

May 2023

## Systemic Theoretical Instruction: Tense and Aspect in Italian a Sociocultural Study of American Learners of Italian

Charles Joseph Panarella, Jr.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/thesesdissertations>



Part of the [Educational Psychology Commons](#), [Italian Language and Literature Commons](#), [Language Description and Documentation Commons](#), and the [Other Languages, Societies, and Cultures Commons](#)

---

### Repository Citation

Panarella, Jr., Charles Joseph, "Systemic Theoretical Instruction: Tense and Aspect in Italian a Sociocultural Study of American Learners of Italian" (2023). *UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones*. 4752.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.34917/36114777>

This Dissertation is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Scholarship@UNLV with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Dissertation in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Dissertation has been accepted for inclusion in UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact [digitalscholarship@unlv.edu](mailto:digitalscholarship@unlv.edu).

SYSTEMIC THEORETICAL INSTRUCTION: TENSE AND ASPECT IN ITALIAN  
A SOCIOCULTURAL STUDY OF AMERICAN LEARNERS OF ITALIAN

By

Charles Joseph Panarella, Jr.

Bachelor of Arts – Business Administration  
University of San Diego  
1999

Master of Arts – Italian Language and Culture  
Middlebury College  
2011

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

Doctor of Philosophy – Educational Psychology

Department of Educational Psychology, Leadership, and Higher Education  
College of Education  
The Graduate College

University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
May 2023



## **Dissertation Approval**

The Graduate College  
The University of Nevada, Las Vegas

March 30, 2023

This dissertation prepared by

Charles Joseph Panarella, Jr.

entitled

Systemic Theoretical Instruction: Tense and Aspect in Italian a Sociocultural Study of  
American Learners of Italian

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy – Educational Psychology  
Department of Educational Psychology, Leadership, and Higher Education

Lisa Bendixen, Ph.D.  
*Examination Committee Chair*

Alyssa Crittenden, Ph.D.  
*Vice Provost for Graduate Education &  
Dean of the Graduate College*

Steven McCafferty, Ph.D.  
*Examination Committee Member*

Vanessa Vongkulluksn, Ph.D.  
*Examination Committee Member*

Tracy Spies, Ph.D.  
*Graduate College Faculty Representative*

## Abstract

University-level language and second-language classrooms typically use general rules of thumb to teach grammar without considering its conceptual aspects and cultural origins. These general rules of thumb are normally taught using a communicative approach to language teaching which typically places little emphasis on immediate corrective feedback and learner development. Most assessments are static in nature and focus on right and wrong answers rather than their origins (i.e., learner development and microgenesis). The lack of corrective feedback and lack of considering affective factors have the potential to negatively influence language acquisition in terms of motivation and self-efficacy. In addition, foreign language instructors typically do not assess learners' level of language awareness in their native language and how it could negatively impact learning the target language (i.e., L2) at the beginner level. The native language (i.e., L1) is usually not considered as a tool to mediate concept development in the L2, even though research indicates it is a learner's greatest mediation tool. However, if the L1 is not properly assessed for gaps in knowledge then it could have the reverse effects and result in negative transfer to the target language. Therefore, this study sought to understand how visual diagrams grounded in STI and CBI principles could evaluate native English speakers' level of language awareness of tense and aspect. Consequently, the study aimed to evaluate how bringing the L1 tense and aspect system back into focus impacts L2 concept development in Italian (i.e., tense and aspect) and how acquisition of tense and aspect in Italian was impacted if taught sequentially. The findings in this study show that the L1 can be instrumental in L2 concept acquisition and development at the beginner level and increase motivation and self-efficacy. The study also transformed the participants' perspective on grammar as essential to creating meaning that highly impacts communication and was not just an academic activity. Lastly, concept-based

instruction pedagogical materials were found to be effective when teaching the L2 tense and aspect system through the lens of the L1 system.

## Acknowledgments

A dissertation is a tremendous group effort that is brought to a successful close by will, determination, desire for knowledge, and the expertise of the individuals that guided you along the way. I would like to first thank my committee, beginning with my chair, Lisa Bendixen, my former chair, and beloved professor Steven McCafferty, Tiberio Garza for his contributions while at UNLV, Vanessa Vongkulluksn for being so gracious in taking Dr. Garza's place, and Tracy Spies who helped guide me right from the beginning when I was thinking about getting a Ph.D. over eight years ago. I feel like I have grown immensely from this project, and my growth is specifically owed to my committee members and professors for being so patient, kind, and helpful along the way. This Ph.D. has humbled me in so many ways and opened my mind to life-long learning. It has exposed my weaknesses and strengths and motivated me to improve where I am weak and further develop where I am strong,

I have had lots of friends and family cheering for me along the way. I want to thank my father for instilling a strong will and worth ethic in me to never give up no matter what the circumstances are. I want to thank my mother Sandy for always believing in me, even when others did not. She is the reason for my level head and humble approach to life. She has taught me so much about friendship and kindness and being able to see things from the perspective of others. I am forever in their debt. To all my friends Mike Trippiedi, Adam Trippiedi, Chris Trippiedi, Mike Tomasello, Kevin Payne who helped me when I was down and out, you are the reason why I am in the position I am in today and a major part of the reason I became the man I am now. To my soulmate and love of my life Daniela, you stuck with me through thick and thin. When rough times came upon me, you never left my side, and you loved me even more when I was in my darkest hours. You are an amazing person and I feel so lucky to say you will be my

wife. I cannot imagine spending my life without you. To Alan Hartman and DJ Higgins, my two Italian-American brothers that gave me a chance to start my career in higher education. I would never have gotten this far without those initial opportunities and your loving support. To all my professors at Middlebury College that inspired me and all the staff in Florence, Italy, thank you for your support and guidance which led me to where I am now.

## **Dedication**

My dissertation is dedicated to my mother and father who made me the person I am today. I made a promise to my father before he passed that I would finish my dissertation and be committed to lifelong learning, long after my dissertation is complete. This is a step in that direction. My father gave me endless wisdom about life and is someone I consider having a doctorate his own right. To my mother who supported me through all the tough times and believed in me when nobody else did. You were both always by my side and gave me every opportunity to succeed in life. I am forever grateful for the privilege of being able to call you my parents.

I would like to dedicate this dissertation as well to my future wife Daniela who stood by my side every step of the way. No matter how hard the circumstances got she was there to support me and has waited so patiently these last four years that we have been together for the day when I could say “I did it.” Without her love and support, this project would have been infinitely more difficult, and I am forever grateful to have her in my life.



## Table of Contents

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Abstract.....                                       | iii |
| Acknowledgments .....                               | v   |
| Dedication.....                                     | vii |
| List of Figures.....                                | xiv |
| Chapter One.....                                    | 1   |
| Theoretical Framework.....                          | 2   |
| Sociocultural Theory .....                          | 2   |
| Zone of Proximal Development .....                  | 3   |
| Mediated Learning Experience.....                   | 3   |
| Dynamic Assessment.....                             | 5   |
| Internalization.....                                | 5   |
| STI and Adult L2 Development in the Classroom ..... | 7   |
| The Dissertation Study .....                        | 9   |
| Study Purpose and Research Questions.....           | 9   |
| Methods .....                                       | 10  |
| Dissertation Organization.....                      | 11  |
| Chapter Two .....                                   | 12  |
| Literature Review .....                             | 12  |
| Sociocultural Theory .....                          | 12  |
| Zone of Proximal Development .....                  | 13  |
| Internalization.....                                | 21  |
| Dynamic Assessment.....                             | 25  |
| Mediated Learning Experience.....                   | 28  |
| Systemic Theoretical Instruction .....              | 31  |
| The Role of the L1 in Inner Speech.....             | 37  |
| Chapter Three .....                                 | 39  |
| Methodology.....                                    | 39  |
| Purpose of the Study.....                           | 39  |
| Research Questions.....                             | 40  |
| Qualitative Research Design .....                   | 40  |
| Recruitment Procedures.....                         | 41  |
| Qualitative Data.....                               | 41  |
| Participants .....                                  | 41  |
| Data Collection.....                                | 42  |
| Data Analysis.....                                  | 46  |
| Role of the Researcher.....                         | 47  |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Ethical Considerations .....                    | 48  |
| Validity & Reliability .....                    | 49  |
| Summary.....                                    | 49  |
| Chapter Four .....                              | 51  |
| Study Findings .....                            | 51  |
| Data Coding.....                                | 52  |
| Preliminary Interview Results .....             | 54  |
| Profile .....                                   | 54  |
| Italian Language Personal Goals .....           | 56  |
| Successful Language Learning.....               | 57  |
| Italian Proficiency.....                        | 59  |
| Classroom Instruction.....                      | 60  |
| English Language Awareness.....                 | 62  |
| Sentence Analysis.....                          | 66  |
| Cognitive Linguistic Terminology .....          | 69  |
| Group Study Sessions Findings.....              | 73  |
| Meeting One .....                               | 74  |
| Linguistic Terminology.....                     | 74  |
| Tense Diagrams.....                             | 76  |
| English Language Awareness.....                 | 77  |
| Assignment Results.....                         | 80  |
| Meeting Two.....                                | 81  |
| Italian Tense and Aspect.....                   | 90  |
| Meeting Three.....                              | 93  |
| Final Meeting.....                              | 113 |
| Italian Tense and Aspect Diagrams.....          | 128 |
| Italian Present Tense Diagram.....              | 137 |
| Italian Diagrams Review.....                    | 140 |
| Post-Study Assessment.....                      | 142 |
| Jayden Exit Interview.....                      | 143 |
| Language Ability.....                           | 143 |
| Diagram Evaluation.....                         | 143 |
| Italian Usage.....                              | 144 |
| Italian Study.....                              | 144 |
| Present vs. Presente.....                       | 144 |
| Present Perfect in Italian.....                 | 145 |
| Italian Speaking Confidence.....                | 146 |
| Top Benefit of the Study.....                   | 146 |
| Study Benefits vs. Old Teaching Techniques..... | 147 |
| English Language Awareness.....                 | 147 |
| Attitude Toward Grammar.....                    | 147 |
| Motivation.....                                 | 148 |
| Biggest Challenges.....                         | 148 |
| Successful Language Learning.....               | 148 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Post-study Assessment. ....                      | 148 |
| Kimberly Exit Interview. ....                    | 152 |
| Language Ability. ....                           | 152 |
| Diagram Evaluation. ....                         | 152 |
| Italian Usage. ....                              | 153 |
| Italian Study. ....                              | 153 |
| Present vs. Presente. ....                       | 153 |
| Present Perfect in Italian. ....                 | 154 |
| Italian Speaking Confidence. ....                | 155 |
| Top Benefit of the Study. ....                   | 155 |
| Study Benefits vs. Old Teaching Techniques. .... | 156 |
| English Language Awareness. ....                 | 156 |
| Successful Language Learning. ....               | 157 |
| Attitude Toward Grammar. ....                    | 158 |
| Motivation. ....                                 | 158 |
| Biggest Challenges. ....                         | 158 |
| Post-study Assessment. ....                      | 159 |
| Emilia Exit Interview. ....                      | 163 |
| Language Ability. ....                           | 163 |
| Diagram Evaluation. ....                         | 163 |
| Italian Usage. ....                              | 163 |
| Present vs. Presente. ....                       | 164 |
| Present Perfect in Italian. ....                 | 164 |
| Italian Speaking Confidence. ....                | 164 |
| Top Benefit of the Study. ....                   | 165 |
| Study Benefits vs. Old Teaching Techniques. .... | 165 |
| English Language Awareness. ....                 | 165 |
| Successful Language Learning. ....               | 166 |
| Attitude Toward Grammar. ....                    | 166 |
| Motivation. ....                                 | 167 |
| Biggest Challenges. ....                         | 167 |
| Post-study Assessment. ....                      | 168 |
| Gary Exit interview. ....                        | 170 |
| Language Ability. ....                           | 170 |
| Diagram Evaluation. ....                         | 171 |
| Italian Usage. ....                              | 171 |
| Present vs. Presente. ....                       | 172 |
| Present Perfect in Italian. ....                 | 172 |
| Italian Speaking Confidence. ....                | 173 |
| Top Benefit of the Study. ....                   | 174 |
| Study Benefits vs. Old Teaching Techniques. .... | 174 |
| English Language Awareness. ....                 | 174 |
| Successful Language Learning. ....               | 175 |
| Attitude Toward Grammar. ....                    | 175 |
| Motivation. ....                                 | 175 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Biggest Challenges. ....                         | 176 |
| Post-study Assessment. ....                      | 176 |
| Charlotte Exit Interview. ....                   | 180 |
| Language Ability. ....                           | 180 |
| Diagram Evaluation. ....                         | 180 |
| Italian Usage. ....                              | 180 |
| Italian Study. ....                              | 181 |
| Present vs. Presente. ....                       | 181 |
| Present Perfect in Italian. ....                 | 181 |
| Italian Speaking Confidence. ....                | 182 |
| Top Benefit of the Study. ....                   | 183 |
| Study Benefits vs. Old Teaching Techniques. .... | 183 |
| English Language Awareness. ....                 | 183 |
| Successful Language Learning. ....               | 184 |
| Attitude Toward Grammar. ....                    | 184 |
| Motivation. ....                                 | 185 |
| Biggest Challenges. ....                         | 186 |
| Post-study Assessment. ....                      | 186 |
| Lydia Exit Interview. ....                       | 189 |
| Language Ability. ....                           | 189 |
| Diagram Evaluation. ....                         | 189 |
| Italian Usage. ....                              | 189 |
| Present vs. Presente. ....                       | 190 |
| Italian Speaking Confidence. ....                | 191 |
| Top Benefit of the Study. ....                   | 191 |
| Study Benefits vs. Old Teaching Techniques. .... | 192 |
| English Language Awareness. ....                 | 192 |
| Successful Language Learning. ....               | 193 |
| Attitude Toward Grammar. ....                    | 193 |
| Motivation. ....                                 | 193 |
| Biggest Challenges. ....                         | 194 |
| Post-study Assessment. ....                      | 194 |
| Donna Exit Interview. ....                       | 198 |
| Language Ability. ....                           | 198 |
| Diagram Evaluation. ....                         | 199 |
| Italian Usage. ....                              | 199 |
| Present vs. Presente. ....                       | 200 |
| Italian Speaking Confidence. ....                | 201 |
| Top Benefit of the Study. ....                   | 202 |
| Study Benefits vs. Old Teaching Techniques. .... | 203 |
| English Language Awareness. ....                 | 204 |
| Successful Language Learning. ....               | 204 |
| Attitude Toward Grammar. ....                    | 205 |
| Biggest Challenges. ....                         | 205 |
| Motivation. ....                                 | 206 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Biggest Challenges. ....                        | 206 |
| Post-study Assessment. ....                     | 206 |
| Mary Exit Interview.....                        | 210 |
| Language Ability. ....                          | 210 |
| Diagram Evaluation. ....                        | 210 |
| Italian Study.....                              | 210 |
| Present vs. Presente. ....                      | 211 |
| Present Perfect in Italian.....                 | 212 |
| Italian Speaking Confidence.....                | 213 |
| Top Benefit of the Study. ....                  | 213 |
| Study Benefits vs. Old Teaching Techniques..... | 214 |
| English Language Awareness.....                 | 214 |
| Successful Language Learning.....               | 214 |
| Attitude Toward Grammar. ....                   | 214 |
| Motivation. ....                                | 214 |
| Biggest Challenges. ....                        | 215 |
| Post-study Assessment. ....                     | 215 |
| Davide Exit Interview.....                      | 219 |
| Language Ability. ....                          | 219 |
| Diagram Evaluation.....                         | 220 |
| Italian Usage.....                              | 220 |
| Present vs. Presente. ....                      | 221 |
| Present Perfect in Italian.....                 | 221 |
| Italian Speaking Confidence.....                | 224 |
| Top Benefit of the Study. ....                  | 224 |
| Study Benefits vs. Old Teaching Techniques..... | 225 |
| English Language Awareness.....                 | 225 |
| Successful Language Learning.....               | 226 |
| Attitude Toward Grammar. ....                   | 227 |
| Motivation. ....                                | 228 |
| Biggest Challenges. ....                        | 229 |
| Post-study Assessment. ....                     | 229 |
| Chapter Five .....                              | 234 |
| Discussion.....                                 | 234 |
| Overarching Themes.....                         | 243 |
| Preliminary interview .....                     | 245 |
| Group Study Sessions.....                       | 247 |
| Post-study Exit Interview .....                 | 249 |
| Limitations.....                                | 250 |
| Theoretical Implications .....                  | 252 |
| Zone of Proximal Development .....              | 252 |
| SCOPA & Internalization .....                   | 253 |
| Mediated Learning Experience.....               | 255 |
| Inner speech.....                               | 257 |

|                                   |     |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Practical Implications .....      | 258 |
| Methodological Implications ..... | 260 |
| Future Research .....             | 261 |
| Review of findings.....           | 261 |
| Appendix A.....                   | 264 |
| Appendix B.....                   | 265 |
| Appendix C.....                   | 266 |
| Appendix D.....                   | 267 |
| Appendix E.....                   | 268 |
| Appendix F .....                  | 269 |
| Appendix G.....                   | 270 |
| Appendix H.....                   | 271 |
| Appendix I.....                   | 272 |
| Appendix J.....                   | 273 |
| Appendix K.....                   | 274 |
| Appendix L.....                   | 275 |
| Appendix M.....                   | 276 |
| Appendix N.....                   | 277 |
| Appendix O.....                   | 278 |
| Appendix P .....                  | 279 |
| Appendix Q.....                   | 280 |
| Appendix R.....                   | 281 |
| Appendix S .....                  | 282 |
| References .....                  | 283 |
| Curriculum Vitae .....            | 290 |

## List of Figures

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Figure 1: Progressive & Gerund .....               | 94  |
| Figure 2: Materializing Activity .....             | 95  |
| Figure 3: Materializing Activity .....             | 96  |
| Figure 4: Materializing Activity .....             | 97  |
| Figure 5: Materializing Activity Jayden .....      | 98  |
| Figure 6: Materializing Activity Davide.....       | 98  |
| Figure 7: Italian Tense & Aspect Diagram .....     | 100 |
| Figure 8: Italian Tense & Aspect Diagram .....     | 101 |
| Figure 9: Visual Diagram Activity .....            | 102 |
| Figure 10: Visual Diagram Activity .....           | 104 |
| Figure 11: Gerund Explanation.....                 | 106 |
| Figure 12: Visual Diagram Activity .....           | 108 |
| Figure 13: Present Perfect & Italian Meaning ..... | 111 |
| Figure 14: Italian Preposition DA.....             | 113 |
| Figure 15: Participant Activity.....               | 114 |
| Figure 16: Participant Activity.....               | 118 |
| Figure 17: Italian Tense & Aspect Diagram .....    | 119 |
| Figure 18: Participant Response .....              | 121 |
| Figure 19: Participant Response .....              | 121 |
| Figure 20: Participant Response .....              | 122 |
| Figure 21: Italian Tense & Aspect Diagram .....    | 123 |
| Figure 22: Italian Tense & Aspect Diagram .....    | 124 |
| Figure 23: Participant Response .....              | 126 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Figure 24: Participant Response .....               | 127 |
| Figure 25: Participant Response .....               | 128 |
| Figure 26: Visual Diagram Activity .....            | 130 |
| Figure 27: Visual Diagram Activity .....            | 130 |
| Figure 28: Visual Diagram Activity .....            | 131 |
| Figure 29: Visual Diagram Activity .....            | 132 |
| Figure 30: Visual Diagram Activity .....            | 133 |
| Figure 31: Visual Diagram Activity .....            | 134 |
| Figure 32: Visual Diagram Activity .....            | 135 |
| Figure 33: Visual Diagram Activity .....            | 136 |
| Figure 34: Visual Diagram Activity .....            | 137 |
| Figure 35: Visual Diagram Activity .....            | 138 |
| Figure 36: Visual Diagram Activity .....            | 138 |
| Figure 37: Visual Diagram Activity .....            | 139 |
| Figure 38: Visual Diagram Activity .....            | 140 |
| Figure 39: Participant Present Perfect Diagram..... | 146 |
| Figure 40: Jayden Post-test Exit Interview .....    | 150 |
| Figure 41: Participant Present Perfect Diagram..... | 155 |
| Figure 42: Kimberly Post-test Exit Interview.....   | 160 |
| Figure 43: Emilia Post-test Exit Interview.....     | 169 |
| Figure 44: Participant Present Perfect Diagram..... | 173 |
| Figure 45: Gary Post-test Exit Interview .....      | 178 |
| Figure 46: Participant Present Perfect Diagram..... | 182 |



|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Figure 47: Charlotte Post-test Exit Interview ..... | 188 |
| Figure 48: Participant Present Perfect Diagram..... | 191 |
| Figure 49: Lydia Post-test Exit Interview.....      | 196 |
| Figure 50: Participant Present Perfect Diagram..... | 201 |
| Figure 51: Donna Post-test Exit Interview.....      | 207 |
| Figure 52: Participant Present Perfect Diagram..... | 212 |
| Figure 53: Mary Post-test Exit Interview.....       | 217 |
| Figure 54: Davide Post-test Exit Interview.....     | 223 |
| Figure 55: Davide Post-test Exit Interview.....     | 230 |

## Chapter One

Using grammar rules has been the general practice to teach second languages in university classrooms for decades (Negueruela, 2003). This approach does not teach language learners how to think in their second language (L2) but conditions them towards a mechanic-like acquisition. Producing independent language learners who can use the language spontaneously is the ultimate goal in L2 instruction (Danesi, 2015). Also, instructors typically expect novices to assimilate L2 concepts through mere repetition and exposure to the target language to communicate and mediate their thinking (Macaro, 2009). While this is how children learn their first language (L1), adults already possess a culturally-based conceptual framework to mediate their thinking (Danesi, 2015). Taken together, effective language development results not only from practice but also from the acquisition of its respective conceptual system. One aspect of that conceptual system is how events across time are interrelated grammatically, which differs to one degree or another across all languages despite perceived similarities. Danesi (2015) illustrates the importance of learning an L2 conceptual system to avoid errors caused by mental calquing, which he defines as the production of words and phrases in the L2 with meanings reflective of the L1 conceptual structure.

