lived in Cyprus since 2003*.); experiential (e.g. *I have never been to Africa*.), and recent past or hot news (e.g. *The prime minister has resigned recently*.).
The *resultative present perfect* describes the past action that has caused the change of the state at the moment of utterance (Davydova 2011). The resultative perfect is mostly associated with the verbs of accomplishment and achievement. According to Comrie (1976) and Siemund (2004), the meaning of the resultative perfect is 'a central manifestation of a perfect', and explicitly shows the current relevance. The result of a prior situation still holds for the present. The resultative perfect can also show 'nil results' or failure of a result (Huddleston and Pullum 2002).
The *extended-now perfect* is also called inclusive past-and-present, universal perfect, the continuative perfect or perfect of persistent situation (Filppula 1999). The extended-now present perfect depicts the situation which started

in the past and continues to be/is still valid at the moment of utterance (Davydova 2011). Verbs of activity and duration are combined with this type of perfect and certain time adverbials such as *since*, *for a long time*, *all his life*, and *up till now*. The extended-now perfect describes "an event which started to occur at a certain point in the past and has occurred regularly up to the moment of utterance" (Davydova 2011: 58).

The *experiential perfect* or 'existential perfect' or 'indefinite anterior' perfect describes "a situation or an event which has taken place once or several times during a period of time leading up to the present" (Davydova 2011: 60). Stative verbs and verbs of activity and duration are compatible with the experiential perfect. Iterativity and repeatability are the characteristics of this type of present perfect (Dahl and Hedin 2000). There is no such explicit current relevance as with the resultative perfect.

The *perfect of recent past* describes "situations where the present relevance of a past situation is simply the one of temporal closeness, the past situation is very recent" (Comrie 1976: 60). Thus, the perfect of recent past is used with adverbs such as *recently*, *lately*, and *this year* (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 145). It has a very general semantic nature; it can be used with all types of verbs: state, activity, accomplishment and achievement (Davydova 2011).

Davydova (2011: 63) proposed the semantic composition of the perfect and preterite (see Table 1):

Table 1
Semantic composition of the perfect and preterite

	Reference to the past	Current relevance	Focus on the present	Focus on the past	Indefiniteness	Definiteness
Preterite	+	–	–	+	–	+
Perfect	–	+	+	–	+	–

According to Bardovi-Harlig (1997), present perfect and past simple are similar in terms of anterior feature, while present perfect and present simple are similar in terms of the current relevance feature.

The choice between preterite and present perfect usage can be influenced by time adverbials (McCoard 1978; Davydova 2011). McCoard (1978: 135) proposed the feature ±THEN in order to classify time adverbials: +THEN (–current relevance), e.g. *yesterday*, *last night*; ±THEN (±current relevance), e.g. *recently*, *always*; –THEN (+current relevance), e.g. *at present*, *so far*, *since* (Davydova 2011: 68). Adverbials of ±current relevance can trigger the co-occurrence patterns of preterite and present perfect in L2 English, as these adverbials are less explicit than other types of adverbials.

Pragmatic knowledge, discourse, 'speaker's view of the event' (McCoard 1978: 47) together with semantic knowledge are crucial for differentiation between preterite and present perfect (Elsness 1997; Davydova 2011).

1.2. L2 acquisition of present perfect

There are two main approaches regarding tense and aspect acquisition: meaning-oriented and form-oriented. The former one is a functional perspective focusing on semantics and pragmatics, on learners' production

rather than comprehension, on how learners try to establish temporal relations, according to it, learners first start to use pragmatic and lexical expressions of temporality, such as discourse and adverbs and then move to the implementation of grammatical means, such as morphological marking (Bardovi-Harlig 2000).

Form-oriented approach is focused on the emergence of verbal morphology that expresses temporality, it deals with learners' knowledge and use of verbal inflectional morphology with respect to their L1 background. There is no unanimous opinion about the role of L1 transfer in L2 acquisition and whether L2 learners can reach a native-like attainment in L2; some researchers support the full access to Universal Grammar (UG) view (Schwartz and Sprouse 1996), the others partial access to UG (Hawkins and Chan 1997) or no access to UG (Smith and Tsimpli 1995).

According to the Form-before-Meaning Hypothesis (Slabakova 2002; Montrul and Slabakova 2002), morpho-syntactic discrepancies (mismatches) and L1 transfer cause difficulty in L2 acquisition of tense and aspect; L2 learners have a problem distinguishing semantics of present perfect due to the absence of one-to-one morphological correspondence at the syntax–semantic interface.

There is a predictable/universal order of tense and aspect acquisition: tense is acquired/marked prior to aspect (Dietrich et al. 1995). The emergence of present perfect follows the emergence of past simple, when the learners have a high competence in past simple (accuracy rate, well-formedness and appropriate use). In order to use present perfect L2 learners have to restructure their knowledge of the use of past simple, they tend either to overgeneralize (use present perfect in the past simple contexts) or undergeneralize (use past simple and present simple tenses in present perfect environments), which has been called Interlingual Form-Mismatch by Han and Hong (2015).