This perspective foregrounds the current investigation into conceptual differences that exist across languages, the role culture plays in language development, and the L2 pedagogical approaches and tools that enhance teaching an L2 conceptual framework. This study is meant to further our understanding of L2 teaching and language development from the point of view that grammar is conceptually integrated with culture. The focus will be on undergraduate American native speakers of English learning to speak Italian in Italy as part of their semester studying abroad. A sociocultural theoretical lens is adopted to highlight meaning-making in the L2 instead

of the rote memorization of grammar rules. This chapter will begin with an overview of sociocultural theory which will lead to an outline of the research questions and methodology proposed for the study.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### ***Sociocultural Theory***

L.S. Vygotsky is a prominent developmental psychologist whose work informed Sociocultural Theory (SCT). Vygotsky's work centers on the role of culture and mediation in child development. Vygotsky's work suggests that mental processes can be understood only if we understand the tools and signs that mediate them (Wertsch, 2009). Vygotsky sought to demonstrate that while biological development plays a fundamental role in psychological development, human society (e.g., cultural-historical influences) plays an equally significant role, the two operating together to form a dialectical approach to development. As human beings mature, Vygotsky believed that human consciousness derives from the presence of others, and that society heavily influences intellectual, emotional, and personal development, which language ultimately reflects. Similarly, as L2 adult learners mature, their cultural awareness of L2 usage develops, depending on their contexts of exposure. For example, novice L2 learners of Italian with an American English L1 typically incorrectly opt for the preposition *su*, which means "on", to express *I am talking on the phone*, but in Italian, this grammatical relationship is expressed differently. Using *su* would indicate that someone is standing on the phone and talking, but not with another person, the preposition instead signaling the direction of speech. An instructor who understands the L1 cultural perspective of the learners can inform instruction to guide L2 learners to contrast their L2 thinking to form a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to enable L2 learning and development.

### ***Zone of Proximal Development***

One of Vygotsky's most recognized contributions to teaching/learning is the Zone of Proximal Development. The ZPD illustrates how intellectual development can take place through interaction with others, with an explicit focus on formal education (Kozulin, 2018). The ZPD demonstrates that learning is led by development in contrast to Jean Piaget's work that depicts learning as biologically dependent on stages of maturation. Vygotsky's ZPD measures what a child can do with the guidance of an experienced adult. It reveals that some children are close to the next level of development while others are not, despite having the same score on a standardized assessment instrument (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 85-86). Use of the ZPD surfaced in L2 developmental research roughly forty years ago. The ZPD is well suited for language assessment because it can help guide the instructors to concentrate their efforts on aspects of the target language that are not yet mastered and determine if students are ready to progress, modifying instruction based on learner needs. For example, correct answers on a fill-in-the-blank verb conjugation exercise may signal that learning is occurring, but it does not imply a student's ability to conjugate verbs appropriately under naturalistic circumstances. However, the ZPD provides a tool to investigate learning beyond surface-level rules of thumb with development as the focus rather than correct answers. Reuven Feuerstein developed a similar complementary approach called Mediated Learning Experience.

### ***Mediated Learning Experience***

Both Feuerstein and Vygotsky challenged conventional views on teaching and assessment as isolated foci, arguing instead for their integration (Poehner, 2008, p. 5). Mediated Learning Experience (MLE), in many ways, parallels Vygotsky's vision of assessment as related to his work on the ZPD. As true for Vygotsky, Feuerstein (2010) does not deny the role of

genetics in development but does believe it has supremacy over other aspects of development. Feuerstein (2010) supports brain malleability in later stages in life and suggests that the development observable from proper instruction negates the notion of an innate, unmodifiable, predetermined ability. Hence, conceptual systems in language can be taught to adult learners and existing conceptual systems can be modified with the help of a researcher (e.g., language instructor). Also comparable to Vygotsky, Feuerstein (2010) points out that learning occurs from one's immediate environment as well as a researcher who imparts knowledge and experience to make sense of those surroundings. Feuerstein furthered this stream of thought, developing a model with specific parameters. Specifically, Feuerstein (2010, p. 40) identified "three essential characteristics that transform an interaction into MLE: *intentionality and reciprocity, transcendence, and the mediation of meaning*".

The researcher, through intentionality and reciprocity, forms a dialectic to bring specific stimuli into focus to the learner. As the interaction is happening, the researcher will adjust his behavior based on the learner's reactions to stimuli. Once reciprocity has been established, transcendence would follow, where the learner can act based on the original interaction with the researcher in different contexts, long after initial instruction, and use newly acquired skills spontaneously. This type of interaction serves language development as language production and understanding are the ultimate goals. Lastly, the researcher must express why lesson content is important, and the reason why students should engage with it (i.e., mediated learning). The learner needs to understand the importance of the content not only as relevant to immediate needs but also for future ones to keep motivation high. It is not common knowledge that conceptually linguistic systems differ, but without this realization, mediation of meaning would be obstructed. Adhering to Feuerstein's (2010) claim that learners must see the utility of

acquiring knowledge, if L2 learning is approached through rote memorization, then learners could view learning a second language as nothing more than direct translations from the L1 into the L2, which may result in questioning the usefulness of language instruction. Taken together, Feuerstein's MLE and Vygotsky's ZPD provide the theoretical underpinnings for the current SCT approach to assessing student capabilities, known as Dynamic Assessment (DA).

### ***Dynamic Assessment***

According to Feuerstein (2010), DA shows how to develop a ZPD through several steps. The initial phase is a pre-test to guide instruction. For example, the current study will assess American students' knowledge in tense and aspect in English before language teaching to establish a ZPD for individual students and class regarding the conceptual ideas that will be examined in the study, accomplished using pedagogical materials developed by Infante (2016, p. 330). Feuerstein (2010) specifies the need to mediate learners, but particularly with interventions tailored to learners' needs. Those needs need to be determined to inform instruction. Static assessment (e.g., multiple-choice, fill in the blank, true or false questions) does not directly serve instructional purposes, whereas DA unifies assessment and instruction (Feuerstein, 2010, p. 91). Instead of being a product, assessment becomes a process in continuous development. By examining the development of the L2 conceptual systems as they take place, DA allows teachers the ability to help students at the conceptual level before they internalize misunderstandings so that they do not become part of learners' L2 consciousness.

### ***Internalization***

Vygotsky believed that child development occurs in great part through interaction with the social world (the external plane) with adult guidance. Vygotsky considered semiotically mediated social processes as key to understanding the emergence of internal functioning

(Wertsch, 2009, p. 62). As the child develops, interactions with the environment directly and through adult mediation become the basis for abstract thought - which Vygotsky referred to as *higher mental functions*. An important aspect of Vygotsky's concept of internalization is met in development when higher-level mental functions become a means of self-control for the child to act intentionally (Miller, 2011). Extending Vygotsky's concept of internalization, P. Ya. Gal'Perin developed his theory of Systemic Theoretical Instruction (STI) concerning the internalization of abstract concepts, which he argued, concerning education, should be presented to students as a "scheme of complete orienting basis of action" (SCOBA; Gal'Perin, 1967). The pedagogical tools provided by STI facilitate the materialization of higher mental concepts to initiate the process of internalization (Infante, 2016, p. 330).

Foundational to SCT L2 research, mediation to support internalization can take both symbolic (STI pedagogical tools) and dialogical (DA plus ZPD) forms (Infante, 2016, p. 3). Building on the concepts of the ZPD, DA, and STI, Infante (2016, p.6) further included research on MLE "to offer a coherent approach to the instruction of English tense and aspect to adolescent and adult" English language learners, which he called Mediated Development (MD). Infante and Poehner (2016) defined MD as a dialectical interactional framework where:

The goal is not to assess emerging capabilities, as discussed previously with L2 DA interactionist research, but instead to guide learner understanding and use of concept-based symbolic tools for thinking through language-related problems. (p. 1)

This approach to instruction centers on L2 learner abilities to create meaning as opposed to diagnosing learners' ability to produce correct answers. However, mediation of L2 concepts at the beginner level requires deep understanding as they are in the process of learning how to construct meaning in the new language, making it unlikely that they would only rely on their understanding of the STI tools but also use knowledge of the L1 as well (Negueruela, 2005).

### ***STI and Adult L2 Development in the Classroom***

Vygotskian theory has provided the framework for several studies that advanced concept-based learning in the language classroom. However, despite researcher attempts to utilize Gal'Perin's and Vygotsky's theories of concept formation in L2 instruction, the extensive integration of this pedagogical approach was not seen before the dissertation of Eduardo Negueruela in 2003 (Garcia, 2018, p. 184). Negueruela (2003) used Concept-Based Instruction (CBI) to promote the understanding of complex L2 grammatical concepts such as tense, aspect, and mood in L2 Spanish while targeting the elimination of grammar rules, generalizations, which are typically part of foreign language teaching.

SCT studies have built upon Negueruela's work in supporting the efficacy of the CBI approach. Lantolf and Poehner (2010) demonstrated how DA can be applied in the classroom through immediate, graded feedback, supporting the ZPD-based contention that even students who produce the same number of correct results on assessments can be at dissimilar stages of development. Lantolf and Poehner (2010) concluded their study results signaling the importance of conceptualizing teaching and assessment as an integrated activity that need not be followed in a prescribed manner. Furthermore, the results indicate that DA underscores the need to reconceptualize the relationship between teaching, assessment, and development in the immediate instructional context (Lantolf & Poehner, 2010). Also, Van Compernelle (2014) examined the instruction of L2 pragmatics from an SCT perspective, establishing a framework for how instruction can lead development in this area in terms of materials design and teaching practices (p. 1). Taken together, these studies led Infante (2015, p. 229) to explore the use and perception of psychological means (i.e., materials design) and the dialogic processes learners undergo for reconceptualizing materials as resources for thinking, a consideration which Infante



states had gone largely unexplored. Infante (2015) bridges the gap between STI and DA in the L2 classroom by establishing a cohesive teaching approach that utilizes both concepts jointly.

While these previous studies lend insight into their respective areas of SCT, the role of the L1 in L2 development has been considered unnecessary to determine or ignored. However, Van Compernelle (2015, p. 91) states that denying learners access to their L1 denies them access to their most fundamental psychological researcher and consequently can be detrimental to their L2 development. STI involves the learning and internalization of abstract concepts, a process that requires learners to mediate their thinking. In advanced stages of L2 development, learners can learn to mediate their thinking to be in line with that of the L2, but usually, this comes after years of extensive practice and immersion in the target language (Centeno-Cortés & Jiménez, 2004), which is experience beginning-level language students have not yet acquired. Usage-based examination of L2 proficiency is important, but DA shows that simply providing the correct answers on a grammar test, for example, does not signify that learners have command of L2 conceptual frameworks (Lantolf & Poehner, 2010). Moreover, most native speakers are not conscious of their L1 conceptual system, or their L1 grammar, because it is no longer declarative knowledge and reached the stage of automaticity (Miller, 2011). However, this does not mean L1 speakers cannot re-access L1 grammar knowledge with strategic help from an instructor. By doing so, it leaves open the possibility that L1 conceptual knowledge can provide a foundation for understanding the L2, which could (a) result in more accurate usage of the L2, (b) require less focus on error correction, and (c) lead to more student practice than teaching as helping to facilitate L2 development.

Furthermore, for STI to be effective, concepts should be taught in a connected manner (Negueruela, 2005, p. 81). When learning a L2, tenses are often spread out over different

chapters in many textbooks used in foreign language teaching at the college level. This approach is considered disjointed from an STI perspective and squanders valuable opportunities for learners to make stronger connections to the material through examining how different tenses are used and in which ways they relate to one another, or authentic use of the language. Therefore, it would follow that teaching the L2 tense-aspect system more linearly so learners can visualize how events are situated in time is of great importance. Vygotsky argued that language is our most powerful psychological tool in mediating our thinking processes with respect to learning and development. To provide a deeper conceptual understanding of the L2 for beginning undergraduate students, this study focused on the effects and sequencing of strategic L1 incorporation into L2 teaching.

## **The Dissertation Study**

### ***Study Purpose and Research Questions***

The current study attempted to further develop the implementation of STI, shifting instructional focus from teaching grammar rules in the L2 classroom to centering student awareness of/on meaning-making through the use of their L1. Specifically, a focus will be placed on the development of concepts associated with the L2 conceptual structure through the strategic use of the L1 to internalize the SCOBA (cultural symbolic tools) utilized in the study to facilitate the learning of the Italian tense and aspect system (Infante, 2016, p. 330).

Previous research on the teaching of tense and aspect from an STI perspective to beginning university-level students learning a foreign language has not explored: a) introducing students first to how the L1 conceptualizes relations in time for tense and aspect, and b) teaching tense and aspect in a specific sequence (below). The current study took an exploratory qualitative approach, exploring student reactions to both innovations.

## Research Questions:

- 1) How does focusing explicitly on tense and aspect in the L1 as framed within the STI approach facilitate comprehension and production of tense and aspect in the L2 for undergraduate US English native speakers who are beginning-level learners of Italian?
- 2) How does teaching L2 tense and aspect in the specific sequence of past perfect (*trapassato prossimo*), past (*passato prossimo*), present (*presente*), present perfect (i.e., how it is expressed in Italian), and the gerund (*il gerundio*) as framed within the STI approach facilitate comprehension and production of the L2 for undergraduate American beginning level university students learning Italian?

## ***Methods***

Participants were American university first-year students who spent no more than one semester studying Italian ahead of participating in the study. The study was conducted over six weeks using interviews, questionnaires and surveys, live intervention sessions, and video recordings of those live sessions to collect data. Assessments during the live group sessions, along with pre-study and post-study exams, monitored development and informed instruction during the interventions. Questionnaires and surveys provided insight into learners' knowledge of tense-aspect in US English as well as in Italian. This data was utilized to develop a ZPD to focus on areas where conceptual change was needed during the live recorded sessions. Video recordings of the interventions were cross-referenced with the surveys and questionnaires for a more complete understanding of the development of conceptual knowledge as visual cues added further detail to track development as it happened (microgenesis) with the surveys and questionnaires representing specific moments during the study. Pre- and post-exams assessed

learner conceptual knowledge as it developed in Italian to reveal the depth of knowledge and linkages in successful language problem solving in Italian to determine progress.

### ***Dissertation Organization***

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Chapter One, the introduction, provides an overview of the pertinent research to present the problem, purpose, questions, and the organization of the dissertation. Chapter Two presents theoretical frameworks and offers reviews of ZPD, MLE, DA, internalization, and STI and considers how these various components contribute to learning an L2 conceptual system. Chapter Three provides the methodology for the study, which includes the rationale for an exploratory qualitative research design and discusses the process of participant selection, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter Four presents the findings on preliminary interviews and the participants' level of English language awareness and their ability to utilize linguistic terminology to describe language; changes in the L2 conceptual system and the utility of the L1 in this process; teaching an L2 conceptual system with the L1 as a cognitive resource to promote learner use of tense and aspect in Italian in spontaneous and unstructured contexts over time. Chapter Five discusses how successful the sessions were in promoting the conceptualization of the Italian tense and aspect system, what changes in the participants' view of themselves as English speakers occurred, and if their ability to conduct an analysis of tense and aspect through visualization has changed, as well as the conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future research.

## Chapter Two Literature Review

### Sociocultural Theory

Mediation is one of the main focal points of SCT and can be viewed from many different perspectives; it can take place not only between objects and people but between concepts (Kozulin, 2018). SCT perceives mediation in its psychological sense to explain human mental functioning and its relationship with external stimuli. Vygotsky introduced lower and higher-level mental functions to account for when external stimuli (i.e., physical plane) are necessary to aid development and when they are no longer required (i.e., psychological plane). Vygotsky called to attention how humans and primates differ when problem-solving; showed how our consciousness of the world is highly contextualized based on cultural artifacts; and how children develop ontogenetically through mediation with adults who assist them in appropriating historical cultural artifacts to develop abstract thinking (i.e., higher-level mental functions). Regarding second language acquisition, Vygotsky underscores how learning a second language differs from how one learned the first. The main difference is because a second language learner already has developed higher-level mental functions based on their L1. Therefore, adult fluent speech in the L2 develops at later stages of acquisition, whereas the opposite is true for the L1. Learning L1 semantics is not the only challenge as entire new systems must be acquired that typically function differently from the L1 in one way or another.

Poehner and Infante (2015) use this conceptual approach to teach the English tense-aspect system. Kozulin (2018) indicates that Poehner and Infante (2015) used a process that resembled learning academic concepts. Kozulin (2018) also points out that spontaneous concepts (i.e., natural phenomena) often clash with academic concepts in a science classroom, which mirrors how spontaneous knowledge of language gained through L1 acquisition often does clash

with L2 language requirements. Kozulin (2018, p. 34) also cites Vygotsky's conclusion that studying a foreign language enhances children's understanding of their L1:

A foreign language facilitates mastering the higher forms of the native language. The child learns to see his language as one particular system among many, to view its phenomena under more general categories, and leads to awareness of his linguistic operations.