Previous research by Bulut (2011) on the acquisition of English present perfect by Turkish speakers revealed that L2 learners use past simple instead of present perfect due to negative L1 transfer. Similar results were found for Japanese (Yoshimura and Nakayama 2009), Korean (Han and Hong 2015) and Portuguese (Rocha 2004). Liszka (2004, 2005) found that L1, differences in feature inventory for tense-aspect distinctions, encoding of [+/−perfect], between L1 (e.g. Japanese, German and Chinese) and English and sensitivity to these differences can affect present perfect acquisition in L2 English.

The Inherent Lexical Aspect Hypothesis (Shirai 1991; Andersen and Shirai 1996; Bardovi-Harlig 1999, 2000) suggests that L2 learners at initial stages of L2 acquisition are influenced by inherent semantic meaning of the verbs with respect to acquisition of tense and aspect morphology: past and perfect morphology is related to punctual-telic predicates (achievements or accomplishments), while atelic or durative predicates are uninflected, without morphology. At the later stages of L2 acquisition, inherent aspectual properties of verbs are not so important.

Salaberry (1999) proposed the Default Past Tense Hypothesis, according to which L2 learners at the initial stages of L2 acquisition tend to assign a

default past tense form across lexical categories and then when their level of proficiency increases they start to adhere to the Aspect Hypothesis.

Vendler (1967) proposed to divide all English verbs into four lexical aspectual classes (Mourelatos, 1981): state (+homogeneous +durative, –dynamic, –telic (e.g. want, know); activity (+homogeneous, +durative, +dynamic, –telic e.g. jump, work); accomplishment (–homogeneous, +durative, +dynamic, +telic e.g. write, bake); achievement (–homogeneous, –durative, +dynamic, +telic) (e.g. realise, find) (Sharma 2009: 3). Stative and activity predicates are both atelic, homogeneous and durative, while accomplishments and achievements are telic and lack internal homogeneity.

Verkuyl (1972, 1993) suggested that a verb together with its arguments should be taken into consideration in order to determine aspectual class of the predicate and lexical aspect class should be determined on VP level and not on V level. According to the Sentential Aspect Hypothesis (SAH) (de Swart 1998), aspectual class of a sentence is determined not only by the lexical aspect of the verb and its arguments, but also by such operators as negation and adverbs (time adverbials, adverbs of quantification).

If there is (im)perfectivity marking in L1 then L2 learners would be sensitive not only to the lexical aspect of the verb, but also the derived aspectual class of sentences. English is not sensitive to (im)perfectivity, it has morphological markers for tense, but not for perfective/imperfective aspect. It has overt markers of past tense and progressive aspect (Sharma 2009; Roberts and Liszka 2013).

The distribution of tense/aspect forms in interlanguage can also depend on discourse organization (Discourse Hypothesis). The use of verbal morphology depends on narrative grounding (foreground and background). The foreground is related to the structure of discourse, the foreground events are elaborated/supported by the background; past simple is used mainly in the foreground, while pluperfect is used in the background (Hopper 1979; Bardovi-Harlig 1992).

Overall, previous studies on L2 acquisition of English present perfect have shown that licensing of English present perfect by L2 learners depends on multiple factors such as L1, frequency of L2 input, accuracy rate, order of instruction, pedagogical practices (past simple is taught prior to present perfect in L2 classrooms), task type, individual differences, cognitive skills, perceptual saliency and prototype, rote-learning strategies and metalinguistic knowledge of L2 learners, context, discourse type, memory, mental encyclopedia knowledge, association knowledge of adverb collocation with particular tense, presence and absence of adverbs, type of adverbs, lexical aspect, Aktionsart of the verb, type of verb, type of sentence, negative and semantic contexts (Sugaya and Shirai 2007; Han and Hong 2015).

1.3. Present perfect in CG

According to Menardos (1969) and Agouraki (2006), in CG present perfect is formed differently with transitive and intransitive verbs. For transitive verbs, auxiliary verb *eho* 'have' is used and a participle which agrees in *phi*-features with the object; for intransitive verbs, present perfect is formed with the help of the auxiliary *ime* 'be' and a participle agreeing in *phi*-features with the subject. It should be noted that of intransitive predicates it is only

unaccusative predicates that can form present perfect B (Agouraki 2006: 43), see Table 2.

Table 2
Present perfect and past simple in CG

Present Perfect (*eho* 'have' + adjectival participle — for transitive verbs)	can only have result reading
Present Perfect (*ime* 'be' + adjectival participle — for unaccusative verbs)	can only have result reading
Past simple Tense	can have "definite", existential, and result reading

Unaccusative verbs are intransitive verbs with non-agentive subjects (e.g. a glass dropped, the door closed), while unergatives are also intransitive but have agentive subjects (e.g. laugh, swim). In CG, present perfect can have only resultative reading, while past simple can have definite, indefinite, existential and resultative readings. In CG, there is no continuative/universal perfect or the hot news perfect, associated with present perfect (Agouraki 2012). The continuative/universal reading is expressed with the help of present simple, and hot news reading with the help of past tense (verb-initial sentences). Present perfect in CG is incompatible with past time temporal adverbials (e.g. yesterday, last week).
CG has distinction between perfective (e.g. *elisa* 'I solved' aorist past tense) and imperfective (e.g. *elina* 'I was solving' imperfect past tense). CG is sensitive to (im)perfectivity distinctions, which are not correspondent to verbal morphological distinctions, markings in L2 English.
A recent study by Melissaropoulou et al. (2013) suggests that present perfect, which is formed with the help of auxiliary verb *eho* 'have' and the perfective participle (e.g. *eho diavasi* 'I have read') is emerging in Cypriot Greek koine, taking over functions of the simple past, and has two semantic functions of experiential and resultative, but more research is needed.
Karpava and Agouraki (2013) investigated the acquisition of resultative and existential present perfect by L2 learners of English with L1 Standard Greek and L1 Cypriot Greek backgrounds. In CG, present perfect has only resultative reading, while for existential reading simple past is used. Elicitation tasks were implemented based on Agouraki (2006) focusing on the (in)compatibility of certain adverbial modifiers with resultative and existential present perfect. The study had a large sample of participants; the findings showed that L1 (CG) influences L2 acquisition of English present perfect and supported the Full Transfer/Full Access Hypothesis (Schwartz and Sprouse 1994, 1996).