Tense and aspect are a higher form of grammar conceptualization that is brought into focus in the L1 as the L2 develops. As Kozulin (2018) indicates, “for Hebrew speakers, there is no intuitive way to understand ‘present perfect’ in English because Hebrew only has three simple tenses: past, present, and future”, which is also true in Italian. Furthermore, Vygotsky states that “a child’s strong points in a foreign language are his weak points in his native language and vice versa. In his language, the child conjugates and declines correctly, but without realizing it” (Kozulin, 2018, p. 33). This indicates that the L1 is procedural and consciousness of concepts is absent unless intentionally studied. However, some L2 learners are more aware of L1 grammar than others, but typically such knowledge is not assessed when students begin L2 study. Moreover, misconceptions and incorrect knowledge of the L1 can transfer to the L2 if not brought under examination. Not only would assuming that all speakers have mastered their L1 on a conceptual level be erroneous, but it would also fail to recognize how important knowledge of the L1 might be in mediating learning of a L2 from an SCT perspective (Van Compernelle, 2018).

### **Zone of Proximal Development**

Vygotsky believed that biological factors are not the single driving force in cognitive development and argued against such single-factor theories rife with biological reductionism and mechanistic behaviorism (Wertsch, 1997, p. 21). However, Vygotsky recognized the importance

of biological development at the early stages of life when lower-level mental functions form (i.e., natural/spontaneous knowledge) and that children rely primarily on the external environment and social interactions with adults as their principal means of self-mediation. Vygotsky argued that these natural processes at some point become high-level mental functions (i.e., abstract thinking), and when these natural functions become more cultural in nature, a major shift in how learners mediate their thinking happens. According to Wertsch (1997, p. 25), Vygotsky used three criteria to define a lower-level mental function. Vygotsky stated that these lower-level functions saw a shift of control from the environment to the individual; the emergence of conscious realization of mental processes, social origins, and social nature of higher-mental functions; and the use of signs to mediate higher-mental functions. According to these criteria, Vygotsky separated what consciousness meant for primates and what it meant for humans. As a result, Vygotsky demonstrated that the distinction between humans and primates is the ability to think independently and act on their own volition without dependence on the external environment for stimuli (Wertsch, 1997, p. 27). External stimuli are the initial stimuli humans encounter as they develop. Over time, these stimuli begin to change, and mediation shifts from the physical to the psychological.

As the development process unfolds, interactions in the world become increasingly more social in nature. Vygotsky emphasized social interactions as underlying all higher-level functions in humans (Wertsch, 1997, p. 60), which he designated as “intermental” functions. Vygotsky signals that as they develop, intermental functions lead the individual to be a stage closer to internalization when the interpsychological will become intrapsychological (i.e., mediation of self). According to Wertsch (1997, p. 49), Ginsburg’s (1982) explanation on the development of mathematical skills offers a good explanation of this transition. As noted earlier, the beginning

phases of development, natural functions, are heavily influenced by the environment, where skills emerge directly from the environment, and there is no influence of culture (i.e., mathematic skills used at the grocery store). As development continues and a sociocultural sign system is introduced, the process no longer qualifies as solely natural or belonging to lower-level mental functions (i.e., the number system in Ginsburg's case). For Vygotsky, the most important sociocultural sign system is language. Even though these skills have technically entered the realm of higher-level mental functions during childhood, they are still considered rudimentary in nature, and the ability to use this knowledge in different contexts has been instantiated only to a minimal degree. Lastly, Ginsburg introduces a final type of functioning that is formal and cultural in nature, because it is taught systematically in a school setting and uses a sociocultural sign system. Therefore, at this level of functioning, the individual learns to apply acquired information across contexts, signaling internalization. This theoretical framework can be applied to learn tense and aspect by using the L1 system to develop an understanding of the L2 system.

Vygotsky concentrated his efforts on understanding sociogenesis (i.e., cultural-historical development) in relation to higher mental functions (i.e., scientific concepts acquired during formal education), and established the foundational concepts of sign (i.e., words as cultural artifacts), mediation (i.e., dialectic nature of learning), and internalization (i.e., the purpose application of knowledge across different contexts). These concepts combined with the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and private speech (i.e., spoken language unintended for others to mediate problem-solving) and inner speech (inner-forms of language not vocalized) have formed the basis for the sociocultural theoretical approach to acquiring a second language (Veresov & Mok, 2018, p. 129). Vygotsky defined the ZPD “as the difference between what a person can achieve when acting alone and what the same person can accomplish when acting with support



from someone else and/or cultural artifacts” (Lantolf, 2000, p. 17). While Vygotsky was interested in understanding the processes of human development, he also hypothesized the role of what Russians call *perezhivane*, “lived experience”, but used this term in a technical sense (Vygotsky, 1994), defining it more narrowly as how an individual experiences an event (Zvershneva, 2016) and as a unit of emotional development. By not treating emotion and cognition as separate, Vygotsky sought to consider both as forming processes of development, which applies to second language learning, which includes the influence culture has on the different linguistic choices employed by different cultures to express a common idea, emotion, and so on. By understanding an individual’s social situation, one can understand the dialectical contradiction present for growth to occur (Veresov & Mok, 2018, p. 135). An example would be determining what learners know, or think they know, about language structure and use and how these conceptualizations differ from those in the target language to create a ZPD as informing subsequent instruction and aid development.

Accordingly, this study examined the effect of brining into focus the US English tense-aspect system to a native speaker and how conscious understanding of the present perfect tense facilitates the creation of the same meaning in the Italian tense-aspect system, which has no equivalent. The Italian tense-aspect system has a distinct difference between past, present, and future events, and no perfect tenses exist. Hence, the focus can be placed here on sense rather than meaning, which Vygotsky defined as “everything in consciousness which is related to what the word expresses” as linked to “the internal structure of personality” as argued by McCafferty (2018, p. 76). Hence, the real solution to this Italian/English linguistic problem might be to modify the learner’s conceptual system to assimilate a new way to create the sense of the US English present perfect using Italian lexicon and grammar. According to the underpinnings of

SCT, an assessment of current knowledge would establish a lower limit for a ZPD on which new knowledge can be constructed.

The ZPD was one of Lev Vygotsky's biggest contributions to education and has shown promising results in the L2 classroom (Infante & Poehner, 2019). Vygotsky believed in showing where abilities are (i.e., intrapsychological activity as a form of self-mediation) and what they can potentially be with the help of an expert (i.e., interpsychological activity as a form of mediation with others), an approach which has shown to effectively support second language development (Lantolf & Aljaafreh, 1994). According to ZPD principles, examining development in action (microgenesis) in addition to assessments (i.e., snapshots of development), can trace how development emerges. The idea of capturing the developmental processes informs instruction by revealing any disparities in conceptual development (Infante & Poehner, 2021). Vygotsky did not dismiss the utility of test results, but instead highlighted that the outcomes of such assessments only indicate the current state of development through intrapsychological development at the time of assessment and not, the inner workings of development, choosing to focus on the genesis of development in order to understand the process, not simply the outcome, in relation to pedagogy.

In the L2 classroom, considering only learner responses to language-related problems does not reveal their origins or microgenetic development. By examining microgenesis, conceptual errors reveal their origin in learner thinking (i.e., cultural artifacts). Vygotsky argued that two children relying on intrapsychological means for mediation could produce identical results but questioned if those children were at the same developmental level. Vygotsky demonstrated that students who produce identical outcomes on assessments can still differ in their levels of development. Without further probing by the instructor, instances of guessing the

answer would go unnoticed by the researcher and be viewed as a positive development. By requiring students to elaborate on their answers, it ensures the correct answer was chosen with sound reasoning; thus, revealing if learning occurred. Vygotsky states that two learners with identical scores on an independent activity appear equivalent, but they can be sharply different regarding their immediate potential development (Wertsch, 1997, p. 68). Consequently, two novice Italian learners can differ regarding their conceptual understanding of the Italian tense and aspect system yet produce identical answers. Cloze exercises are often utilized to verify L2 progress, but they do not reveal if learners can generalize what they learned from one linguistic context to other relevant ones (Lantolf & Aljaafreh, 1994). Therefore, it is necessary to focus on the conceptual underpinnings of learner responses to gauge whether the L2 conceptual system is understood correctly. The ZPD states this can be accomplished with the guidance of a teacher to build sound foundational knowledge that will be used at a more abstract/conceptual level across contexts by the learner.

According to Wertsch (1997, p. 71), Vygotsky stated that “instruction in the zone of proximal development calls to life in the child, awakens, and puts in motion an entire series of internal processes of development.” Vygotsky contended that instruction was only good when it was ahead of development so it can awaken numerous functions in maturation. Instruction is not development, but it sparks development to happen. Therefore, it is important to know where development stands in order to plan instruction appropriately. Instruction in its various forms is part of a child’s life from birth and is part of the social and not natural line of development that gives rise to higher-level functions. Vygotsky argues that “instruction would be completely unnecessary if it merely utilized what had already matured in the development process if it were not itself a source of development” Holzman (2018, p. 66). This highlights the importance of the

role the ZPD has in linking the interpsychological and intrapsychological given that learning and development are in a dialectic relationship. By using interpsychological (i.e., working with an expert) means to advance intrapsychological mediation (i.e., an independent language user), what was previously at the intrapsychological level of development can advance to further development stages as the process becomes reciprocal with new information being processed and the ZPD reassessed continuously to keep development progressing.

Before instruction can be implemented effectively, it is critical to establish a starting point to ascertain the ZPD limits. Vygotsky maintained that interaction with objects, the environment, and particularly other adults are what form an individual's early learning experiences before formal education begins (i.e., lower-level mental functions or spontaneous concepts). Lower-level mental functions (i.e., spontaneous concepts) are developed by interacting directly with the environment and are practical in nature but lack scientific reasoning. For example, children play in the snow and realize that ice will form when it gets cold enough outside, but they do not know why water turns to ice which leaves them incapable of giving an in-depth explanation of that phenomenon. Usually, it is through formal education that children begin to think abstractly and develop higher-level mental functions (i.e., scientific concepts). At the scientific level, learners understand how temperature affects water molecules, slows them down, and causes them to bind and form ice when temperatures fall below 32 degrees Fahrenheit. Once this information has become internalized, it can be used across different contexts spontaneously. Similarly, US English native speakers already have an existing conceptual system concerning the functions of language as associated with the L1, but knowledge of US English tense and aspect, when applied to Italian, would be incomplete and flawed given that the two tense-aspect systems differ. Hence, the L1 conceptual system (i.e., US

English) in a certain sense resembles spontaneous knowledge because of its incomplete and flawed nature when applied to the L2, which through formal study of the L2, would develop into abstract knowledge for reasoning in the L2 (i.e., Italian). Likewise, the L2 conceptual system would be viewed as scientific knowledge to study in a formal setting with L1 concepts taking on the role of spontaneous knowledge; a process mimicking the educational process young adults undergo as they transition from lower-level mental functions to abstract thinking.

Therefore, conceptual errors are likely the most common errors committed by second language learners (Danesi, 2015). Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) illustrates this point rather well. In US English, characteristics of war get mapped onto the abstract idea of an argument, and consequently, an argument can be metaphorically interpreted as a war (Lakoff, 2008). Like spontaneous knowledge, the properties of war (i.e., external stimuli) are initially understood in their general sense as language is acquired. As higher-level functions develop and the idea of war becomes internalized, the concept of war can now be used in other domains (i.e., argument). Therefore, phrases such as “defending an argument”, “destroying an argument”, or “attacking an argument” make conceptual sense given the language is properly situated (i.e., the social environment in which language is acquired). In cultures where an argument is not perceived in warlike terms, the above phrases would not be relevant.

Aside from differences in cultural perceptions, L2 instruction typically assumes that the quality of L1 conceptual knowledge of the L1 tense-aspect system is good, and instruction commences making no assessment of that. Therefore, where the instructor and students share a common language, instructors may take advantage of a valuable opportunity to establish solid base knowledge in how tense and aspect function conceptually at the initial stages of L2 acquisition. Building a proper ZPD involves understanding where learner development is in

order to advance it. By assessing L1 tense-aspect knowledge, the lower-end of the ZPD is constructed; and metalinguistic terms, typically forgotten by some native speakers, become an object of focus by learners to address the differences in the L1 and L2 tense-aspect systems to fully take advantage of the power of their native language as a cognitive tool for development. Metalanguage unfamiliar to novice L2 learners used to explain the L2 system may complicate the learning process due to language error transfer resulting from inconsistencies in understanding their L1. Thus, building on prior knowledge would potentially be done with gaps in learner knowledge of tense and aspect that may carry over when communicating in Italian. Adult language learners who have not intentionally studied their L1 are typically not aware of the reasons, or the metalanguage, for which they make linguistic choices because it is no longer declarative knowledge that is now procedural. In conclusion, this study proposes an assessment of the US English tense and aspect system, with particular focus on the present perfect, to properly form a ZPD as a point of departure for teaching its linguistic equivalent in Italian where the present perfect is non-existent. To illustrate the difficulty a native English speaker can face, the pedagogical materials and exercises developed by Infante (2016, p. 330), which were implemented with native speakers of English, demonstrated that even materials used to teach L2 learners linguistic concepts strongly suggested the level of L1 language awareness most learners have is incomplete, forgotten, or flawed.

### **Internalization**

Vygotsky believed the external environment of an individual can change them and maintained they can change their environment through the various semiotic tools at their disposal. He focused on language as a semiotic tool and viewed language as a direct reflection of thought that could reveal the inner workings of consciousness. Vygotsky's dilemma of mediation

started with questioning if there was some other mediating factor other than the external environment that would help explain human mental functioning (Kozulin, 2018, p. 43). His response to this dilemma is what Wertsch (1997, p. 17) referred to as Vygotsky's genetic method as "it is only in movement that a body shows what it is." Vygotsky argued against single-factor theories of development because they relied on biological reductionism and mechanistic behavior (Wertsch, 1997, p. 21). Essentially, these one-dimensional theories gave no credence to the individual as an agent in their development.

Kozulin (2018, p. 48) argued that the individual can acquire an external symbolic tool (i.e., language) which is transformed into an inner psychological tool used to reason and problem solve; and as a result, make changes to the psychological functions of an individual. At which point, these psychological functions are no longer tied to the external environment but are concepts like those acquired in formal education used for problem-solving. Vygotsky agreed with Piaget and behaviorists that biological development plays a role in the development of consciousness but is not the only factor. During the acquisition of lower-level mental functions, Vygotsky agreed the environment was the main factor in learner development, and the locus of control remained outside the individual. Kozulin (2018) states that "while natural functions may indeed develop through maturation and direct interaction with external stimuli, higher functions are developed via cultural mediation." While it was not specifically stated when the shift from lower-level to higher-level functions occurs, this was Vygotsky's explanation for how the locus of control passes from the external environment to the individual, a line of distinction named natural and cultural lines (i.e., lower-level and higher-level mental functions) (Wertsch, 1997, p. 42). As Wertsch (1997, p. 42) states, "natural development is explained primarily based on biological principles, whereas cultural development is attributed to principles that apply to

mediational means including the principle of decontextualization.” Decontextualization, fundamental to the internalization process, refers to the dismissal of the physical environment as a mediating tool and when concepts are applied across multiple contexts. Once an individual is conscious of their volition, the new context is now considered to have been socially constructed.

Given the socially constructed nature of higher-level mental functions, studying their social origins, genetically, becomes necessary because higher-level mental functions “have their origin in social processes” Wertsch (1997, p. 15). To study these interpsychological and intrapsychological processes, Vygotsky chose the word as his unit of analysis (Lantolf, 2000, p. 7). Vygotsky stated that trying to separate thought and speech would have the same consequences as trying to explain the components of water (H<sub>2</sub>O) by treating the hydrogen and oxygen elements separately (Lantolf, 2000). As such, while thinking and speech are different, they are heavily interrelated and should be examined as a dialectic to examine consciousness, which according to Vygotsky lies in the sense of the word (Lantolf, 2000, p. 7). Therefore, any foreign language will need to account for these cultural origins of thought. It would follow then that the Italian tense and aspect system would involve ways of thinking that differ from American English.

What heavily distinguishes lower-level from higher-level functions rests in the use of signs to mediate these functions (i.e., language use for problem-solving). Vygotsky indicates that the internal was first external and higher mental functions were once a social phenomenon before becoming an internal mental function forming the mental plane (Wertsch, 1997, p. 62-63). With the source of consciousness being external and anchored in social activity, higher forms of thinking are internalized by first using them socially Lantolf (2000, p. 13). Vygotsky’s theoretical core relies on a genetic or developmental method and mental processes are only truly



understood if the tools and signs that mediate them are understood, which in relation to learning is the process that DA captures (Wertsch, 1997, p. 15). In the case of this study, given that US English speakers already have developed higher-level mental functions, the approach to language learning reverses given they consciously acquire the L2, meaning L2 concepts are acquired before fluent speech (Negueruela, 2003).

Vygotsky never elaborated on the internalization process, which he believed to be highly individual and sensitive to phenomenal experience (Vygotsky, 1987). However, Galperin, a contemporary of Vygotsky's, extended Vygotsky's research by developing his Spiral Formation of Mental Actions, which has influenced sociocultural theory, particularly in relation to pedagogy, in the form of Concept-Based Instruction (i.e., operationalization). The process of forming intellectual actions was something Galperin considered to be possible if objective previous knowledge and ability are present, but he sought to clarify the conditions that need to be present in forming new intellectual actions. It was not through just general social interaction that could explain internalization, but the teaching of academic subjects that have a specific purpose, material, and methodological approach. In L2 teaching, the internalization process adopted to acquire new concepts focuses on scientific concepts as taught in the same manner as math, physics, etc. Like Vygotsky, Galperin first began his research by studying tool use between humans and animals, which he indicated is the greatest difference between other mammals and people, the latter who employ self-mediation, that is, humans can self-mediate, eventually, without utilizing the physical environment, but instead through language and other cultural tools and artifacts as mentally internalized. However, the goal of Galperin's research was to operationalize how human mental activity forms from the transformation of external activity. According to Arieviditch & Haenen (2005, p. 158), Galperin classified an action into three basic

levels of abstraction: the material, the verbal, and the mental; each of equal importance in learning and development as one builds off the other.

In dealing with material objects, Galperin refers to hands-on manipulation of physical objects and material representations of them that come in various forms such as models, pictures, diagrams, and displays (i.e., schema for orienting basis of action, a.k.a. SCOBA, used in Systemic Theoretical Instruction) (Arievitch & Haenen, 2005, p. 159). At this level of operation, the manipulation can even occur mentally but with the aid of the physical environment (i.e., decorating a home while you view the rooms). The next level of abstraction is verbal (i.e., social interaction and language use) where these same operations can be carried out without any physical objects but by speaking aloud. At the highest and final level, mental, the process is performed exclusively in the mind (i.e., external objects and audible speech are no longer necessary). As this process continues, each new level of abstraction continuously becomes more abbreviated. Therefore, this study uses materializations (i.e., SCOBA) of the Italian and English tense-aspect systems to visualize how each system works and differs. The goal for the use of SCOBA is for students to modify their conceptual understanding of tense and aspect by examining the Italian tense-aspect system in relation to the English system.

### **Dynamic Assessment**

Dynamic Assessment (DA) is another theory inspired by Vygotsky's research that compliments the ZPD. Heavily tied to the ZPD, DA has a dialectic relationship in how it informs teaching by leading it. Once the ZPD boundaries are adequately identified, development is stratified within that ZPD as assessments are snapshots of the various stages of development, but DA implies doing those assessments in real-time to assess progress and inform instruction to form a continuous cycle. DA approaches generally involve three stages: a traditional assessment

of the abilities under examination, an intervention addressing problematic areas of learner performance, and a final assessment analogous to the initial one (Lantolf & Poehner, 2010, as cited in Haywood & Lidz, 2007). Testing that only compares pre and post-test results to determine if the abilities assessed fall within the ZPD is more biased towards product and not process (Lantolf & Poehner, 2010). Research in L2 DA diverges from this approach and seeks to find ways in which learner-researcher interactions function simultaneously to comprehend and support learner development (Lantolf & Poehner, 2010).