1.4. Research questions/predictions

The aim of this study is to examine both comprehension and production of present perfect in L2 English, to investigate whether L2 learners of English transfer from L1 CG with respect to English present perfect production and comprehension and whether positive/negative/partial transfer is influenced

by such variables as age, gender, length, quality of exposure to L2 input, level of proficiency in English and whether the participants are aware of the semantic and pragmatic conditions warranting the present perfect and understand the difference between the existential and the result reading in Greek and in English. Specifically, if learners of L2 English use past simple instead of existential present perfect this could be the evidence of L1 transfer from CG.

The other question is to identify which of the variables, such as adverbial modification, Aktionsart, type of sentence, transitivity of a verb, and semantic context/type of present perfect, influence target and non-target production and comprehension of present perfect and whether the Lexical Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen and Shirai 1996; Bardovi-Harlig 1999) is supported and L2 learners of English use past simple and present perfect with achievement and accomplishments rather than with state and activity verbs, resultative present perfect with achievements and accomplishments and existential/experiential present perfect with activities and state verbs.

2. Methodology

1.1. Participants

One hundred Greek Cypriot university students (89 undergraduate, 11 MA level) took part in the study. Among them there were 69 males and 31 females. Their age ranges from 17 to 36 years, length of exposure (LoE) to L2 input from 2 to 20 years, and age of onset (AoO) to L2 from 5 to 27 years (see Table 2). Twenty-five students have graduated from private, English-speaking schools, while 75 students have finished government, Greek-speaking schools. Only 16 students have been exposed to authentic L2 input: they visited or studied in English-speaking countries, and 19 students additionally know a foreign language other than English (e.g. Italian, Japanese, Spanish, Turkish, French, Swedish, Russian and German). The L2 English proficiency of the participants in English was identified with the help of the test of English language proficiency, International English Language Testing System (IELTS) as this test is designed to assess the language ability of non-native speakers of English who intend to study at university. The students were examined on four skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking. The IELTS scores of the participants were from 3.5 to 8.5, with a mean score 6.36 (SD 0.87): 1 student had 3.5 IELTS score (extremely limited user); 5 students had 4-4.5 IELTS score (limited user), 17 students had 5-5.5 IELTS score (modest user), 44 students had 6-6.5 IELTS score (competent user), 31 students had 7-7.5 IELTS score (good user) and 2 students had 8-8.5 IELTS score (very good user), see Table 3.

Table 3:
AoO, age and LoE to L2, IELTS score, level of English proficiency of the participants

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
AoO	100	5.00	27.00	13.66	4.13
Age	100	17.00	36.00	21.6300	3.57
LoE to L2	100	2.00	20.00	7.9700	3.60
IELTS score	100	3.5	8.5	6.36	0.87

1.2. Materials and Procedure

The first part of the study examined the sensitivity to grammatical norms, while the other part of the study was focused on the actual production.

A short questionnaire with 18 questions was used in order to elicit the information on students' socio-economic status and linguistic background, their motivation and attitude towards English. All of the tests were piloted with the native speakers. 10 L1 speakers of English, university students, 20-25 years old, their results were taken into consideration in order to create valid and reliable testing battery as the items that were considered incorrect/deviant/ambiguous by native speakers were removed.

The first part of the experimental study was the elicitation task, a passage correction exercise or a kind of proofreading test based on Odlin (1986) and Odlin et al. (2006). The participants were presented with three text passages (2,300 words in total) and were asked to proofread it and to correct if necessary the underlined tense forms (60 items). Among 60 items, there were 25 errors: present perfect (10 resultative and 15 existential/experiential) replaced by present simple (12 items) and past simple (13 items). Present perfect contexts were created with the help of discourse and adverbials of current relevance: *for*, *as a result*, *since*, *over*, *so far*, *yet*, and *latest* (10 with adverbs, 15 without adverbs). The task of the participants was to detect and correct errors where the present perfect was replaced by an anomalous use of the past or present tense. There were also 35 distractors: 20 correct and 15 incorrect usages of present simple/continuous, past simple/continuous and future simple. The distractors also examined the relative level of proficiency of the participants in English. This task included acceptability judgement of the participants, as they had either to accept the tense form and leave it like it was or to consider it ungrammatical and correct it. Examples (1) and (2) show error types in the elicitation task:

(1) Virtually none of the thousands of women who <u>were financially assisted</u> (past simple instead of present perfect) by the bank for over 20 years <u>defaulted</u> (past simple instead of present perfect) on their payments.
(2) These borrowings <u>enable</u> (present simple instead of present perfect) Bangladeshi women to set up numerous small-scale projects which directly benefit their families and the communities in which they live. The success of the experiment <u>brings</u> (present simple instead of present perfect) about a revolution in the way anti-poverty programmes are now organised.