Lantolf & Poehner (2010) conducted one of the first studies in L2 DA that used DA to change how instructors carry out instruction in the L2 classroom and aimed to reposition the role of the teacher as an advocate of a student's ability to speak L2 Spanish. The framework of this model allows the focus to shift from correct answers as the overarching goal of L2 instruction to the enhancement of language capabilities (i.e., usage). Assessments of this nature happen on the intermental plane because what one does not know cannot be discovered if the processes remain internal (Infante, 2021). Poehner (2018) defines DA as abandoning the conventional approach to assessment where learners are observed as they independently complete tasks and instead involves the assessor intervening when learner difficulties arise by offering models, feedback, leading questions, and other forms of support that are grounded in Vygotskian dialectical materialism.

In following, the evaluation of US English speakers of Italian should not just consist of language-related tasks with correct final answers as the target of instruction but focus on conceptual development of the Italian tense and aspect system with those assessments informing teaching strategies throughout that process. The dialectic created by the instructor and students in unison with DA revealed flaws in understanding, so assessments are strategically made to

discover the source of the problem and adjust instruction in real-time. The process is like filming a movie, so microgenetic development can be captured in frames. Dynamic assessments function as frames of the film that can be analyzed with precision but not in isolation of the entire process, or the ripening of functions (Poehner, 2018, as cited in Vygotsky, 1986, p.188). The interpsychological activity through teacher-student and student-student activity uncovers discrepancies between the US English and Italian tense-aspect systems allowing learners to move closer to intrapsychological activity, and ultimately self-regulation in the L2 conceptual framework. Approaching language-related problem-solving in this manner counteracts creating language learners that are fast learners but not good thinkers or both (Poehner, 2018, as cited in Kozulin, 2011).

In following, when instructors identify the need to intervene (i.e., perform an assessment), carrying out that assessment should also adhere to DA principles consistent with research findings that show the use of implicit and explicit feedback to be effective. Vygotsky's research aimed to reorient the teacher approach to target learners' development of their conceptual understanding of the world so they can act in more agentic ways, and Vygotsky did not indicate or articulate specific teaching methods or techniques to be followed (Lantolf & Poehner, 2010, p. 14). Carroll & Swain (1993) hypothesized that explicit feedback assists learning "by identifying the occurrence and nature of the learning problem whereas implicit feedback expects learners to infer both of these important aspects of learning" (Lantolf & Poehner, 2010, as cited in Carroll & Swain, 1993). In addition, Ellis (2009) also found a distinct advantage for groups receiving explicit feedback after reviewing post-test and delayed post-test results. In contrast, Lantolf & Aljaafreh (1994) found that feedback should be based on implicit and explicit means given that learning should be active and not quickly obtained (i.e., fast

learners). Poehner (2018) reiterates this finding by stating that immediate explicit error correction deprives both teachers and students of the chance to ascertain if less implicit forms of support would have enabled them to gain control over the language; thus, indicating if the learner's capacity to master a new language feature is ripening.

Lantolf & Poehner (2010), one of the first studies to put DA to practical use in the L2 classroom, demonstrated how implicit to explicit feedback can be implemented in tiers once the ZPD is established. If learners could not produce a correct response, they were led with leading questions, hints, and prompts varying in their degree of explicitness by gradually becoming more explicit. While each interaction with every learner differs, this system of graded level feedback was found to help gauge at which point in the ZPD development is located. Therefore, by having a method to quantify the ZPD level, interventions were more precise in targeting the conceptual errors that may occur. Also, these assessments allow the necessary conditions for a teacher-student dialectic to occur to examine microgenetic development. Levi & Poehner (2018, as cited in Lundstrom & Baker, 2009) posited learners benefit more from taking an active role in commenting on their initial test performance or that of another student and interacting with peers to discuss test performances than they do from simply receiving feedback from a tester. Hence, test performance analysis may include analyzing correct and incorrect responses to reflect on the thought process used to solve language-related problems, making learners active agents in their development. Therefore, an approach that combines implicit and explicit feedback to foster L2 development will be implemented in this study which is modeled after what Infante (2016) implemented to help ESL learners gain command of the English tense and aspect system.

### **Mediated Learning Experience**

Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) is the result of Reuven Feuerstein's research and extends Vygotsky's research (remembering that Feuerstein was not aware of Vygotsky's research). Feuerstein's work focuses on helping those with disabilities, and his research supplied evidence that the brain can be modified despite what is known as the critical period (i.e., language development becoming fossilized after an established age (associated with puberty) without sufficient exposure to the language before that time) (Feuerstein, 2010, p. 6). For those learning a second language, the critical period can prove to be a devastating obstacle, and Feuerstein shows how MLE is a way to overcome it. MLE was designed to produce a cognitive change in individuals and proved effective even in older people (Feuerstein, 2010). Besides, MLE places immense importance on the presence of an expert mediator to assist the learner, which is remarkably like what Vygotsky proposes, and what Infante (2016) successfully implemented to teach the English tense and aspect system to learners of English as a second language.

MLE is a different approach to learning that requires a mediator and not just exposure to stimuli. The role of the mediator in MLE is particularly important as it relates to the language classroom because communicative approaches to language learning usually advocate heavily for language exposure, but mediator/learner interaction for concept development is usually not the focal point in this approach. While it is true language learners might learn phrases they repeatedly hear and say, Feuerstein (2010, p. 31) states that "repeated actions, unaccompanied by thinking and understanding processes, may perhaps cause enjoyment and reinforcement but do not necessarily produce learning." Therefore, in relation to this study, thinking and understanding of the Italian tense and aspect system should be incorporated to ensure effective and optimal

language use, while DA provides insight into the origins of learner answers and avoids reliance solely on correct answers for assessing language development.

According to Feuerstein, MLE must meet three fundamental criteria to transform an interaction into MLE: *intentionality and reciprocity*, *transcendence*, and *the mediation of meaning*. These stimuli represent the first group of parameters responsible for the phenomenon of human modifiability as the interaction would not be mediational without them (Feuerstein, 2010). Intentionality brings a specific topic of focus into the foci of the learner that does not necessarily or automatically occur if the mediator does not do so. Hence, if the L1 brings specific L2 concepts into focus, learners can direct their attention to concepts that otherwise may go unnoticed during L2 language activities conducted exclusively in the L2 (i.e., Italian). During this mediator-learner interaction, a skilled mediator can provide immediate feedback as the learners react to stimuli and modify their method of mediation to ensure learners absorb the material. The goal is to have the learner absorb and register the message, generalize the concept, conserve it, and ultimately think abstractly. At this stage, reciprocity begins, which is when the learner can partake in the intention of the mediator by choosing how to respond with an explicit, voluntary, and conscious act (i.e., responding to spontaneous L2 questions).

The next phase of MLE is transcendence, which is the use of concepts learned as applied in different contexts. When solving language-related problems, instructors have learners not only answer specific questions but create meaning in the L2. For example, answering the question, *come stai?* (How are you?) with *sto bene*, does not indicate that the learner understands verb conjugation but just how to answer that specific question. *Transcendence* is the next step, which Feuerstein (2010, p 40) defines as the ability to act over large distances of time, space, and levels of abstraction (i.e., spontaneous use of language in a variety of contexts). Transcendence

would be satisfied by a learner continuing the conversation with a phrase like *sto bene e come sta tuo fratello?* (i.e., *I'm fine, and how's your brother?*). The learner's response indicates the learner is conceptually aware of verb conjugation to create different meanings and adapt to new situations.

The final component, essential for establishing mediating value, is the mediation of meaning. The instructor must communicate why they are performing the mediation with the learner. In other words, there needs to be a reason why the learner should engage and absorb the concepts the mediator wants to teach. In second language learning, classroom objectives can become obscure rather quickly when they are concealed in L2 language that learners just begin to study. Hence, unambiguous language learning objectives are essential to maintaining learner motivation, which is a key aspect of Feuerstein's research, addressing affective concerns as an aspect of classroom learning, something Vygotsky did not do, although aware of the importance of emotional development. The second component to the mediation of meaning is learners finding associations and connections between events and phenomena. In relation to the current study, this would come in the form of how tenses relate to one another in Italian. These three guiding principles of MLE as incorporated into DA provide a more complete assessment, including emotional considerations as a part of learning as well as intellectual considerations (Infante 2016, 2021).

### **Systemic Theoretical Instruction**

Systemic Theoretical Instruction (STI) and Concept-Based Instruction (CBI) are synonymous (CBI is considered as a more contemporary version of STI) and consist of a series of processes that outline the process of internalization; a topic Vygotsky never elaborated on. Instead, however Piotr Galperin, continued the line of research started by Vygotsky on



internalization formulating his *spiral formation of mental actions* (STI) that specifies the systematic steps necessary for the internalization of concepts to occur. According to Galperin (1967), the first step in the process is materialization or an orienting basis of mental action. Galperin argued that verbal explanations are problematic when presented by themselves. And therefore, learners need a complete understanding of the concept, or at least, as much as possible, to help guide their thinking (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014, p. 63). These materializations (i.e., schema for orienting basis of action or SCOBA) of the problem closely follow Vygotskian theory that states that the external world serves as the initial basis for human cognitive development. These material representations help learners visualize the process, and they should contain a minimal amount of verbal information, and the diagram is as general a representation across contexts as possible (Lantolf et al., 2014, p. 65). For example, children are exposed to language initially by adults through pre-formed phrases and single words without explanation. It is the external contexts in conjunction with language that helps children in the process of meaning-making. As Lantolf (et al., 2014, p. 51) states, children often use words and phrases before they understand them. Therefore, when a child sees a lion, they may refer to the lion as a big cat because of similar characteristics with the household pet. Children may even think they can be as playful with a lion as they can with a domestic cat without understanding the difference between the two types of animals which Lantolf et al. (2014) referred to as *coincidences*. These misconceptions become clearer when formal education ensues, and students learn to distinguish academic from spontaneous concepts and no longer depend on outside stimuli for learning. In this study, the coincidences mentioned above would come in the form of linguistic meanings that seem to be similar in the English and Italian tense and aspect systems but may not be.

Once an individual has had the opportunity to practice with the aid of the SCOPA, it is necessary to remove the support system to initiate the next phase, which is verbal action, or transfer to audible speech (Wertsch, 1997, p. 58). Here, the main objective is gaining control over a concept and its use. Languaging is a critical step for transferring the information from the interpsychological to the intrapsychological plane (Swain, 2006, p. 96, as cited in Lantolf et al., 2014). As learners develop understanding of the concept first through dialectic speech, it continues to transform and becomes private speech. Eventually, it turns into the highest form of self-talk (i.e., inner speech) (Gal'Perin, 1967). At this stage of the learning process, all knowledge of the concept becomes completely internal, and any connection with the forms of materialization that aided concept development is expected to fade away.

Infante (2016) follows Galperin's model and utilizes SCOPA to materialize the English tense and aspect system and uses them as tools for thinking with ESL (English as a Second Language) learners. Following this activity, the ESL learners verbalize the English tense and aspect concepts represented on the SCOPA. Finally, Infante removed all scaffolding, and the process became internalized as the participants were able to reproduce English sentences that were conceptually correct in the process of guided activity.

Negueruela (2003) conducted a cornerstone study that used CBI teaching techniques to teach L2 Spanish tense-aspect by integrating SCOPA with CBI instruction for the first time in a classroom. Negueruela (2003) put the CBI theoretical framework into practice by teaching grammar points as scientific concepts, although as Lantolf and Poehner (2014) point out, Negueruela did not apply a fully formulated grammatical system, as found for Cognitive Linguistics, for example, which would have added to the conceptual base for the system he employed. Additional research findings by Negueruela (2007) state, "performance-based

approaches, whether communicative or not, seem to privilege the executive component of an action and in doing so separate fluency from accuracy, treating each as a unique problem". Negueruela argued that these approaches focus on outcomes (i.e., correct usage of grammar rules) and not language learner development. In CBI, Negueruela (2007, p. 82) states that the minimal unit of instruction should be the overarching concept and not specific instances of its use. CBI approaches focus on the underlying conceptual frameworks so that learners can deploy these concepts across multiple contexts. These scientific concepts must be systematic in nature which general rules of thumb fail to address Garcia (2018, p. 257). Garcia (2018, p. 258) also states that scientific knowledge is learned in more of a top-down fashion starting from the abstract and becomes more specific in relation to specific contexts.

Internalization, according to Gal'Perin (1967), reaches its final stage when concepts are intrapsychological. Vygotsky argued internalization is not the transfer of an exact copy of the external to the internal plane but instead is transformed in the process at the individual level. At this stage, the individual gains voluntary control of the internal plane of what formerly was an external sign. Lantolf (2000, p. 14) also states that internalization is not the complete transfer of external mediation to the internal plane, but where mental actions are formed based on external stimuli. Even if external stimuli are no longer employed to regulate thinking, this does not mean mediation is no longer taking place but has become internal (i.e., inner speech). Vygotsky stated that inner speech is the most powerful tool at our disposal for self-mediating. Consequently, it is interesting to ponder how self-mediation occurs at the novice level L2 proficiency, whether the L2 is employed in inner speech or not. Learning scientific concepts take a certain amount of abstract reasoning to comprehend, so one could hypothesize that learners mediate L2 concepts in their L1 (i.e., codeswitching). However, researchers have not ruled out the possibility for

individuals to mediate their thinking in the L2, but experts agree that it takes a significant amount of time and exposure to the language to be able to do so (De Guerrero, 2018, p. 160). If the L2 is the dominant language for an extended period with little interference from the L1, research findings indicate changes in consciousness occur to make it possible for inner speech to transpire in the L2 (Centeno-Cortes & Jimenez, 2004, p. 31). This sort of L2 exposure in university classrooms is unlikely as most students do not study the language in-country for an extended period and typically only have limited contact with native speakers of the L2.

Nonetheless, even if not in the L2, all private forms of speech are self-regulatory because private speech is always a means to control one's mental activity (De Guerrero, 2018, p. 154). Numerous studies involving children and adolescents show learners engaging in behaviors that may support the appropriation of the L2 by engaging in activities (De Guerrero, 2018, p. 219; Infante, 2016; Lantolf & Poehner, 2010; Macaro, 2009; Negueruela, 2003; Poehner & Infante, 2019; Swain, 2010; Tyler, 2012; Van Compernelle, 2015), such as: "immediate and delayed repetition, vicarious response and participation, experimentation with meaning and language forms, meaning-focused translation, rehearsal for memorization or future production, and displays of metalinguistic awareness, or as stated by McCafferty (1992, p. 179), use of the L2 for private speech generally increases alongside proficiency, but it also depends on the difficulty level of a task as learners usually revert to their L1 when task difficulty increases. In addition, Jimenez-Jimenez (2015, as cited in Lantolf et al., 2018, p. 222) determine that language dominance or the degree of use and confidence in one's ability to use the language determines the frequency with which it gets used in private speech. Therefore, STI techniques can increase participant confidence by giving learners command of key concepts and ease the level of difficulty at the beginning levels when the L2 is not developed enough to support self-mediation.

Research has shown the sustained use of the L2 as inner speech is possible but contingent upon several factors: “high levels of proficiency, intense past and present exposure and socialization in the L2, and substantial conceptual/semantic restructuring based on the L2” (De Guerrero, 2018, p. 227); all of which are typically not achievable in relation to reaching a sufficient level of proficiency with exposure to the L2 only in American university classrooms.

STI also, of course, includes private speech as a key contributor to internalizing concepts. Lantolf (2000, p. 15) states that as our cognitive development continues, private speech becomes inner speech, and “loses its formal properties as it condenses into pure meaning.” Wertsch (1998) illustrates this point by comparing novice and expert pool players. Novices must rely on the pool table, the cue, and the balls to envision the outcome of a particular action, whereas an expert can perform these actions mentally without the aid of external stimuli. When ideas are fully internalized and have reached the inner psychological plane, visual aids (i.e., pool table) do not need to exist any longer as experts mediate their thinking on the inner psychological plane in contexts having been internalized. In like manner, the same is true for a novice language learner who completes Italian tense and aspect cloze question exercises accurately but encounters difficulty using Italian in spontaneous speech. Communicative teaching approaches champion L2 usage as a critical aspect of L2 development. However, simply using the language does not guarantee deep understanding or effective use, which in the absence of corrective feedback or a mediator amounts to empty verbalism (Infante, 2016). Macaro (2009, p. 38) argued for *optimal use* of codeswitching that he defined as the following:

optimal use is where codeswitching in broadly communicative classrooms can enhance second language acquisition and/or proficiency better than second language exclusivity

Macaro draws attention to the potentially detrimental effects of not drawing comparisons between the L1 and L2 and not drawing attention to aspects of the learners' L1 in relation to learning the L2. Macaro (2009, p. 43) also hypothesizes that given novice learner processing limitations, using the L1 may lighten the cognitive load and free up valuable resources to focus on L2 meaning. Macaro (2009) concludes that there is no evidence that codeswitching is detrimental to the acquisition of lexicon, and its absence likely deprives learners of a valuable cognitive resource if its use is prohibited in external speech production. Therefore, *optimal use* of the L2 is thought to be achieved by Macaro through the strategic use of the L1 in regard to conceptual development, which also adheres to STI principles, and emphasizes the role of language in intellectual mediation, supporting Vygotsky's claims about the role of language in development.

### **The Role of the L1 in Inner Speech**

Van Compernelle (2015, p. 141) states that SCT agrees in large part with the optimal use concept because SCT emphasizes how the L1 serves as a psychological tool that mediates the internalization of L2 meanings, functions, and forms. This approach taken in the current, proposed study does not argue for using the L1 to learn the L2 but instead to use the L1 strategically for concept development. Research supports collaborative dialogue around L2 tasks in group settings to construct linguistic knowledge through “*linguaging*”, that is, using the L1 to think about the L2 (Swain, 2000). Given that the L1 is a more powerful psychological tool initially than the L2, learners revert to its use for mediating their thinking (Centeno-Cortés & Jiménez-Jiménez, 2004). Van Compernelle (2015, p. 103) agree that L1 usage is appropriate and necessary for L2 concept development because "it allows learners to quickly and efficiently reflect on the concepts and express themselves in meaningful and more complex ways than

would have been possible in the L2, given their relatively low proficiency level in French."

Additionally, Swain et al. (2009) suggests it makes little sense from a Vygotskian perspective to require learners to engage in cognitive activities in the L2 when it is not sufficiently developed to serve as a mediating tool for concept formation. Most language classrooms at the novice level focus immediately on L2 acquisition and eliminating any L1 usage without giving thought to the above (Van Compernelle, 2018, p. 218). Furthermore, studies have not considered how L1 tense and aspect awareness influences L2 acquisition, that I am aware of. Assorted studies have shown learners revert to their L1 when the difficulty level of the language task rises (Van Compernelle, 2015).

Lantolf and Aljaafreh (1995) state that for learners to appropriate feedback, it must be within their ZPD. If a conceptual understanding of the L1 tense and aspect system is not assessed before L2 instruction, then a critical step may be missed in forming an appropriate ZPD. Moreover, if learners do not understand metalinguistic knowledge used to explain grammar in their L1, then the meaning is even further obscured when attempting to learn grammar in the L2. Indeed, Lantolf and Aljaafreh (1995) make the distinction between expert knowers and performers, and beginners. Experts do not rely on declarative knowledge as it has become procedural to them. Even language users who employ L1 grammar structures with high accuracy are still subject to expert blind spots when knowledge becomes procedural (i.e., metalinguistic knowledge), and their attention needs to be drawn to those concepts so they can regain consciousness of them. Additionally, most learners of a L2 do not receive instruction on grammar from a cognitive linguistics perspective, but instead learn rules of thumb, which are not adequate in explaining grammatical concepts to begin with.

## **Chapter Three Methodology**

This chapter presents an overview of the purpose of the research, research questions, and the rationale for a qualitative research design. Participant selection, data collection methods, details regarding the researcher's role, and the ethical considerations are described along with procedures for data analysis.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Based on STI, this study will examine the role of the L1 in the acquisition of L2 tense and aspect as well as the sequence of its instruction during the initial stages of L2 development for American university students of Italian in a study abroad context. The focus of the study is the documentation of development over time as derived from student-researcher interaction; how participants respond to the SCOPA (Infante, 2016, p. 330) in relation to the research questions below; and how exposure to the SCOPA impacts the maturity of conceptual development and performance in relation to L2 tense and aspect. Previous L2 STI-based studies (Infante, 2016; Negueruela, 2003; Negueruela, 2013; Van Compernelle, 2014) have not utilized the L1 to promote the conceptual development of the L2 tense and aspect system in helping to mediate conceptual development of the L2. Hence, the study desires to bring the L1 tense and aspect system back into the conscious awareness of the beginning-level language learner in order to be deployed as a tool for thinking when conceptualizing L2 tense and aspect. This may prove to be an important consideration and worth incorporating into L2 language pedagogical practices given how research has illustrated the importance of the L1 in private and inner speech as a tool for mediation (Centeno & Jimenez, 2004; McCafferty, 1992, 1994; Lantolf & Aljaafreh, 1995; Swain, 2010). In addition, the sequencing of verb tense instruction will be introduced to participants in a sequential fashion in an effort to promote conceptualization through a



visualization of tense and aspect in relation to a timeline. Such an approach is thought to highlight nuances of usage when events in time occur linguistically in relation to others as opposed to being studied in isolation from one another as is typically the case in Italian L2 textbooks.

### **Research Questions**

- 1) How does focusing explicitly on tense and aspect in the L1 as framed within the STI approach facilitate comprehension and production of tense and aspect in the L2 for undergraduate US English native speakers who are beginning-level learners of Italian?
- 2) How does teaching L2 tense and aspect in the specific sequence of the past perfect (*trapassato prossimo*), past (*passato prossimo*), present perfect (i.e., how it is expressed in Italian), present indicative (*presente indicativo*), and the gerund (*il gerundio*) as framed within the STI approach facilitate comprehension and production of the L2 for undergraduate American beginning level university students learning Italian?

### **Qualitative Research Design**

The research design of this study involved the collection of qualitative data (Merriam & Bierema, 2016) to reveal participant reasoning, particularly in relation to the development of concepts associated with teaching L2 Italian tense and aspect system. The study utilized the SCOPA designed by Infante (2016, p. 330), originally constructed for the teaching of writing for English as a Second Language learners. Qualitative data collected in an initial interview concerning participants knowledge of their L1 tense and aspect helped to ascertain participant knowledge and help determine the focus for the use of L1 SCOPA. In addition, the data yielded insights into participant reasoning in the construction of L2 Italian tense and aspect SCOPA. The following qualitative instruments were utilized in the study: video recordings of all Dynamic

Assessment sessions as related to both research questions, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews for pre- and post-study sessions. As a last step, the non-dynamic assessment results from the pre- and post-study sessions along with the above qualitative data collection methods, when cross-referenced, served to document and triangulate learner conceptual development in the Italian tense and aspect system over time as derived from the researcher's interactions with the students and the SCOPA.

## **Recruitment Procedures**

### ***Qualitative Data***

Consent from the Offices of Research Integrity – Human Subjects Research at UNLV was obtained along with Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the Florida State University home campus. The recruitment process was face-to-face and possible online meetings whereby the consent forms and questionnaires were distributed to students enrolled in our summer session abroad. Upon finalization of the list of participants, a time to conduct the study sessions was established prioritizing participant schedules. The study began on Thursday, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022, of the 2022 spring semester.

### ***Participants***

The group was a homogeneous class of US English native speakers with beginning-level proficiency in Italian, or complete novice levels, enrolled in a study abroad course in Italy. Learners of Italian in this context typically want to experience learning Italian in a context where the language can be utilized in daily life.

Florida State University study abroad students fall into four distinct categories: full-year abroad (FYA), full-semester abroad (FSA), full-summer abroad (FS), and summer-session abroad (SS). Both the fall and spring semesters consist of 15 weeks (about 3 and a half months)

of formal instruction and living in Italy, and summer sessions are five weeks long. The FYAs spend an entire academic year abroad beginning in the fall and extends through the following summer. FSAs spend one semester abroad: either a fall or spring semester. FSs study abroad for an entire summer, and SS students study abroad just one summer session.

Participants were in the range of 18 to 22 years old, L1 American English speakers and from an American cultural background with one participant born in Spain. Groups typically consist of individuals with varying language goals in Italian and/or possibly know Spanish or French given their popularity as foreign languages in the United States. There were some bilinguals in the group that fit this description, and this was addressed in the semi-structured interview at the outset of the study to account for any linguistic competencies that existed prior to the study. Dynamic assessments addressed development at intervals throughout the study to capture an in-depth understanding of conceptual development of the Italian tense and aspect system and as related to their understanding and awareness of US English tense and aspect usage and as associated with the introduction of the Italian tense and aspect system provided through instruction. The total number of participants were nine students, and they were divided into four or five groups of two students each for dynamic assessment.

### ***Data Collection***

The study design included questionnaires, video recordings, and semi-structured interviews. A pre and post-test along with two semi-structured interviews both administered during the first and last session along with four student-researcher instructional sessions were conducted; all video recorded. Each session lasted a minimum of 45 minutes to no longer than one hour, and participants discussed the SCOPA among their group and in conjunction with the researcher after presentations which model their use and explain their conceptual significance.

To ensure quality video and audio, two separate video cameras will be deployed to focus on each group. Descriptive statistics were applied to the qualitative data to document participant development over time, and their interactions with other participants and the researcher. This data intended to chronicle the response of the participants to the SCOBA for both RQ 1 and RQ 2, and how exposure to the SCOBA impacted development over time in relation to the conceptualization and performance of L2 tense and aspect. The study utilized adaptations of the diagrams and questionnaires developed and used by Infante (2016, p. 330), in addition to the SCOBA of the English tense and aspect system, to make a direct comparison between native speaker and ESL learner English language awareness.

The data collection process initiated with a pre-study diagnostic assessment, non-dynamic assessment in nature (i.e., no help provided), to measure participant metalinguistic knowledge and conceptual awareness of the US English tense and aspect system through a semi-structured interview and diagnostic exercises. Participants were allowed to answer to the best of their ability with no intervention to get an accurate assessment of current L1 knowledge.

The first session introduced the participants to the pedagogical materials created by Infante (2016) to investigate their knowledge of the US English tense and aspect system and present it conceptually. Following that presentation, an analysis of sentences in English that were used to verbalize the meaning in the diagrams to teach English as a Second Language was conducted using the SCOBA to identify instances of tense and aspect in those sentences by identifying the key language (Infante, 2016). The objective is to reveal how their understanding of US English tense and aspect compares to the Italian tense and aspect system (e.g., using sentences as examples) and apply the pedagogical materials as tools for understanding the similarities and differences between the systems with guidance from the researcher, if necessary,

and attend to any gaps in knowledge. The researcher (i.e., mediator) guided the participants through using the pedagogical materials (i.e., SCOBA diagrams) and introduced the metalinguistic terminology used with the SCOBA. To conclude the first session, the researcher gave the participants a short writing assignment to use the diagrams to form sentences in English that respect the English tense and aspect rules. This assessment served as a tool to determine their level of English language awareness as a native speaker. The results were examined and used for concept analysis using SCOBA of the American English tense aspect system in the subsequent session.

The second session shifted the focus to the verbalization of the English tense and aspect system SCOBA with the mediator using the established metalinguistic terminology from the previous sessions. The researcher asked the participants to recall the linguistic terminology introduced during the first session and work with a partner to verify their answers. Once pair checking was complete, a review with the group was conducted to recap the linguistic terminology and answer any further questions or need for further clarification. A portion of the session was dedicated to have the participants apply the newly acquired conceptual linguistic knowledge of English tense and aspect and performing an analysis of five sentences that were used in an English as a Second Language research study (Infante, 2016), and they were expected to draw diagrams that illustrate how the language is conceptualized. After which, a follow-up activity was given to the in-class activities. The last portion of the session is dedicated to introducing the Italian tense and aspect system. The mediator and the participant co-reviewed and compared these SCOBA with those of the English tense and aspect system to highlight any differences, so they become consciously aware of them. The researcher introduced the Italian tense and aspect system as a timeline starting with the past (*passato prossimo*) and progressing to

the future (futuro). The presentation of verb tense was systematic in nature with each subsequent tense taught being related to the one under examination on the timeline. The intention is to mimic how the past, present, and future are viewed in a left to right fashion in American culture if written on paper – conceptualized the same way in Italian.

The third session began with an activity – connecting the previous introduction of the English tense and aspect diagrams and key words – that asks the participants to identify the key language in sentences to indicate which tense is being used in English. The learners were able to use the pedagogical materials, when necessary, to promote learner ability in applying these tools with the researcher modeling their use but were encouraged to try working without them at first. Participants were allowed to finish the identifying the key language with no time limit imposed. Once the first portion of the activity and pair checking was complete, the next step involved the verbalization of the SCOBA for the Italian tense and aspect system as the researcher visited with each pair to clear up any misconceptions or gaps in knowledge. An activity followed that had the participants identify tenses in Italian that relate to the ones they identified with the language in the sentences in English. To conclude, learners were given a verbal explanation on camera that compares the reasoning for the drawings completed in this session and their answers to the second-session activity questions, including what differences and similarities exist between the Italian and English tense and aspect systems using the SCOBA.

The fourth session started with the researcher verbalizing the Italian tense-aspect SCOBA components that are still giving the participants difficulty. The researcher and learner engaged in textual analysis of a provided text in Italian to identify instances of tense and aspect for which learners had to explain the reasons for those grammar choices in relation to the SCOBA. To conclude the fourth session, students were required to form sentences in Italian which were peer

reviewed. The participants discussed their linguistic choices and conducted peer reviews to comment on the sentences they created to provide more insight on microgenesis.

The final session included a post-test to determine if there were changes in learner conceptual understanding of the Italian tense-aspect system and how it differs from English. A semi-structured interview concluded the study to gather qualitative data on the participants regarding their thoughts on how they changed as language learners, what they found most helpful, or not, using the diagrams, and their perspective on learning grammar considering this approach.

### ***Data Analysis***

Analysis of the data sources was conducted from a Vygotskian SCT perspective consisting of participant pre- and post-study interviews, participant pre-assessments, researcher-participant interaction focusing on STI materials, structured activities, co-review and revision of exercises, reflection on the English and Italian tense and aspect systems and the sequence of instruction of verb tense and aspect in Italian. The pre-study interview served to collect information about the participants as follows: (1) gain a better understanding of their motivations for learning Italian; (2) provide a complete picture of their experiences with second language learning; (3) develop an understanding of their conscious awareness of the American English tense and aspect system, (4) discover if sequencing tense and aspect reveals nuances between them and aids L2 tense-aspect acquisition, and (5) identify issues that could taint the results of the study, or affect its efficacy. The post-study interview provided insight into the affective factors of the study regarding the feelings of the participants towards the intervention, what they thought worked, how their view of learning grammar has changed, and suggestions on how they might modify the study for future learners. The structuring of the semi-structured interviews,

questionnaires, data mining, and video analysis all followed the principles outlined by Merriam & Bierema (2016, p. 195) and Saldana (2010) to code and categorize the data.

The diagnostic assessment administered during the pre-study session intended to collect data on how well the participants understood their L1 tense and aspect system and the metalinguistic language associated with it. Given the L1 plays a vital role in self-mediating for beginning-level language learners, the intent was to ensure correct understanding of the English tense and aspect system to avoid error transfer to Italian (i.e., conceptual errors) (Danesi, 2015). By making learners aware of the tense-aspect system differences in English and Italian, error transfer may be minimized and help participants reason better in L2. In line with the Vygotskian theoretical-methodological approach of expert and novice working together, the researcher-learner interaction was critical to providing real-time data to inform instruction. Hence, the qualitative data and results obtained from the dynamic assessments during the sessions were triangulated with the semi-structured interviews, video recordings, and the literature to verify and document participant understanding and development. Lastly, presenting the Italian tense and aspect system in a connected fashion so nuances were revealed to distinguish where events fall on a timeline according to Italian language use allowed participants to develop their control over accurately sequencing events in Italian to a higher degree and with varying success.

### ***Role of the Researcher***

My role was as a researcher and observer, but I did not want them to perceive me as a total expert or authority. However, it has been my experience that this is the perspective students usually take when they become aware that I am working on my Ph.D. and already potentially view me as an authority on the material. Furthermore, I realized that this approach to L2 instruction is not possible in all language classroom settings and would be doable only when



there is a common language between the instructor and students spoken at a high level of proficiency. All participants were encouraged to ask for assistance and ask questions. I remained conscious of how I provided feedback and assisted the participants with obstacles they encountered with incorrect language use or conceptually inaccurate interpretations of the SCOBA diagrams. Moreover, it was necessary to be observant of the affective factors during our mediation sessions by being empathetic and creating a positive environment open to questions and viewing errors as learning opportunities. Hence, this facilitated open communication and promoted active participation on behalf of those involved in this study to ensure accurate conclusions as much as possible.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

The names and privacy of individuals who partook in this study were protected, and their names did not appear on any reports of the research. Pseudonyms were applied to prevent their actual names from being used but allow subjects in the study to be identifiable. However, all essential transcriptions and writings to this study excluded any references to their real identity. All video recordings were accessed solely by members of the research team. All electronic files related to the study were protected with passwords and deleted from computers and cameras used to create them. This data will be stored in a private and locked office belonging to the leading researcher for no less than three years.

This study had minimal risks. Participation in this study was voluntary, and participants had the option to opt-out of any portion with which they felt uncomfortable. A potential risk was students feeling uneasy about being recorded, which could have been a distraction in the study. I did not anticipate this to be an issue and it was not. In this regard, I attempted to make them feel at ease as much as possible and make sure I paid attention to their feelings throughout the

process. Beyond feeling nervous about appearing in a video recording in general, participants might have felt self-conscious about their Italian pronunciation, but this was not the case. In any case, I reminded them that Italian is my second language to make them feel more comfortable and point out that Italians have varying accents of which theirs is one of them. Questions made to the participants were only be related to the study and did not make them feel threatened in any manner. Any video recorded sessions were scheduled according to the availability and schedules of the participants as the top priority. They also had the right to refuse to answer any questions with which they felt uncomfortable during the recorded sessions, and they were given as much time as needed to respond to the questions.

### ***Validity & Reliability***

While the length of time spent abroad does not necessarily correlate with language acquisition in the absence of formal study, the time students spent in Italy should be noted due to their natural daily exposure to Italian culture and language. Besides, classes students have taken throughout the academic year abroad were considered. Although not likely, subjects such as English or linguistics could impact conceptual awareness of the US English tense-aspect system and influence student assimilation of concepts during this study, which did not occur. Likewise, previous knowledge of romance languages such as Spanish and French might influence student knowledge of the Italian tense and aspect system as they are popular second language choices in the United States that the participants studied previously. Despite this factor, there was no noticeable effect on the acquisition of the Italian tense and aspect system. To the contrary, some of the participants with previous Spanish and/or French language study did not show signs of exceptional performance but on par with the rest of the group.

### **Summary**

This study focused on the role and influence of L1 American English on learning the Italian tense and aspect system and fostering conceptual development in the Italian tense and aspect system through an STI theoretical approach. This exploratory study incorporated qualitative data to give a comprehensive picture of American university students' usage of US English to mediate their thinking when acquiring the Italian tense-aspect system and how sequencing tense and aspect may facilitate L2 tense and aspect. This chapter includes descriptions of the design of this study, how participants will be selected, the data collection methods and analysis, and the ethical concerns involved.

## **Chapter Four Study Findings**

This chapter covers the preliminary interview, study sessions, and post-study exit interview findings. Qualitative findings are examined to provide a profile of the participants and suggest an indication of their level of language awareness in their native language. Linguistic terminology and concepts are introduced along with sentences illustrating tense and aspect in US English to pursue a broader understanding of the participants' technical knowledge as well practical usage of English. Exposure to different languages and cultures were also included as potentially relevant information to investigate any connections that could influence acquiring tense and aspect in Italian. In addition, the interview questions aimed to capture emotions and attitudes towards Italian language and culture along with goals associated with learning the language, perceptions of the characteristics of being a good language learner, and if they believe to be good at learning languages. The researcher gathered additional information to determine if the participants were already in possession of any proficiency in Italian and asked to describe previous techniques used to teach languages in the contexts in which they had studied Italian or another language. Participants were consequently asked to describe what they thought was helpful and not helpful in those contexts, and if they had no language acquisition experience to describe what they thought might be helpful and not.

At the end of the study, the participants completed post-study interviews and assessments participants to see how their perceptions of themselves as language learners and English native speakers may have changed. An evaluation of their acquisition of the Italian tense and aspect system is made, and their impression of the effectiveness of the study is reported. Connections to the study and their motivation levels to learn Italian are explored and if a shift in their approach

and feelings towards studying grammar have evolved. A brief description of any obstacles the participants encountered and how they might have overcome those obstacles is provided. Lastly, the participants' the change, if any, in how they utilize tense and aspect in Italian is examined.

### **Data Coding**

The pre-study interviews were semi-structured interviews to collect data to inform a ZPD at the beginning of the study and form a profile for each participant. The preliminary data was coded in a two-approach included two cycles 1) analysis and 2) synthesis to group the data and then regroup it to give meaning (Saldana, 2011, pg. 5). In following, codes were developed based on the semi-structured interview questions to be sure the coding was specific enough to target ideas but also general enough to make distinctions between the codes as to not create confusion regarding what they represent and create clear boundaries between them (Saldana, 2011, p. 15). The researcher conducted an analysis of the transcription of the recorded interviews and study sessions, along with visual analysis of the videos, to collect and organize the data according to the coding system dictated by the questions and activities in the interviews and the study sessions.

To be certain the coding structure was specific and relevant, the codes were developed prior to the analysis of the transcriptions and the videos to keep the coding focused and avoid excessive coding causing the study to lose a targeted focus aimed at examining specific ideas (Saldana, 2011, p. 28). Once the preliminary coding phase was complete, a review of the transcription and video data followed to ensure the codes captured the desired information with subcodes added to capture other related and relevant information. (Saldana, 2011, p. 33); between 50-200 codes are recommended (Saldana, 2011, p. 37). The study utilized a deductive approach to coding as given the conceptual framework and research questions of this study

suggest that certain codes, themes, or concepts were most likely to appear in the data (Saldana, 2011, p. 40). Voice memos of the transcribed and video data were recorded to serve as a type of journal or blog to ponder the information further to understand any phenomenon taking place (Saldana, 2011, p. 58). Saldana (2011, p. 59) states:

Virtually every qualitative research methodologist agrees: whenever *anything* related to and significant about the coding or analysis of data comes to mind, stop whatever you are doing and write a memo about it immediately.

This approach allows additional key information to remain part of the analysis that would otherwise be lost in a transcription. The voice memos of the videos allowed for coding of paralinguistic features to be considered such as tone of voice, rate of speech, and vocal dynamics such as volume and pitch; as well as non-verbal movements such as facial expressions and body language that would provide further depth to the analysis that transcripts alone cannot capture. (Saldana, 2011, p. 81).