It is very difficult to elicit the use of present perfect in L2 English, as it has a hybrid nature with both past and current relevance. It is very difficult to provide the context relevant for present perfect, as then it can be easily compatible either with present simple or past simple (Odlin et al. 2006). A specialised use of perfect, the experiential perfect, can be elicited with the help of essays describing personal experiences, though then it is difficult to compare individual performances of the participants (Bardovi-Harlig 2001). The second part of the study was focused on the elicitation of natural written

discourse, with students being asked to write essays about personal experience, which could elicit experiential/existential and resultative perfect. A small written corpus of 100 essays (see Table 4) was analysed in terms of present perfect contexts: resultative perfect, existential/experiential perfect, perfect of the recent past, and extended-now present perfect.

Table 4
Written corpus: words, sentences, MLU/word

	Total	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Words	18754	48	480	187.54	67.39
Sentences	1076	4	36	10.76	5.01
MLU/word	1825.69	7.6	34	18.25	4.48

The aim was to find out whether L2 learners of English use target present perfect in these contexts or substitute it with simple tenses, such as past simple and present simple. The other concern was to examine the Aktionsart of the verbs (state, activity, accomplishment, activity) used with each type of the present perfect, as well as which types of adverbs modify present perfect (+current relevance, –current relevance and ±current relevance or no adverb modification at all), the type of the sentence (negative, affirmative) and transitivity of the verbs (transitive, intransitive), relevant to the sentential aspect.

The clauses/sentences in written corpus/essays were analysed with respect to lexical-aspectual information, obligatory contexts of present perfect, target/non-target production of present perfect and its substitution by other tenses (e.g. present simple and past simple) in order to reveal possible L1 transfer from CG and lexical/aspectual influence. The temporal contexts of present perfect were identified based on internal properties of the clause and contextual discourse information, narrative frame, obligatory contexts for present perfect. Analysis of the discourse is essential for the identification of present perfect contexts.

The context analysis of the clauses in students' written essay revealed 151 obligatory contexts for present perfect in 100 students' essays. Then the morphological marking of the temporal content in these contexts was examined. The lexical-aspectual properties of these clauses (with perfect contexts) were analysed based on Vendler's classification and coded as state, activity, achievement and accomplishment which is quite challenging (Gujord 2013). The coding of lexical aspect in written essay was based on standard diagnostic tests by Dowty (1979), Robinson (1990), Shirai (1991), Shirai and Kurono (1998): stative verbs cannot take imperative form; activity verbs have entailment from progressive to simple past; accomplishments are accepted with time-span adverbials, achievements are accepted with punctual adverbials. The across-category analysis of lexical aspect has been implemented in line with Bardovi-Harlig (2000) and Gujord (2013) as the focus is on the morphological form (present perfect vs. present simple vs. past simple) and the distinction of this morpheme across the lexical-aspectual classes was observed. Only token counts were used. It is important to use different tasks to avoid the task effect as elicitation can

trigger monitoring of language form, while narrative can deal more with learner's competence (Tarone 1988).

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Elicitations task, passage correction exercise

The analysis of the error correction in the proofreading task showed that only 400 (16%) of all errors were corrected and L2 learners used target present perfect. The other errors (2,100 / 84%) were either not corrected or L2 learners tended to use other non-target tense forms instead of present perfect (see Table 5):

Table 5
(Non)-target present perfect production

Target / Present perfect	400	16%
Non-target	2,100	84%
Non-target production		
Past simple	1,154	46.16%
Past perfect	6	0.24%
Past continuous	36	1.44%
Present simple	809	32.36%
Present continuous	95	3.80%

The distribution of (non)target production of present perfect by L2 learners of English according to the number of years of exposure to English is presented in Figure 1. There is a slight increase in the use of target present perfect with the increase in the number of years of English learning and there is a slight decrease in the use of non-target past simple. It seems that the length of exposure to L2 is an important factor for present perfect acquisition in L2 English.

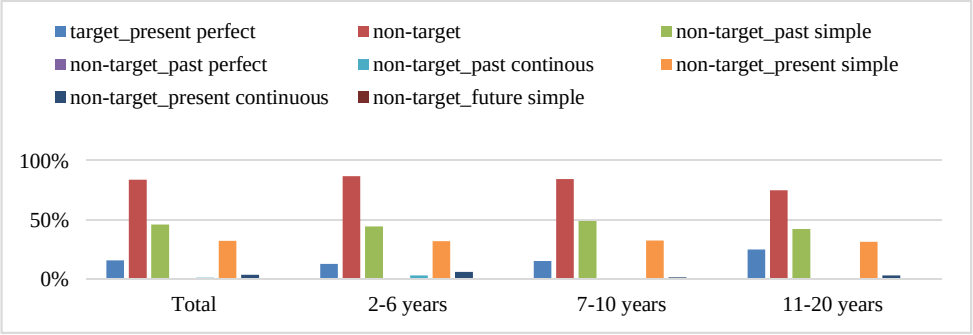

Figure 1: Years of exposure to English factor: present perfect (non)target production

Overall, it seems that L2 learners of English have a problem with English present perfect (84% non-target production). They tend to use past simple (46.16%) or present simple (32.36%) instead. The use of past simple can be explained by L1 transfer from CG.