Elemental Coding methods were opted for given the use of semi-structured interviews to collect data. Specifically, Structural Coding was implemented given its appropriateness and suitability for interview transcripts, and studies that include multiple participants where semi-structured data-gathering protocols are deployed (Saldana, 2011, p. 130). This was the main coding approach applied to both the pre- and post-study interviews. Regarding the study sessions, Structural Coding was applied given there were specific data gathering tools such as linguistic exercises assigned to the group, but in addition, Descriptive Coding was integrated for its applicability to field notes, documents, and video to capture the unstructured portion of the study and gather the data emerging from participant interactions and their engagement with the structured activities (Saldana, 2011, p. 134). Descriptive Coding, given the study took place over

the period of a month and intended to measure participant change, was implemented given “descriptive codes from data collected across various time periods and charted in matrices are useful for assessing longitudinal participant change (Saldana, 2011, p. 134).

Table 1: Participant Profiles

| Participant Profiles |                                       |                      |     |                   |                         |                              |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|-----|-------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Name                 | Formal Study of Italian at University | Native Language (L1) | Age | Country of Origin | Years Lived in the U.S. | Foreign Languages Experience |
| Charlotte            | None                                  | Spanish / English*   | 20  | Spain             | 14 years*               | High School Spanish          |
| Gary                 | Second Semester                       | English              | 18  | United States     | Entire Life             | High School German           |
| Donna                | None                                  | English              | 19  | United States     | Entire Life             | **Italian                    |
| Mary                 | First Semester                        | English              | 22  | United States     | Entire Life             | Spanish                      |
| Jayden               | Second Semester                       | English              | 18  | United States     | Entire Life             | Spanish / French             |
| Davide               | None                                  | English              | 20  | United States     | Entire Life             | ***Spanish                   |
| Emilia               | Second Semester                       | English              | 18  | United States     | Entire Life             | Chinese / Spanish            |
| Kimberly             | Second Semester                       | English              | 20  | United States     | Entire Life             | **** Hungarian               |
| Lydia                | First Semester                        | English              | 18  | United States     | Entire Life             | None                         |

\*Lived in the United States since she was six-years old.  
 \*\*Four years in high school  
 \*\*\*Followed a course for Spanish heritage speaker and grew up in Spanish speaking household but does not speak it.  
 \*\*\*\*Heritage speaker

## Preliminary Interview Results

### *Profile*

Participants in the study ranged from 18 to 22 years old. Eight of the nine participants said their country of origin was the United States and that their native language was English. One participant, her pseudonym being Charlotte, said Spain was her country of origin and Spanish was her first language. Charlotte said she lived in Spain for the first five years of her life and then for one year in Peru. Referring to when she was five-years old, Charlotte explained in the

interview that she “just started speaking Spanish”, and interestingly said, “I did have the accent, though, like, from what my mom tells me.” She appears to strongly identify with her Spanish origins and lists English as her second language despite having no accent and displaying US English native speaker proficiency during the interview. Charlotte is 20 years old and has been living in the United States since she was approximately six-years old.

Despite being a group of predominantly native English speakers from the United States, some participants spoke at least one language at a basic level. Lydia, 18 years old and the participant with the least amount of language proficiency, was currently enrolled in her first semester of Italian. Gary, 18 years old, had four years of German in high school and was enrolled in his second semester of Italian. Donna, 19 years old, took four years of Italian in high school and is of Italian origin and seemed to heavily identify with Italian culture. Mary, 22 years old, is also enrolled in her first semester of Italian and has no other university-level language experience but did take Spanish in high school. Davide, 20 years old, also has no second language experience at Florida State University, but says he grew up around native Spanish speakers in his house and took a course for Spanish heritage speakers in high school. He says his understanding and comprehension of Spanish are “much better” than his ability to write and speak in Spanish. Kimberly, 20 years old, says she speaks Hungarian and grew up speaking it with her parents who immigrated to the United States and was currently enrolled in her first semester of Italian. Emilia, 18 years old, said she speaks Chinese, some Spanish, and was currently enrolled in her second semester of Italian. Jayden, 18 years old, said “I’m conversational with Spanish. I can read French, and I’m learning Italian.” Jayden was also enrolled in his second semester of Italian.

While the group had a wide range of language experience, there was only one student, Donna, who had studied Italian for several years prior to this study. The rest of the group had



little proficiency in Italian and did not have exposure to the entire Italian tense and aspect system. Florida State University students in their first semester of Italian only study the present tense and do not move on to another tense until they enroll in their second semester of Italian. It is worth noting that eight of the ten participants had at least one semester of Italian complete or in progress at the university level. In addition, they were either starting their first semester living in Florence, Italy, or had begun their second semester in Italy with the program; they were all Florida State University students. Their time enrolled as a student at FSU ranged from two to eight semesters, but half the group was in their second semester of university study. Regarding time spent abroad, only Charlotte had lived outside the United States in an environment where another language other than English was spoken before their study abroad experience in Italy. However, Davide and Jayden pointed out that the areas in the United States in which they lived have large populations of Spanish and French speakers. Even though the group had little exposure to an Italian speaking population, they all indicated that they were extremely interested in learning the language and more about the culture. Donna's response to her attitude towards Italian language and culture stood out from the rest as she stated:

“I'm pretty comfortable with it 'cause my family is Italian, so I've been around it most of my life. And then, I've studied the language for four years in high school. And then, I'm continuing to study it here for my 5<sup>th</sup> year now in college.”

### ***Italian Language Personal Goals***

Participants generally stated communication as the fundamental reason why they were taking Italian. Being fully immersed in the culture seems to have heightened their desire to speak with the local people, even though most people find many Italians who speak English as a second language well enough to not prevent having an insurmountable language barrier between

Italians and Americans. Given tourism is a large part of the Florentine economy, this could suggest why such a high number of Italians speak English at a higher proficiency level.

Nonetheless, this did not seem to discourage or disinterest the participants in learning more Italian as they included learning more about the culture as part of the reason why they desired to improve their Italian to converse with the locals and function in Italian society while they were here.

### ***Successful Language Learning***

The consensus of the group was that communication was the most important aspect of being a successful language learner. Some participants emphasized communication in the language in terms of getting across an idea without focusing on accuracy.

“Understanding the lingo that people use, and like, the abbreviations for words and even just like having basic, like, proficiency where you, like, can get around in a restaurant or in an airport.” – Charlotte

“To be a successful language learner, you have to be able to take what you learn in the classroom, whether it’s grammar or vocabulary, and be able to apply it in more real-life situations, like, outside of just being test on it.” – Donna

While communication was emphasized, a perceived weakness emerged that language instruction in the classroom is just grammar and not real-life language. There appears to be a connection between what language learners believe “real language” to be which seems to be more in the spoken form and communicating meaning when they described the characteristics of a successful language learner.

You are able to understand when someone is speaking to you in that language and respond in an accurate way and maybe even understand some slang eventually and not just the proper, um, the proper form of the language. – Kimberly

Words and phrases such as: *real-life situations*, *into the real world*, *apply it to the real world*, *practice outside the classroom*, and *everyday life* were part of the participants' responses to their definition of a good language learner.

Participants also mentioned practicing consistently as a fundamental component to learn a language successfully.

Being able to take what you, the information you learn in the class, and then applying that so that you can truly understand it. And then, taking that understanding out into the real world, practicing it and applying it on a nearly daily basis. – Gary

You have to practice it every day. – Emilia

Two of the participants mentioned not being afraid to make mistakes and speaking freely with others but staying conscious of identifying errors and understanding them to make improvements as being critical to reaching higher proficiency levels. However, only Kimberly, Charlotte, and Gary said they thought they were good at learning languages. The other six participants stated they were not good at learning languages because they perceived language learning was difficult in general. Charlotte and Kimberly, who think they are good at learning languages, are the only two of the group that said they can speak another language fluently, Hungarian and Spanish respectively. As heritage speakers of both languages, they grew up speaking Hungarian and Spanish in their house. While Gary did not grow up speaking German, he took four years of it in high school and claimed to have conversational proficiency.

Oh, yeah. I would say I'm good. I can't say I'm the best but after four years of German, I feel like I could probably get casual conversation with somebody. (Gary)

The common theme between Charlotte, Kimberly, and Gary seems to be their success to communicate in another language that increases their level of belief in themselves.

### ***Italian Proficiency***

Italian proficiency varied among the group, which ranged from self-study to formal instruction. None of the participants proficiency level exceeded that of a beginner in their first or second semester of Italian. All participants had been exposed to the language daily for four weeks at the time of their preliminary interviews given they were one month into the spring 2022 semester in Florence, Italy. Donna was the only participant with extensive study in Italian for four years in high school but noticeably did not have a high proficiency level in Italian or attempt to test into a higher-level Italian course. Davide and Charlotte did not complete any formal study in Italian but were heavily influenced by Spanish growing up; however, Charlotte claimed to be fluent in Spanish and said it was her first language, whereas Davide said English was his first language and did not speak Spanish well but was able to understand it in written form and when it was spoken around him. Lastly, seven out of nine participants had completed at least one semester of Italian at the university level or were beginning their second semester of Italian at Florida State University. It is worth noting that the curriculum at Florida State follows a specific path with the aim to have students reach certain proficiency levels after each semester of study. Regarding tense and aspect, Italian students in their first semester of study at Florida State University only get exposed to the present tense, *presente* in Italian. It is in their second semester of Italian where the past (*passato prossimo*), the future (*il futuro*), the imperfect (*l'imperfetto*), the gerund (*il gerundio*), and the conditional (*il condizionale*) are introduced. Therefore, students would have been exposed to enough Italian to participant in the study but not too much given it would mean they would likely already understand the Italian tense and aspect system well or

have enough knowledge in Italian to potentially taint the study results.

### ***Classroom Instruction***

The most important aspect of language learning in the classroom that every participant mentioned as being fundamental to learning a language was communication or speaking. It appears that written exercises were perceived as lessons in grammar instead of being seen as a key component of second language acquisition.

So, in Chinese we have, like, speaking a lot. We would speak, um, and, it was just nice because we would have, like, to speak about things, like designated topics on the board. – Emilia

.... Just practicing the language is a great way to learn – Gary

I think in high school, like, a lot of repetition isn't always helpful, just 'cause I feel you could spend more time practicing it instead of just going over slides and slides and notes. – Donna

.... I took Spanish 1 and 2 online in high school and it's very linguistic based almost like it's not necessarily meant for you to speak the language, just like theoretically how you would speak it.... You need to be practicing.... That's the one thing I remember honestly is not speaking... You need to be doing that. Yeah, the same way that you have to be running, if you want to get better at running or walking at least. – David

The participants definitely see a value in practicing the language in class, and the data suggests that if they do written, listening, or reading exercises without backing that up with speaking exercises, then their perceptions of those activities appear to be that they are more linguistic in nature and are not effective methods for acquiring a new language. This tendency could suggest that participants do not possess a holistic view of languages and their conceptual differences which require study to use the target language through the lens of the target culture. Some participants emphasized learning vocabulary, but there was no evidence that suggested that the

participants understood the complex nature of vocabulary across different languages and not all words can transfer equally when it comes to meaning making.

You have to know the vocabulary first. – Lydia

I've only taken Spanish like in high school, but I already knew it. However, my professor, he would teach, um, in like, not a very effective method, like, he would just teach straight from the book, like, passages or something to assimilate, like, writing the language. Not very helpful, um, a big emphasis on grammar, which is important, but it can't, like, if you're actually trying to learn Spanish, like it's not the main thing, unless you want to get in depth with it. – Charlotte

Italian speakers who are just beginning to learn English will commonly use the verb *avere* (to have) when describing someone's age. If they were to say *ho venti anni*, it would mean in direct translation that they have twenty years, which is an error in US English. Charlotte's comment above, deemphasizes grammar and partially promotes the stereotype that classroom instruction is not real language learning. This perspective could also further bolster the idea that "all romance languages are the same" and therefore do not require study and should only focus on verbal communication. Lastly, a few participants also suggested that feedback during verbal communication exercises as being critical.

For my third year of Spanish, I had a very hands-off teacher, and I did not learn as much as I would have liked to.... I mean, we would be given packets instead of going up and discussing in front of the classroom. – Jayden

But my teacher didn't like walk around as much, so then it's like if you didn't know something, we would just like, say it in English and like move forward, but.. – Emilia

This could suggest a link between group dynamic assessment during speaking exercises in class to encourage correct grammar and vocabulary usage as an integral part of conversational proficiency in the language.

## *English Language Awareness*

The participants were asked some basic questions about linguistic terminology in English and were asked to describe those terms. In the first question, each participant was asked what a verb is in English, all of whom said, without pausing to think, it was an action. However, when asked about the meaning of tense, some participants either needed a brief pause to think about it or tried to vocalize their thoughts to decide what they thought tense meant. Once again, all participants managed to describe tense accurately in that it is when an action takes place. Some used the actual names of the tenses in English, while others turned to examples.

Um, it lets us describe, like, if you did something in the future, now, in the past. Just, so, like, your perspective on when you did something. – Emilia

What time period the sentence is referring to, whether it's the past, present, or future. – Gary

It's the past, present, and future, so the time period, I guess? I think we only have like past, present, and future. And maybe not, but that's what I can say. – Lydia

Even though their definitions of tense were fundamentally true, the intonations in their voice revealed hints of doubt about if they had described tense correctly and/or named them all. Only one participant needed further clarification on the word tense before attempting to answer.

Mary: Ummm, like, what is tense... um, like,... [laughter] I don't.. um... ok... now I wanna say tense but...

Researcher: That's ok. Not in terms of language. What is tense in reference to language?

Mary: um... wait, what?

These seemed to be the first indications the participants were no longer conscious of the linguistic terminology used to describe language. In addition, signs began to show that the knowledge they demonstrated was limited and potentially flawed in this regard.

This was particularly noticeable when the researcher asked the participants to name as many verb tenses in English as they could. All the group used the words past, present, and future when defining the word tense and nearly all the group gave a definition of what they believed tense was. Hence, when asked to name all the verb tenses that they could in English, most of the participants found it difficult to think beyond the past, present, and future as answers to this question.

Oh, um... I know there's the future tense, there's present, past... and there's a couple different types of those. I think there are past participles... is like past participle or something like that. This I know that... these... those tenses, the three tenses, and then there's variations of them. I think. – Davide

While Davide's response is fairly accurate, his inability to name the tenses shows there may be gaps in knowledge or that his ability to analyze language has diminished due to non-use. Other participants like Charlotte were not able to give the actual names but instead opted to try to give examples.

Researcher: OK, OK. And then can you name as many tenses for me as you can in English?

Charlotte: Um... Yeah... so... Like just regular word examples?

Researcher: Just yeah, just like the types, the actual tenses.

Charlotte: Like past tense present tense. Oh, OK.

Researcher: Exactly, yeah, yeah.

Charlotte: Past tense, present tense... um... They're all like... [unintelligible] That's all that comes to mind. But yeah, that's where you want right?



The pattern repeats of participants referring just to the past, present, and future tenses and then becoming noticeably confused when trying to elaborate further. The tone in their voices indicates doubt and seeking affirmation they are responding correctly. Furthermore, there appears to be some interference from the second semester Italian students who incorrectly try to use linguistic terminology they encountered in their Italian course to try to guess a tense in English.

Uh.. past tense, present tense, future tense. Then I think there is also reflexive, but I think that's not really a tense. – Gary

Ok, well you got the past tense. You've got the future tense. You got... you've got the present tense. You've got the past participle, future participle level, the present participle. And there's a lot more, but I can't remember all of them. – Jayden

Kimberly, Mary, Donna, and Emilia all struggled to name any tenses beyond the present, the future, and the past. Kimberly said she could name the tenses but could not understand them. Mary, like Charlotte, tried to give actual examples of the tenses in English but with little success.

Mary: Oh, so is that like ING, ED...

Researcher: Yeah, uh huh.

Mary: Uh, OK, so.... So like the end, so it would be like the ending to a verb. So ING, ED...

Researcher: Do you know the technical...

Mary: what?

Researcher: Do you know the linguistic names that go with those particular items that you're describing by chance.

Mary: Uhm, suffixes and then prefixes.

Researcher: OK, and then the.... the tense names.

Mary: No... [laughter]

Donna also decided to turn to examples to spark her memory by asking for some. Donna's response was remarkably like Mary's in that she attempted to offer examples but could not name the tenses.

Researcher: OK, and then sì... uh, sorry. Please name as many verb tenses as you can in English.

Donna: Um.. would you be able to give a couple examples of something?

Researcher: Yeah, I mean if you want me to give examples, that's OK.

Donna: Like I like, I like doing like... I walked, I'm walking... I will walk... something like that?

Researcher: Yeah, exactly, and if you could name the tense itself, if you can attach the, like, the let's say the linguistic name to it. Go for it. If not the examples OK.

Donna: OK, I can try it. I honestly don't know.

Emilia struggled with naming the tenses and showed little confidence in knowing how to respond despite giving some answers and examples that were on the right track. This pattern appears to show in all the participants' responses at this stage of the interview.

Researcher: Please name as many verb tenses as you can in English.

Emilia: So like, verbs with a tense?

Researcher: Yeah, yeah, the actual names of the tenses.

Emilia: OK. Past tense? I don't know. Future.

Researcher: Right?

Emilia: Present.

Researcher: OK.

Emilia: yeah. I think I don't know. I'm not the best with...

Researcher: No, this is, this is totally normal, yeah, yeah. It really is. I'm serious there's a motive for the question but yeah totally normal. These are all things you know, but you know, see how much of it comes to mind.

Emilia: It's just like...

Researcher: Is that it right there?

Emilia: Past progressive?

Researcher: OK.

Emilia: Oh no, I don't know this one, but.

Before moving on to sentence analysis to identify differences in meaning, the participants were asked if they could describe what aspect is in English. None of them were able to do so, and none tried. They generally responded by saying they did not know.

### *Sentence Analysis*

At this stage of the interview, participants performed an analysis of several sentences to determine if there was a difference in their meaning and to describe those differences, if any existed. Given we were able to move away from the linguistic terminology and have them rely more on their natural ability to speak English, it was much easier for them to interpret the meaning, and in a few cases, participants realized what was meant by tense in English, although they still did not know the specific linguistic terminology, nor were they able to give a completely accurate description of the sentences' meaning. All but two of the participants accurately described the meaning of the sentences and their differences. Charlotte and Donna did not make the connection between the first sentence having a bounded period of time and the second and third being unbounded.

Ok, the only thing that would be different is the last one 'cause it's starts on the amount of years. Like if you told me that now... would mean that he lived there for more years than if you told me that last year. – Donna

We can infer from Donna's analysis that she has overlooked the past tense in sentence one and declares there is no difference in meaning. This would be more of a true statement for the second and third sentence where she correctly states that it "starts on the number of years". The noticeable difference is her not referring to the action as completed in the first sentence. On the other hand, Charlotte inversely makes a comparison with the second and first sentence by claiming they are very similar, when in fact they are not. She mistakenly refers to them as both

being in the past, which is true to a point. However, one action ended, and even though the other action began in the past, it is still relevant and has continued.

Yes, there's a difference in all of them. For example, the first one. It's telling us kind of the same as the second one, but without using the *has*. The second one very similar to the first... um... it's a past tense. And then the third one, uses a different way to describe the amount of time being lived in Florence. – Charlotte

The data analysis from the questions regarding linguistic terminology and practical usage have inversely related results. The analysis shows the difficulty with describing language and remembering linguistic terminology that the participants encountered versus their ability to describe sentence meaning on a practical level.

The second set of sentences aim to perform a preliminary analysis of the past tense versus the past perfect progressive. In this case, Charlotte was the only participant that did not recognize the difference in meaning between the two sentences. Like her misinterpretation of the meaning in the first set of sentences, she inaccurately indicates both sentences as being in the past, which is partially true in that the action in the second sentence began in the past but is still ongoing.