L2 learners had more 'no changes' for past simple test items (63.76%) than for present simple test items (48.41%), with both past simple and present simple test items having the same percentage of changes to present perfect (17% and 16.33%). Present simple test items were more changed to past simple (29%) than past simple test items were changed to present simple (17.33%). Consequently, the most preferable tense used instead of present perfect is past simple (see Table 6).

Table 6
(No) attempted corrections of test items

	Past simple items	Present simple items
No changes	829 (63.76%)	581 (48.41%)
Changed to		
Present perfect	221 (17%)	196 (16.33%)
Past perfect	7 (0.53%)	3 (0.25%)
Present simple	225 (17.33%)	
Present continuous	18 (1.38%)	47 (3.93%)
Past continuous		25 (2.08%)
Past simple		348 (29%)

No significant difference was revealed between target production for existential and resultative present perfect. CG speakers might not perceive the limited occurrences of eho/ime + agreeing participle as present perfect forms in CG, otherwise they would have achieved a higher percentage of target resultative present perfect forms. But L2 learners of English used more past simple for existential present perfect (50.44%) than for resultative present perfect (38.70%). This can be due to transfer from L1 CG (usage of past simple instead of existential present perfect). They used more present simple for resultative present perfect (39.60%) than for existential present perfect (27.46%) (see Table 7).

Table 7
(Non)-target production for resultative/existential present perfect

	Existential present perfect	Resultative present perfect
Target/present perfect	16.40%	15.50%
Non-target	83.60%	84.50%
Non-target production		
Past simple	50.44%	38.70%
Past perfect	0.40%	0.70%
Past continuous	1.30%	1.80%
Present simple	27.46%	39.60%
Present continuous	4%	2.70%

Figure 2 shows the distribution of (non)target production of existential present perfect by L2 learners of English according to the length of exposure

to L2 English factors. With the increase of the exposure to L2 English, number of years of English learning, there is a slight increase in the use of target existential present perfect and a slight decrease in the use of non-target past simple

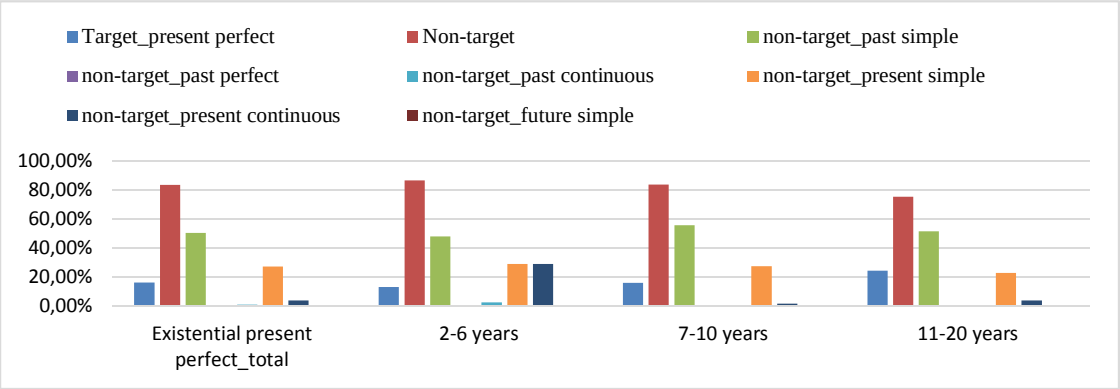

Figure 2: Years of learning English factor: existential present perfect (non)target production

Figure 3 shows the distribution of (non)target production of resultative present perfect by L2 learners of English according to the length of exposure to L2 English factors. With the increase of exposure to L2 English, number of years of English learning, there is a slight increase in the use of target resultative present perfect and a slight decrease in the use of non-target past simple.

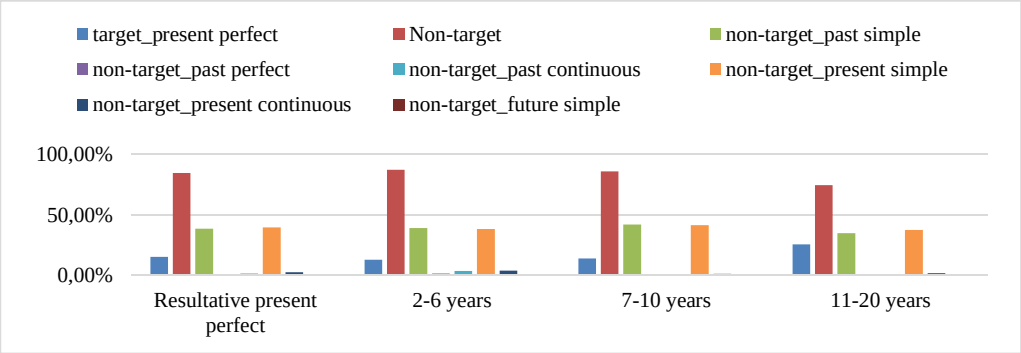

Figure 3: Years of learning English factor: resultative present perfect (non)target production

Overall, L2 learners showed better production for distractor items than for test items. This suggests that they have a particular problem with present perfect rather than with other tenses (present simple/continuous, past simple/continuous, future simple). They had a higher percentage for acceptance of the correct distractor items (75.85%) than for the correction of incorrect distractors (52.34%) (see Table 8).