Ok, yeah, in both, it's like a past tense. They're both tenses in the past. Differences... yeah again, the second sentence uses *has been reading* The Great Gatsby. The first one means that he has read it in the past. That's it. – Charlotte

The rest of the group correctly identified the language in the first sentence as being in the past and it is a completed action, while the second began in the past but is still ongoing.

The last group of sentences collects data on the participants' perceptions of the present tense, the present progressive, and the present perfect progressive. Emilia, Davide, and Donna gave accurate descriptions of the meaning of the three sentences. The rest of the group had

difficulty explaining the present tense and present perfect tense meanings. Explaining the use of the gerund also appeared to be of mild difficulty for the participants. One of the errors in interpreting the meaning of the present perfect progressive was that it dealt with something in the past, which it does have a link to the past, but the connection it has to the present was never mentioned.

.... And then Charlie has been practicing... has been practicing... so, like in the past tense. – Mary

Um, in the present moment, and then the third one, Charlie has been practicing his jump shot. Um, is, means he's been practicing it... um... in the past. – Kimberly

OK, so. Charlie is.... So wait...so the first one is Charlie practices his jump shot. He's practiced his jump shot in the past. The second one is like he's currently practicing it. And the third one that he has been doing it in the past as well. – Charlotte

A second error in the interpretation of the present perfect progressive was linking its meaning to the gerund with no distinction between activities currently happening and those starting in the past and are still relevant in the present.

Um... I would kind of say the first one is probably like current.. like he practices it... And then the second one means just means you've been doing it, but like not right now. And same with like the third one, I think. – Lydia

Lydia mistakenly states that the activity is not completed in the moment for the second sentence, which would be the case for the third sentence. The difference between the second and the third sentences is one is happening now and the other not necessarily. Jayden also has some confusion with the third sentence. He correctly identifies the three sentences belonging to the present tense, but he does not successfully make the distinction between the three.

Charlie is practicing his jump shot. I mean, these are all the present tense, obviously... um... But, but it's, it's almost like moving forward. "Is practicing", it's continual. Charlie has been practicing his jump shot. It's sort of the same. – Jayden

### *Cognitive Linguistic Terminology*

Mental spaces are defined as periods in which past, present, and future events occur. Event times are where an event is in time (i.e., which mental space). Speech time is defined as the perspective of an event or action from present time (Infante, 2016, Appendix D, p. 333). In the definition above of periods, Infante refers directly to the different tenses in English. Hence, a mental space (i.e., period) can be any tense in English (e.g., past perfect, past, present perfect, present, future, etc.). Events can be placed in mental spaces to indicate when they happen, and speech time can give perspective on an event or action from the present time (i.e., the moment of speech). Participants were introduced these terms initially through questioning with no background explanation to evaluate their initial perceptions of these ideas without instruction to see how their perspective might change after formal discussion of these concepts.

When asked how tense and aspect foreground and background events in a narrative, the group was split into two main categories. The first group did not feel able to give an explanation because they were still confused about the meaning of aspect. Mary did not openly state she was unsure about the meaning of aspect and attempted to answer anyway.

It tells you if it's happening now or if it happened in in the past or... for.. um... If it happened now or in the past, or if... Umm.... I don't... – Mary

Gary, Kimberly, Donna, and Charlotte openly state they are not certain of what aspect means. They attempt to explain how tense and aspect foreground and background events in a narrative

but not without some additional information and elaboration on the question. Their responses, while non completely correct, did become more refined.

...the tense is what allows a reader or listener to understand if something is happening in the foreground or the background. So, if it's like the present tense, then you know that it's what's happening right now, but if it's not then it will be in the background. – Donna

Uh, So, we can see here how the word *has* is introduced to reference like you know, build onto the verb tense of which past to indicate really what past it's been. Yeah, the word *been* is also.... it helps indicate if it's currently happening, if it's happening, but not right at the moment, or if it's in the past. – Gary

Emilia, Jayden, Lydia, and Davide give a good preliminary explanation considering not being very familiar with the terminology and not receiving any instruction. The underlying tone in all their responses was the placement of activities in time and the level of detail in which the events are explained.

Ok, so I feel like tense plays like the big role. It's like it tells you what is happening, like past, present, future. And then aspect works with it because like it's giving you more like making it more like detailed in a way. – Emilia

Jayden gave some examples of linguistic terms and language to express his ideas.

Jayden: Alright, so, um.... how does tense and aspect work together to foreground events or background events in a narrative? Ok, well, um... I mean you have to look at the context clues that are in the rest of the sentence to really understand how they interact. So, for instance, *Charlie practiced a jump shot. Charlie is practicing his jump shot.*

Researcher: Right.

Jayden: Um... By looking at the... the INGS, for instance, if there's a gerund here would be able to understand that this is happening right now, versus an ED, which...

Researcher: Right, yeah.

Jayden: It's past tense.

The preliminary qualitative data shows the participants have a very shallow understanding of linguistic terminology when referring to language and can explain sentence meaning more easily when given language. Their ability to conduct an analysis of language on a more abstract level appears limited but was somewhat expected given their profile. This information was able to inform the subsequent sessions to help focus on points of interest to fill gaps in knowledge and understanding to form a ZPD.

Regarding speech time, only Donna and Kimberly were able to give an explanation that was closest to how it was defined by Infante (2016). They both referred to when a person was talking and pointed out a potential relation to an event frame without specifying that directly.

Maybe like the... speech time... like, is it the relation of what you're saying to when it happened? (Donna)

Um.. what is speech time? I'm just gonna say that it's like when a person is talking... Probably wrong, but... What is speech time? Like... not for how long a person is talking, but for when they're talking. (Kimberly)

The rest of the group provided answers that did not capture the essence of the definition of speech time on any level as referred to in Infante (2016). A larger amount of the group (e.g., Lydia, Davide, Emilia, Gary) was able to give a decent explanation of an event frame but still was not precise. Lydia's response, while short, was very concise.

The time period of an event, I guess. (Lydia)

In essence, this is what an event frame is. Davide and Emilia's response was slightly convoluted but contained aspects of the definition of an event frame.



Um, an event frame is maybe the, the um, the window of time that something can be happening. So like an event frame of... could be like a week, or a moment, or an unannounced amount of time. – Davide

An event frame is like in a sentence when like you have an event and then like after or before it they like give you a time of like when that event happened. – Emilia

The rest of the group declined to answer by saying they did not know what an event frame was. Lastly, Kimberly was the only participant that provided a definition of mental spaces that could be in line with what is defined above. She stated that it is “where you place an activity”. This would seem to coincide with where events occur in the past, present, and future. The other participants declined to give an answer or did not provide one that resembled the one mentioned earlier enough to warrant mentioning it.

Nine of the ten participants produced an accurate idea of what cohesion means when referring to tense and aspect. Much of the group referred to the text flowing and avoiding confusion on the part of the recipient, while Gary was the only member not able to confidently explain. He does touch on the meaning a bit but is not able to explain it well.

Researcher: OK. Alright, what does the term cohesion mean? How do tense and aspect affect cohesion in a narrative?

Gary: Uh.. cohesion... isn't that understanding? Or understanding the meaning?

Researcher: Not necessarily. When things.... think when something is cohesive, but cohesion would be the other.

Gary: Well, I mean if they don't work together.. it can cause.. a very confusing.... And umm... backward sentence... Umm... For example, for #3, John has lived in Florence for five years.... Um... I don't know.... Has lived in Florence since five years.... or something like that.... They're not really working together then.... Um...

The rest of the group produced answers like what Emilia said.

Yeah, so tense and aspect, So what you're trying to say, like if you, If you mess up like tense and aspect, it's not gonna give you the full meaning of what you're trying to say. It's more like... people are going to get confused. And you're gonna be like that's not what I was trying to say. - Emilia

Lastly, half the group fared well with being able to associate bounded events to events in time that occurred during a specific period and are complete or will be complete; and being able to suggest that unbounded events started or will start at a certain time but have no definitive ending. Jayden, Mary, Charlotte, and Gary were the participants that appeared to struggle with this the most.

### **Group Study Sessions Findings**

This group study sessions followed the preliminary interviews. The topics that were covered in the first session were reintroducing the tense and aspect system in English to the participants and presenting diagrams that illustrate the English tense and aspect system. The presentation was followed up with mapping those visualizations to language. The second dealt with introducing the Italian tense and aspect system and how it compares to English. The third meeting focused on the participants' ability to recognize language that represented and communicated the ideas that are tied to the diagrams they were presented, first in English and then in Italian. The final meeting concentrated on the participants' ability to identify the language in Italian that would communicate the ideas and meanings that correlate to the diagrams that represent the Italian tense and aspect system. The intended result of these group meetings was to increase the participants' awareness of the differences and the similarities that exist between the tense and aspect systems in Italian and in English. Additionally, the participants seemed to have increased their ability to identify the proper language choices in

Italian to convey ideas and tenses accurately like they would in English and minimize the amount of L1 interference.

### ***Meeting One***

To initiate the first meeting, the researcher gave the participants a copy of the diagrams of the tense and aspect system in English that were created and used by Paolo Infante for his dissertation (Infante, 2016, p. 330). The linguistic terminology used in describing the diagrams and communicating concepts by Infante were presented, and participant understanding was verified with examples and a question-and-answer period ensued after the presentation of the diagrams. At the end of this session, the participants were given a short writing assignment to determine if they were able to implement the tenses correctly in English. Any gaps in knowledge or corrections in the usage were subsequently addressed in the following meeting. It should be noted that not all the students followed the directions for the assignment as some wrote separate sentences that did not allow any evaluation of the cohesiveness of the sentences they provided, but just verification of tense.

#### **Linguistic Terminology.**

All the linguistic terminology referred to in the preliminary interview was explained in this session, as well as the diagrams that would be utilized for visualization of the tense and aspect system in English. Participants were given copies of the diagrams and asked to read the diagrams and definitions of the terminology before initiating the explanation at the start of the group session. It was quickly pointed out that the present perfect tense does not exist in Italian and that it would be the focus of the study, while keeping in mind the entire tense system in US English and how it transfers over into Italian. Then, the participants received an overview of the English tense and aspect system.

The definition of tense was introduced as how a speaker or writer views an event in time (Infante 2016, p. 333). These events in time were given a space in which they could exist called mental spaces, which are defined as time frames in which past, present, and future events occur (Infante 2016, p. 333). In these mental spaces were event times, which is where an event is in time (i.e., tense) (Infante 2016, p. 333). Once these terms were established, an anchor point needed to be determined, which was called speech time and was indicated by the picture of an eye located in the present tense mental space so speakers and writers can orient events in relation to the moment when they are spoken (Infante, 2016, p. 333). Infante (2016, p. 333) defined speech time as a perspective of an event or action from present time. Lastly, the term aspect was defined and introduced to the participants as the diverse ways a speaker or writer views an event (e.g., past progressive, past perfect). Therefore, it was made clear that tense is simply when events occurred in the past, present, or future on a timeline, but aspect is what allows further detail to specify to a higher degree of detail what is happening during that event and how it relates to other events on a timeline; hence, tense and aspect working together to foreground and background events.

Following the explanation of the terminology, the participants received an overview of how tense and aspect function in each of the event frames, specifically in terms of how the language is represented in each of the diagrams and how it is interpreted. Referring to the idea of boundedness and unboundedness – introduced during the preliminary interview – an explanation of how bounded and unbounded events could be represented in the form of diagram were presented (Infante 2016, p. 333). Green vertical lines were used to indicate the beginning and the end of an action, and a red dotted line was used to indicate the portion of an action in progress or that has yet to occur with no boundaries indicated (Infante, 2016, p. 333). Lastly, a solid blue line

was used to indicate the portion of an event that it already complete. Visuals on the whiteboard accompanied the explanations to illustrate the deconstruction and reconstruction of the ideas.

### **Tense Diagrams.**

Once the introduction of these terms was complete, the tenses in US English were reviewed on the diagrams' timeline to show when events can happen in relation to each other. The English tense system, like the Italian tense system, shows a progression of past events to future events from right to left, respectively. This is an important cultural similarity that was pointed out given it is activating prior knowledge, and it will serve as a reference point when inner speech occurs. As noted in Chapter Two, participants rely on their dominant language to make sense out of the new concepts in Italian. The main tenses the participants focused on in English were the past perfect, the simple past, the past progressive, the present perfect, the present, the present progressive, and the present perfect progressive. The key language associated with each tense (i.e., went, is going, had gone) that indicates which tense is being utilized was emphasized and linked to the diagrams when analyzing the sentences in unison with the diagrams. The future tense was introduced solely to show the entire spectrum of the tense systems in Italian and English but was not considered a focus of the study.

In addition, an important emphasis was placed on the concept of events that are bounded and unbounded (i.e., the progressive tenses) in terms of the periods in which they took place and could potentially cause confusion for the participants when trying to form the present perfect in Italian by wrongly opting for the past progressive or known as the *passato progressivo* in Italian. This was an important concept to highlight given that the present perfect indicates an action that is still true even though it has a beginning in the past, meaning it has a continuation with no definite ending. This continuation was represented by a dashed red line as indicated in the

diagrams. On the contrary, bounded events were indicated by a starting and ending green vertical line with a blue line in between to illustrate an event has a beginning and a definitive ending, and signaling the portion of the event that happened in between those green vertical lines. Lastly, the term cohesion was explained in its relation to the tense and aspect system. Cohesion was defined as “the flow of ideas and sentences from one to another that connects old and new information” (Infante, 2016, p. 333). This was introduced to demonstrate that meaning can be distorted if the tenses are not arranged properly to order events in time; hence, rendering the text or the speech incohesive and potentially incomprehensible.

### **English Language Awareness.**

During the first session, some clues began to emerge that hinted towards native speakers no longer having a high level of awareness in their native language. Some confusion appeared with the use of the past participle and language referencing the memory or the past. For example, Gary asked for clarification on the use of the verb *remember* to better understand which mental space the language *I remember* refers to. It was brought to Gary’s attention that *I remember* would still be in the present mental space and it would be *I remembered* that would be in the past mental space. Once Gary is guided with some scaffolding, he correctly responds and adjusts his error by repeating the correct phrase and concept.

Gary: now with the verb remember... uh... also... work as like I was like I remember thinking.

Researcher: I remember is in the present....

Gary: But it’s indicating the past because you’re referencing a time in the past by saying I remember.

Researcher: You’re referencing the past by saying I remember, but I remember would be the present. I remembered would be the would be the past tense version of it.

Gary: Ok.

Researcher: So yeah, you’re right about what you’re referencing, but it’s just think it’s the actual sentence.

Gary: So, I remembered thinking.

Researcher: I remembered thinking is now happening in the past, exactly.

As the session progressed, the discussion opened to questions and the application of the concepts described above that puts language in visual form. Given the present tense is a heavily used tense in English, with which most individuals are familiar, the discussion started with the present tense as the example for identifying language.

Researcher: I'm just gonna start out in the present tense. John lives in Florence. [wrote on the board] What tense is that?

Group Response: It's the present tense.

Researcher: Ok? [participants acknowledged it is the present tense by nodding] What are the key words? What is the key word in this sentence? That... yeah..

Donna: Lives.

Researcher: Lives. Yeah, so, we know by *lives*... we know we're in the present. What does the present tense usually tell us about something?

Gary: It's current.

The general feeling was that the present tense language was rather obvious to the participants and what kind of meaning it meant to convey. In subsequent discussion, a distinction was made to the group what the present tense and the present progressive intended to convey.

Researcher: John eats, you know, Tom watches the game. You know something like that, but it's also something that is in general truth or visual. Like, you know, I eat steak on Sundays. Right? It's an action that happens repeatedly, but it's not something that I'm necessarily doing right now. But it's something that I do generally speaking, so general truths, present tense.

Researcher: That's where you're at right there.

Researcher: What if we wanted to say this in the present progressive now? How would we change this sentence to reflect the present progressive? Remember progress.

Davide: John *has been living*.

Researcher: Ok, but present progressive. John *is living*.

Davide: Right.

Researcher: Yeah, so we have, uh, John is living in Florence. Now notice *is living*. Those are the key words.

Researcher: They tell us we're in the present progressive. It's happening right now.

Despite hinting towards the present progressive happening right now, Davide mistakenly chose language that is representative of the present perfect. Small discrepancies in the correct terminology to use, along with the misinterpretation of what the tense meaning conveys, continue to emerge during the discussion. Davide later corrects his mistake when asked to convert a present tense sentence into the present perfect.

Researcher: Now I what if we wanted to make a reference... We wanted to make a reference to the present perfect.

Researcher: John lives in Florence.

Davide: John has been living in Florence. [corrects his mistake from earlier]

The participants tended to have some difficulty with the meaning and labeling of the progressive tenses. Davide's error was not the only one that surfaced. Jayden also made an error using the progressive tense as the discussion switched from the present mental space to the past mental space when trying to solicit what the correct transformation and key language would be to indicate a past action that happened before another one.

Researcher: What if we wanted to say now, not that it's in the past... what if we wanted to give it meaning to another item that happened in the past to make you believe that it was an item that happened before that past item? so we're going to go a step further into the past.

Jayden: John was living?

Researcher: That's the progressive,

Jayden: Ok, so they're different.

Researcher: So, you could say right here, like, if you wanted to say John was living.

Researcher: So, you can go to the past, if you want the past progressive. [Wrote examples on the board] With these two, so John *is living*. John *was living*. What if we wanted to have the past perfect and say John... so we have an item that happened, but we want... we want to infer that John lived before this thing happened in Florence?

Davide: John *had been living*.

Researcher: John, you can say that yeah. John had been living or John had lived

Davide: yeah.



Researcher: John *had lived* in Florence. So, we have that one as well. The key words.. *had lived*..

Gary: This *had* is necessary?

Researcher: Yeah, it is. Yeah, because for the past perfect you must have *had lived*.

So that's going to go in there. Alright you guys with me so far? [All students acknowledge they are]

The progressive tense, both in the past and present mental spaces, appeared to give the participants some difficulty. The past tense and the past perfect seemed rather easy for the group to comprehend after some examples and then providing the right answers with some scaffolding.

### **Assignment Results.**

The participants were asked to complete an assignment by writing a paragraph between 5-7 sentences that includes the use of all the tenses covered in the first meeting. They were also asked to ensure that the paragraph was cohesive, and the tenses followed the structure indicated in the diagrams.

Donna created six diagrams and accurately matched the language with how the diagrams should have been formed from the diagrams provided to her. However, the diagrams she drew to reflect the meaning of her sentences were not all accurate, as she had just two out of six diagrams completely correct. She seemed to have issues with the past progressive, the present perfect, and the past perfect. Emilia also appeared to have issues with the past progressive and the past perfect. The past perfect was missing a second diagram to indicate a past event occurring before another, and the past progressive, like Donna's diagram, had an event frame of the past tense overlaid on an event frame indicating the past progressive, which suggests the participants likely matched up their sentence with the diagram on the handout without thinking through the meaning when they were drawing their own diagram. Emilia's use of the past perfect was incorrect and the word *had* was not included before the past participle in her sentence to order

the place the events properly on the timeline. As a result, Emilia's sentences were not cohesive in making clear distinctions when events were happening in references to others.