Table 8
(In)correct distractors

Total distractors (35)	
Target	2317 (66.20%)
Non-target	1183 (33.80%)
Correct distractors (20)	
Target (no correction)	1517 (75.85%)
Non-target (correction)	483 (24.15%)
Incorrect distractors (15)	
Target (correction)	785 (52.34%)
Non-target (no correction)	715 (47.66%)

A paired samples *t-test* showed a statistically significant difference between target and non-target present perfect production *(t(99)=14.992, p=.000)*, target present perfect and non-target past simple production *(t(99)=8.060, p=.000)*, target and non-target distractor production *(t(99)=9.338, p=.000)*, and present perfect and past simple production in existential contexts *(t(99)=8.713, p=.000)*.
One-way ANOVA showed that age, length of exposure to L2, and gender are not crucial factors for L2 present perfect production. Pearson correlation analysis showed that target and non-target present perfect production is correlated with target and non-target distractor production (proficiency): *Sig 2-tailed .000*. Thus, L2 proficiency is the crucial factor for target/non-target L2 present perfect production.

3.2. Elicitation of natural discourse

With regard to elicitation of natural discourse: discourse about personal experiences based on essays, overall, it was very difficult to elicit present perfect in natural discourse due to the low rate of present perfect production (151 obligatory present perfect contexts for 100 essays). It was found that L2 learners used more non-target tense forms (64.91%): past simple (45.05%) or present simple (19.86%), than target present perfect (35.09%) in the obligatory present perfect contexts (see Table 8). They used both present and past simple instead of present perfect due to similarities of certain features of present perfect and present simple (current relevance) and present perfect and past simple (anterior) (Bardovi-Harlig 1997).

Table 8
(Non)-target production of present perfect

Present perfect obligatory context	151	
Target production		
Present perfect	53	35.09%
Non-target production (98/64.91%)		
Past simple	68	45.05%
Present simple	30	19.86%

Examples (3) and (4) show the usage of present simple instead of present perfect, and examples (5) and (6) the usage of past simple instead of present perfect.

(3) Michael has passion of photography and travel over 20 years as photographer for national geographic magazine.
(4) I have made a lot of mistakes but I never regret them.
(5) People liked his pictures so he became a professional since then…
(6) It is nice to spend your free time discovering things you did not see before.

It was found that target present perfect was used mainly in resultative contexts, while non-target past simple was used both in resultative and experiential/existential contexts, and non-target present simple was used in resultative, extended-now and recent past. It seems that the semantic context of present perfect influences target and non-target production of present perfect in L2 English. Cypriot Greek students tend to use past simple instead of present perfect in existential/experiential contexts, which can be explained by L1 transfer, as in CG they use past simple instead of experiential/existential present perfect.
Target present perfect was mainly used with achievement verbs, non-target past simple was used both with achievement and state verbs, and non-target present simple was used with achievement, state and activity verbs. The data is compatible with the Inherent Lexical Aspect Hypothesis (Andresen and Shirai 1996; Bardovi-Harlig 1999), as L2 learners use mainly achievement and accomplishment verbs with perfective and past tense morphology.
Target present perfect is mainly used either without adverbial specification or with the adverbs of current relevance, non-target past simple is also used mainly with no adverbs or with the adverbs of current relevance, but it has a higher percentage of the use with the adverbs of –current relevance and ±current relevance, and non-target present simple is used mainly without adverbs or with –current relevance adverbs. The type of adverb might influence the choice of tense only to a certain extent. Target present perfect, non-target past simple and present simple are used more with transitive types of verbs and in affirmative types of sentences (see Table 9).

Table 9
Semantic context, Aktionsart, type of adverb, sentence and verb transitivity

Present perfect obligatory context	Semantic context			
	Resultative	Extended-now	Experiential	Recent past
Present perfect (target)	37 (24.5%)	6 (3.97%)	7 (4.63%)	3 (1.98%)
Past simple (non-target)	31 (20.5%)	4 (2.64%)	20 (13.24%)	13 (8.60%)
Present simple (non-target)	13 (8.6%)	7 (4.63%)	3 (1.98%)	7 (4.63%)
Present perfect obligatory context	Aktionsart			
	State	Activity	Accomplishment	Achievement

Present perfect (target)	13 (8.60%)	6 (3.97%)	10 (6.62%)	24 (15.89%)
Past simple (non-target)	17 (11.25%)	11 (7.28%)	18 (11.92%)	22 (14.56%)
Present simple (non-target)	7 (4.63%)	7 (4.63%)	5 (3.31%)	11 (7.28%)
Present perfect obligatory context	Telic vs. atelic verb phrases			
	atelic		telic	
Present perfect (target)	19 (12.57%)		34 (22.51%)	
Past simple (non-target)	28 (18.53%)		40 (26.48%)	
Present simple (non-target)	14 (9.26%)		16 (10.59%)	
Present perfect obligatory context	Type of adverb			
	+Current relevance	–Current relevance	±Current relevance	No adverbial modification
Present perfect (target)	18 (11.92%)	1 (0.66%)	4 (2.64%)	30 (19.86%)
Past simple (non-target)	16 (10.59%)	7 (4.63%)	9 (5.96%)	36 (23.84%)
Present simple (non-target)	3 (1.98%)	4 (2.64%)	2 (1.32%)	21 (13.90%)
Present perfect obligatory context	Transitivity			
	Transitive		Intransitive	
Present perfect (target)	43 (28.47%)		10 (6.62%)	
Past simple (non-target)	51 (33.77%)		17 (11.25%)	
Present simple (non-target)	24 (15.89%)		6 (3.97%)	
Present perfect obligatory context	Type of sentence			
	Negative		Affirmative	
Present perfect (target)	4 (2.64%)		49 (32.45%)	
Past simple (non-target)	9 (5.96%)		59 (39.07%)	
Present simple (non-target)	0 (0%)		30 (19.86%)	

Figure 4 shows the distribution of target production of present perfect with respect to the length of exposure to L2 English, there is a slight increase of the target present perfect production with the increase of the number of years of learners' exposure to L2.

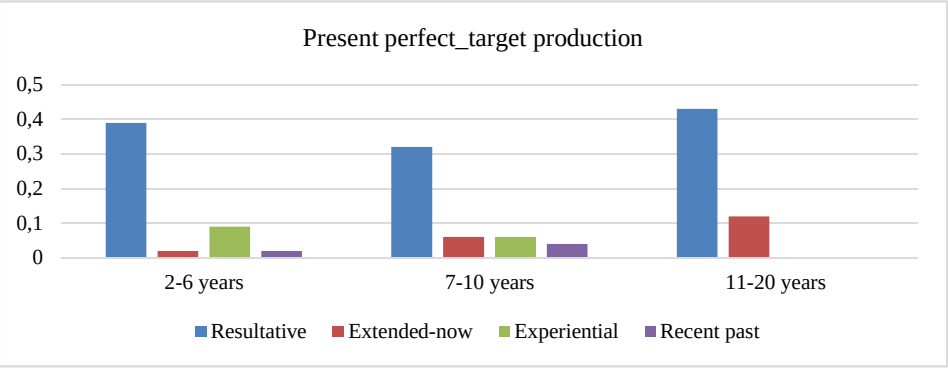

Figure 4. Length of exposure to L2 English: target present perfect production

There is a reverse picture for non-target production of present perfect and its substitution by past simple, L2 learners tend to use fewer non-target past simple tense forms when they have more exposure to L2 English, see Figure 5.

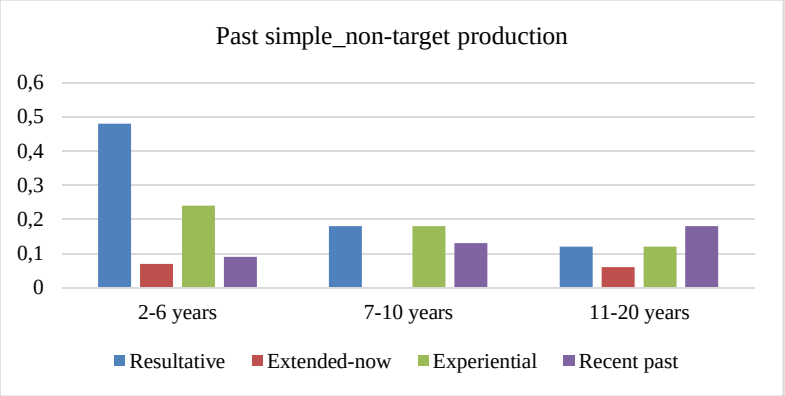

Figure 5.
Length of exposure to L2 English: non-target present perfect production

Figure 6 presents target present perfect production and lexical aspect (state, activity, accomplishment and achievement verbs types) with respect to the length of exposure to L2 factor. The written production data seems to be in line with the Aspect Hypothesis as with more years of exposure to L2 English there is an increase in the use of target present perfect with telic predicates (achievements and accomplishments) and there is a decrease in the use of present perfect with atelic predicates (state and activity).

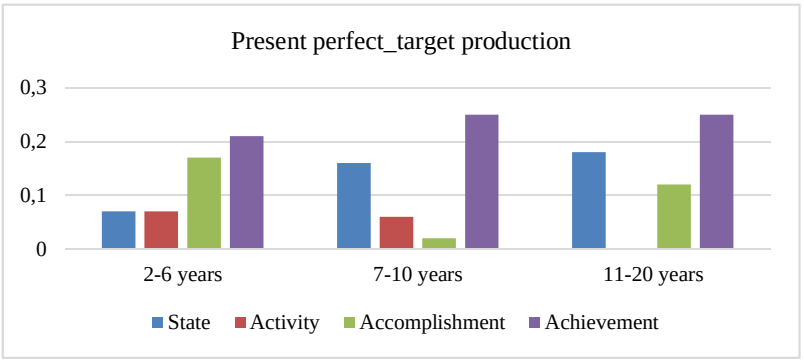

Figure 6. Length of exposure to L2 English: present perfect: lexical aspect

It was found that resultative perfect is mostly associated with the verbs of accomplishment and achievement, both for target and non-target production, which is in line with the findings of Davydova (2011). The extended-now perfect contexts were combined with the verbs of activity and duration, both for target and non-target production. Stative verbs and verbs of activity and duration are compatible with experiential perfect. The perfect of recent past has a very general semantic nature; it can be used with all types of verbs: state, activity, accomplishment and achievement, and the data supports this. Overall, the lexical aspect or Aktionsart of verbs

influences the production of present perfect in relevant semantic contexts (see Table 10).

Table 10
Type of present perfect and Aktionsart

Obligatory present perfect contexts 151	State	Activity	Accomplishment	Achievement
Target present perfect				
Resultative 37 (24.5%)	5 (3.31%)	1 (0.66%)	7 (4.63%)	24 (15.89%)
Extended-now 6 (3.97%)	5 (3.31%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.66%)	0 (0%)
Experiential/existential 7 (4.63%)	2 (1.32%)	3 (1.98%)	1 (0.66%)	1 (0.66%)
Recent past 3 (1.98%)	2 (1.32%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.66%)	0 (0%)
Non-target past simple				
Resultative 31 (20.52%)	1 (0.66%)	0 (0%)	8 (5.29%)	22 (14.56%)
Extended-now 4 (2.64%)	3 (1.98%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.66%)
Experiential/existential 20 (13.24%)	10 (6.62%)	7 (4.63%)	3 (1.98%)	0 (0%)
Recent past 13 (8.60%)	3 (1.98%)	4 (2.64%)	4 (2.64%)	2 (1.32%)
Non-target present simple				
Resultative 13 (8.60%)	1 (0.66%)	2 (1.32%)	2 (1.32%)	8 (5.29%)
Extended-now 7 (4.63%)	1 (0.66%)	3 (1.98%)	1 (0.66%)	2 (1.32%)
Experiential 3 (1.98%)	1 (0.66%)	1 (0.66%)	1 (0.66%)	0 (0%)
Recent past 7 (4.63%)	3 (1.98%)	1 (0.66%)	1 (0.66%)	2 (1.32%)

Paired samples *t-test* analysis showed that there is a statistically significant difference between target present perfect production and non-target present simple production *(t(99)=1.979, p=.051)* and non-target past simple and non-target present simple production *(t(99)=3.224, p=.002).*
One-way ANOVA showed that MLU is an important factor for present perfect correct production *(F(99)=1.671, Sig. 052)*, but not for non-target past simple and present simple production. One-way ANOVA showed that age is a crucial factor for production of non-target present simple tense *(F(99)=5.592, Sig.=.000)*, while AoO does not influence target and non-target production of present perfect. Regarding exposure to L2, years of L2 English learning is an important factor for target present perfect production *(F(99)=5.304, Sig=.013)*, while the level of English proficiency is not an important factor.
According to the paired samples *t-test* statistical analysis, there is a statistically significant difference between resultative present perfect correct and the use of present simple instead of resultative present perfect *(t(99)=2.741, p=.007)*, between experiential present perfect correct and past simple used instead of experiential present perfect *(t(99)=-2.312, p=.023)*,

between past simple and present simple used instead of experiential present perfect *(t(99)=2.896, p=.005),* between resultative present perfect correct and experiential present perfect correct *(t(99)4.025, p=.000),* between present simple used instead of resultative present perfect, and between present simple used instead of experiential present perfect *(t(99)=2.595, p=.011).*

4. Conclusions

This study is an attempt to shed light on L2 acquisition of English by Cypriot Greek speakers with regard to present perfect. Both comprehension and production of this particular linguistic phenomenon have been examined. It was found that L2 learners transfer from L1 CG, specifically using past simple instead of existential present perfect. L2 learners ignore semantic and pragmatic conditions compatible with the use of English present perfect; they mostly equate the semantics of the past tense with the semantics of the present perfect. Their production improves with more exposure to L2 English.

L1 transfer and (non)-target comprehension of English present perfect (elicitation) depend on L2 proficiency level rather than on age, age of onset to L2, length of exposure to L2 input or gender, while the actual production of English present perfect (written corpus data) is affected by MLU, age, age of exposure to L2, length of exposure to L2, but not the level of L2 English proficiency.

It was also found that Aktionsart or the lexical aspect of the verb influences (non)-target present perfect production rather than other factors such as the type of adverbial modification, the type of sentence, transitivity of a verb, and semantic context. The Lexical Aspect Hypothesis is partially supported (Andersen and Shirai 1996; Bardovi-Harlig 1999). L2 learners used perfective and past tense morphology with both punctual-telic predicates (achievements or accomplishments) and atelic or durative predicates (state or activity). Their production of target present perfect improves with more years of exposure to L2 English and is more in line with the Aspect Hypothesis at the later stages of L2 acquisition as they decrease the use of perfective/past tense forms with atelic predicates and use these forms more with telic/punctual predicates.

There is a difference in form, semantics and functions of present perfect in English and CG. There is one form of present perfect and one semantic reading (resultative) in CG and one form of present perfect and four semantic reading (resultative, existential, extended-now and recent past) in English. In CG, present perfect B has a limited use, and is far from being the typical way of marking the resultative reading in that dialect, thus native speakers of CG might not categorize this form as a perfect form.

L2 learners might also have a problem distinguishing semantics of present perfect due to the absence of one-to-one morphological correspondence at the syntax–semantic interface, which could be in line with the Form-before-Meaning Hypothesis (Slabakova 2002; Montrul and Slabakova 2002). This could be investigated in future studies. Moreover, it is important to expand this research to child L2 learners and the older generation of L2 learners, and examine both oral and written production and comprehension of English present perfect.

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