Kimberly also showed the same tendency to leave out the key word *had* when attempting to use the past perfect. She wrote, "Before she moved to the city, Jenny lived on a farm." This was also the case with Emilia's past perfect example, "After I watched the movie, I went to sleep." While it is true in English that consecutive sentences in the past tense would indicate actions happening immediately following one another, Kimberly's and Emilia's attempts to clearly mark the events on a timeline were not successful. Charlotte was also confused by the past perfect as her diagrams were correct, but her key words did not include the word *had*. Charlotte used part of her example using the past tense to explain the past perfect but also excluded the word *had*. The tendency among the participants is to use the past tense for both events that would require the past perfect, which would cause misconceptions in Italian regarding the placing of events on a timeline. Overall, the group was able to successfully diagram and use the past tense without any issue. The problematic areas that the data suggest are the past perfect, the present perfect (mostly with drawing the diagram than actual sentence creation), and the progressive tenses.

### ***Meeting Two***

The initial half of the second meeting dealt with the participants reviewing a set of questions in which they are trying to remember the key language associated with the English tense and aspect system – presented in the first meeting. During the first meeting, an emphasis was placed on the differences between what a blue solid line, a red dotted line, and a green line represent in the diagrams (Infante, 2016, p. 333). It was intended that the participants might use these ideas to create diagrams for visual representations of the tense and aspect system in Italian

and English. The participants were given time to answer the questions on their own, and then they were instructed to work in groups and check their ideas and answers with each other to see if they agreed on the meaning of those three types of lines and definitions of the linguistic terminology (i.e., event frame, mental space). The participants were given a total of five minutes to answer those questions and work in groups. After the five-minute time limit, the researcher began to check in with each group to gauge their progress.

The first group the researcher checked on was Gary and Emilia. They were both asked what the meaning of a green line was, and Gary responded by saying it is “a beginning and end time of an event”, to which Emilia agreed. That question was followed by the meaning of a solid blue line and Gary explained that it is a moment in time between the green lines, and Emilia nodded in agreement. Lastly, they were asked what a red-dotted line represented. However, Gary did not explain the red line correct initially because he said it was “an event that happened in the past” – which is possible if it is past progressive, but he does not give an accurate explanation – and he did not refer to the progressive tense. However, with some clues, Gary was able to confirm that the red dotted line was an action in progress (past or present), and he used several examples of the gerund form of verbs to support his definition. Both Emilia and Gary successfully explained what speech time is, which according to them is when the person is speaking during an event in the present. Regarding the definition of a mental space, Gary and Emilia agreed on defining it as something that refers to the tenses and the time an event is happening.

The second group, consisting of Kimberly and Mary, successfully defined an event frame as the time when an event happens or when the event occurs, which seems to imply tense. They also were correct in defining a solid green line as the beginning and ending of an event.

Kimberly's definition of a solid blue line, to which Mary agreed, was stated as something signifying a definite beginning and end to an event, which was fairly accurate. They also accurately described the meaning of a red-dotted line as something that is an ongoing action for an undetermined time or when something is "still occurring". Kimberly followed up on that by explaining that it is a continuous action, and we do not know when it will finish. Speech time was also accurately as being in the present and "seeing it in your mental space", which Mary explained as your viewpoint when she was asked for additional clarification. Their definition of a mental space was precise, as they referred to it as the tense in which an event takes place.

Davide, Donna, and Lydia were the third group of participants, and they defined an event frame as the timeline of an event when it is happening, which might be interpreted as tense. Donna specifically defined it as "a period when an action happens". Davide, Donna, and Lydia all accurately defined what a solid green line symbolizes, which they stated was the starting and the ending point of an event. They universally agreed that a solid blue line was the portion of the event that already happened. Davide defined a red dotted line by using a sentence to illustrate the meaning, which was *John is living in Atlanta*. To further support his language choice, Davide also states that those dotted lines represent a continuing action that is happening now. Donna also adds that it is "a continuous action and an action that is in progress". However, Davide added a solid blue line to his explanation which would not be representative of the present progressive, and he appears to confuse the present perfect with the present progressive. Lydia also mentions that the red dotted lines could be something that might continue, but she never describes it as an event happening right now. The researcher intervened by giving an example of the past tense with a start and end time. And the researcher gave the example of the past progressive to show a continuous event that happened in the past but did not have a start and end time in that mental

space. Davide and Lydia defined speech time as “the present tense version of an event” and with further clarification it was revealed that their intention was to define it as “your perspective in relation to other events in time”. Davide and Lydia accurately described mental spaces as the past, present, or future tense in which events occur, notably naming only three tenses and ignoring the perfect and progressive tenses. Donna gave a precise definition of speech time as defining it as the specific tense you are using but she also never specified that it could include more than just the past, present, and future tenses (i.e., progressive, perfect).

The fourth group consists of Charlotte and Jayden. When asked what they define as an event frame, Jayden responded “it is similar to a mental space and speech time” and “it is an actual representation of it and it's a model to describe what happens during an event”. This definition seems ambiguous and seems slightly off base, but Jayden could have been referring to tense when he says, “to describe what happens during an event”, but further clarification would have been needed. Charlotte did not respond personally but nodded her head in agreement. Jayden again takes the initiative to define what a solid green line represents by correctly stating it represents the beginning and end of an event (i.e., or the boundaries). Charlotte confirmed she agreed with Jayden and added that she wrote down the same answers to those questions. Regarding the definition of a blue solid line, Charlotte responded by saying that it is part of the action that has already happened, and Jayden agreed. The red dotted line was defined by Jayden as a continuous action. Following up to be sure Jayden understood it could be both a past and present event that is progressive, the researcher introduced that possibility and Jayden immediately agreed that it could be. In addition, the researcher reiterated that it could be an action in progress that could progress indefinitely into the future. When asked about speech time, Jayden invited Charlotte to answer the question. Charlotte defined it as the time that is used to

specify an event and interpret that event. Jayden defined it as a way for a person to interpret a specific action. Given both definitions seemed vague and did not appear to coincide with the definition of speech time given by Infante (2016), The researcher intervened to define speech time as the moment when someone speaks. Furthermore, the researcher explained that speech time serves as the anchor point of a narrative to allow events in time to be situated cohesively and to describe events in relation to speech time. Charlotte and Jayden did not give the impression they understood what a mental space was very well, as Jayden defined it as a time frame, and Charlotte was unsure and asked if it is the actual tense a mental space refers to, and the researcher confirms that is correct.

Once the participants had a chance to answer the review questions, check their answers, receive feedback, and review the answers as a group with the researcher, the next activity consisted of the researcher providing sentences in English for which they would practice drawing diagrams based on those sentences before introducing the Italian tense and aspect system. They were given approximately 15 minutes to complete the activity and draw the diagrams of the sentences to materialize the concepts they had learned up until that point. Moreover, it was an opportunity to see how well the participants would be able to reason the concepts in their dominant language and verify their conceptualizations of tense and aspect in English with their new knowledge of the diagrams. Before they were instructed to begin, the researcher wrote an example to illustrate what the participants needed to do on the board that was analyzed as a group, which was *Alex has been studying law at Harvard*. The participants were reminded that they must evaluate the sentence to look for keywords that indicate when the event is occurring according to the timeline and diagrams they were given. When asked what the keywords in this sentence are, Jayden responds that the key words are by *has been*.

Moving on to the second step of the analysis, a diagram was drawn on the board with a solid green line signifying the start of Alex studying law at Harvard. A blue solid line indicating the portion of the event that was complete up until the speech time of this event was drawn like the diagrams show. The participants were informed that when we reach speech time that the event is still true and could continue, which has not technically ended and is not known for how long it will continue. To indicate this portion of the event that is continuing, a red dotted line was drawn to represent a continuous action that goes on into the future with no definitive end. To complete the analysis and drawing, a box was drawn around the green solid and blue solid line with a dotted line in red to signify the event frame. The sentence *Alex has been studying at Harvard* has now been illustrated and placed into diagram form to demonstrate the present perfect tense in English in visual form. To be certain the participants view each tense as a separate event frame, they are reminded that each sentence should have a diagram that represents the verbs or tenses being used in that sentence to convey the meaning to avoid the perception that one event frame was representative of a compound sentence. As a reminder, a timeline indicating that time is going from left to right, which would be the past to present respectively, and they should pay special attention to the cohesiveness of the parts of the sentence when making their linguistic choices. Jayden also brought up to the group that each sentence could be labeled as seen in the diagrams as L1 or L2 or L3. For example, *Charlie had written his thesis before he went to work in Italy* could be labeled in sections. L1 could represent *Charlie had written his thesis*, and L2 could represent *before he went to work in Italy*. This allows the participants to correctly label the chunks of language in the event frames should there be multiple tenses interacting with each other in the sentences. At this point, the participants are given time to work

on the diagrams in small groups while the researcher goes around to evaluate their progress on the diagrams and provide clarification when necessary.

Emilia and Gary were the first group questioned to see how they are progressing. It appears that Gary confused the past tense with the present perfect. The researcher pointed out to Gary that his interpretation of that sentence was as a completed action. Gary paused for a second, and he realized that it was an action that could still be happening and corrected himself. Emilia also agreed about the continuation of the action described in the sentence. Both Emilia and Gary were directed to the English tense and aspect diagrams for more clarity (Infante, 2016, p. 338) for a sentence example that illustrates a similar meaning. When they utilized the diagram in the Appendix, they realized that the event did not end and proceeds into the future which was the only error in their rendition of the diagram.

Moving on to the next group of Mary and Kimberly, Mary seemed to be confused with the present perfect, and she said that there is a beginning but also makes a reference to the past just like Gary did in his initial evaluation of this sentence. Mary said that *has studied* does not mean it's ended yet, but Kimberly and Mary seemed confused as to which diagram they could have possibly attributed that meaning to on their handout. Both Mary and Kimberly were partially correct in their drawing of the diagram because they had a red dotted line and a beginning point with a box around the event frame, but they were still unsure about the meaning of the diagram and were given more time to think it through after the scaffolding that was provided.

In the next group (i.e., Davide, Lydia, and Donna), Davide was confused about two events happening back-to-back which refers to confusion regarding how to draw two diagrams with one sentence. Davide seemed to focus on the fifth sentence, which confused him the most,



that includes the past perfect in English. A short review of how to identify key language that would indicate tense was given to him and a reminder to match that up with the diagrams and the sentence examples when possible. In agreement, Lydia confirmed that she understood that two boxes are needed for the fifth sentence because they contained two verbs that represent separate event frames. Once Davide completed his diagram, the researcher made a reference to the diagram in the handout that illustrates the past perfect and the past tense to show how it sets up the two ideas and how it correlated to the example he is working on. Consequently, Davide seemed to understand how to separate the two ideas and place them appropriately on the timeline according to when they happened. A second question from the group came from Lydia, who asked about sentence three and if there were two boxes that are necessary to describe the meaning. While this is like the fifth sentence – *Peter was reaching the finish line when he slipped* – in that there are two verbs with two ideas, this one includes an event that occurs and interrupts another one. As far as the key words, Lydia identified the correct language in both sentences. However, she was confused on how to draw the meaning on a diagram. The researcher gave Lydia an example sentence on the diagrams to follow. The confusion for her seemed to be how both events happened at the same time but still distinguish a completed action from a continuing one when they are related. Donna also had an issue with sentence three, but all her other diagrams were correct. The third sentence appears to be a point of confusion for the group in general, mainly due to having an event frame within an event frame. Once some clues were given, the group understood their mistake and how the diagram functions. The portion of the diagram that was correct came from Donna who correctly assumed that the dots going through the event frame should be there to indicate a continuous event happening while another

event was completed. Given that only a few steps were necessary to lead the group in the right direction, it likely meant they conceived the idea correctly and were close to a final solution.

In the next group, Mary and Kimberly also had an issue with sentence three. They are unsure of how to represent two events that are happening at the same time in one event frame, which in this case would include the past progressive and the past tense. Once it was explained that an event frame could be placed in another event frame Kimberly immediately understood how the diagram worked. Mary also confirmed that she understood the diagram and how the events can be represented in one diagram. Mary and Kimberly both easily explained the solutions to sentences four and five which dealt with the past and past perfect, numbers four and five. In both cases, they had the correct diagrams and expressed no difficulty in explaining why they designed the diagrams the way they did.

About 30 minutes into the session, the researcher instructed the class to focus only on the first page of the activities in the interest of time. The exercises were taking longer than expected given it was necessary to spend time on clarifying more English tense and aspect concepts on the diagrams. While it was assumed the participants would have had some difficulty with learning the diagrams of the English tense and aspect system, it was not calculated at this level. It should be noted that this speaks to the idea that language learners have issues in conceptualizing even their own native language. Given the examples on the back page would have been too much to cover in one hour, they were assigned as individual homework to avoid missing out on feedback on the sentences for which they had already completed diagrams. At this point, the researcher continued to visit with the different groups to assess their work for additional issues with the other examples on their worksheet, which would be addressed to the entire group before the end of the session.

As the final round was made, Emilia and Gary needed some additional support for sentence number three, which dealt with placing a box around their event frame to complete the diagram. They also had difficulty with sentence four which dealt with the past and the past perfect. With additional support, Gary and Emilia were able to understand that one event frame would be needed to represent one finished action, and Emilia was able to figure out that two boxes were needed to show the events in the order in which they happened in the past, whereas Gary was still confused. When asked which event happened first in the past, Gary was the first to respond with the correct answer and identified the language which appeared to show some level of understanding, even if he still did not understand how the past and the past perfect should have been represented on the diagrams. Lastly, Jayden and Charlotte, completed the activity and asked to have it checked for errors. After reviewing all five sentences, the researcher verified that Jayden and Charlotte correctly diagrammed all five sentences correctly. In the interest of testing their depth of knowledge further, the researcher asked them to identify which event happened first in the past, and Jayden responded correctly by indicating the portion of the sentence that happened first.

At the 34-minute mark of the session, a group explanation of the diagrams began in the interest of time. The problematic sentences such as sentence three and sentence five on the worksheet were reviewed, and the group was given the solutions. Once again, in the interest of time, there was no analysis of the sentences on the backside of the worksheet to avoid skipping feedback on the sentences the group focused on during the session. Instead, the additional sentences were given as a homework assignment for the group to complete for additional practice to enhance their understanding of creating diagrams of the tenses in English.

### **Italian Tense and Aspect.**

The researcher gave the students a handout of the Italian tense aspect system in the form of a diagram. Given the students did not have a large vocabulary in Italian, the purpose of the diagram was to recognize the language associated with each tense and in which mental space it belongs. The participants were given the opportunity to make a comparison from the English tense and aspect system to the Italian tense aspect system. Given the importance of inner speech and its reliance on an individual's dominant language, the purpose was to associate meaning in time and space between English and Italian, if possible.

The Italian tense and aspect system was introduced in the form of similar diagrams to those that were used to describe the English tense aspect system. A commonality between English and Italian is the conception of time progressing from left to right with the left representing the past and the right representing the future. The participants were informed that the tenses listed on the diagram were not all the tenses that exist in Italian, but these were the tenses that had the most similarities to English. The researcher reminded the participants that the present perfect tense does not technically exist in Italian, so the similarities and the differences between the two systems offered a learning opportunity. Different kinds of verbs in Italian were also introduced to the participants given that the different verb conjugations in Italian generate different endings that may confuse a beginning level language learner.

At the 38-minute mark, the researcher asked the participants about the *trapassato prossimo* on the timeline of the Italian tense and aspect system regarding what tense in English it might represent. Donna responded by saying that it represented *I had* something. Donna was able to reproduce an example in English that would indicate the same meaning in Italian. However, Donna was unable to recall the official name of the tense in English. After several guesses Donna was able to successfully identify the past perfect as the English equivalent of the

*trapassato prossimo*. Donna initially identified it as the past progressive. It is worth noting that the participants generally confused the progressive tenses with other tenses in English. The researcher followed up that explanation by saying that the *trapassato prossimo* in Italian is a past action that happens before another past action, just like the past perfect functions in English. The researcher continued presenting the Italian tense and aspect timeline by introducing the *passato prossimo*. The participants were asked what the differences were when moving to the *passato prossimo* from the *trapassato prossimo* and they mentioned that the endings of the words would change and that it only requires one word to express something in the *passato prossimo* and two words in the *trapassato prossimo*. The participants were able to identify that there was no present perfect equivalent in Italian when we examined the diagram of the Italian tense and aspect system. It was pointed out to the participants that a potential faulty translation could result if you were to misinterpret the meaning of language and tried to directly transfer meaning from English to Italian. Future tenses were introduced to illustrate the idea that a future event can precede another future event and show its equivalent in English. The participants did not demonstrate any difficulty or express any concerns regarding this concept.

The prepositions *per* and *da* were introduced because they also have different conceptual meanings in Italian and are often used with past tenses and completed events. Diagrams of the prepositions were handed out to the participants for visual conceptualization. The example, *John has been living in Florence for five years*, was introduced to demonstrate that the preposition *per* (i.e., for in English) cannot be used to transmit the same concept in Italian regarding the present perfect. The participants were shown on a diagram that the preposition *da* (i.e., since or from) has a starting point and is unbounded with no ending. However, the preposition *per* is typically used in Italian for a period that has started and finished (i.e., bounded). These two prepositions

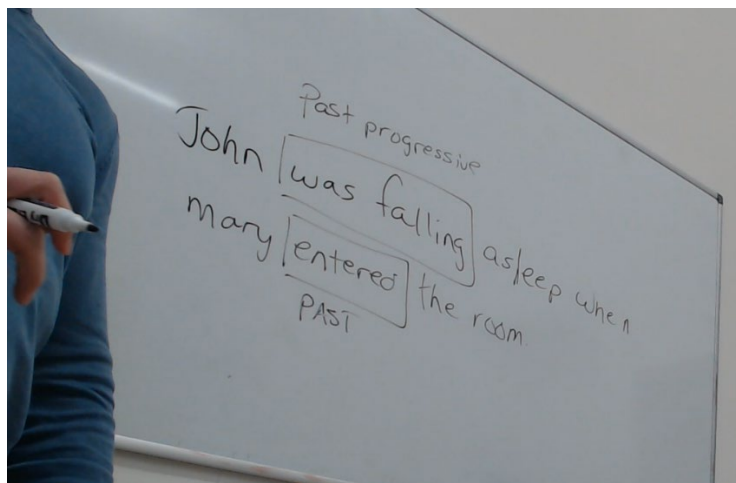
are used in different ways but can be confused with the translations since and for in English. The phrase *John has been living in Florence for five years* is written on the board and the prepositions are explained. A second sentence is written on the board, which is *John has been living in Florence since 2005*. In addition, the idea of a truth value when passing from the past tenses to the present tenses in Italian was introduced. Conceptually things in Italian can only still be true, or they are false, when dealing with the past versus the present. So, a tense that conveys the idea of an event happening in the past and continuing into the future does not conceptually exist in Italian. Donna and Davide brought up some examples such as *I was talking* when we were examining the present perfect example *John has been living in Florence for five years*. There seems to have been some confusion with the past progressive and the present perfect possibly due to the use of the gerund in both tenses, which correlates to some of the previous confusion the participants demonstrated during the previous activity. Kimberly and Davide appear to have a moment when things became clearer. Kimberly asked if the past tense would be used if the sentence on the board in Italian were to change. It was explained to the participants that Italian speakers use the present tense when something is still currently true and the past when something is no longer true. This seemed to help clarify Kimberly and Davide's confusion with the usage of the past and the present in Italian.

### ***Meeting Three***

The third session initiated by distributing a list of sentence to the group to analyze. An example was written on the whiteboard which was *John was falling asleep when Mary entered the room*. The participants were instructed to find the key words in the sentence. After receiving feedback from the group, the key words *was falling* were circled along with *entered*. The group was asked to identify what tenses are present in these sentences in English. Once they identified

them in English, then they were instructed to identify the equivalent in Italian, if there is one. They were encouraged not to use the English tense and aspect diagrams and to try and name the tenses from memory first. If they could not recall after a few short moments, then they were encouraged to refer to the diagrams for the correct names of the tenses.

Figure 1: Progressive & Gerund

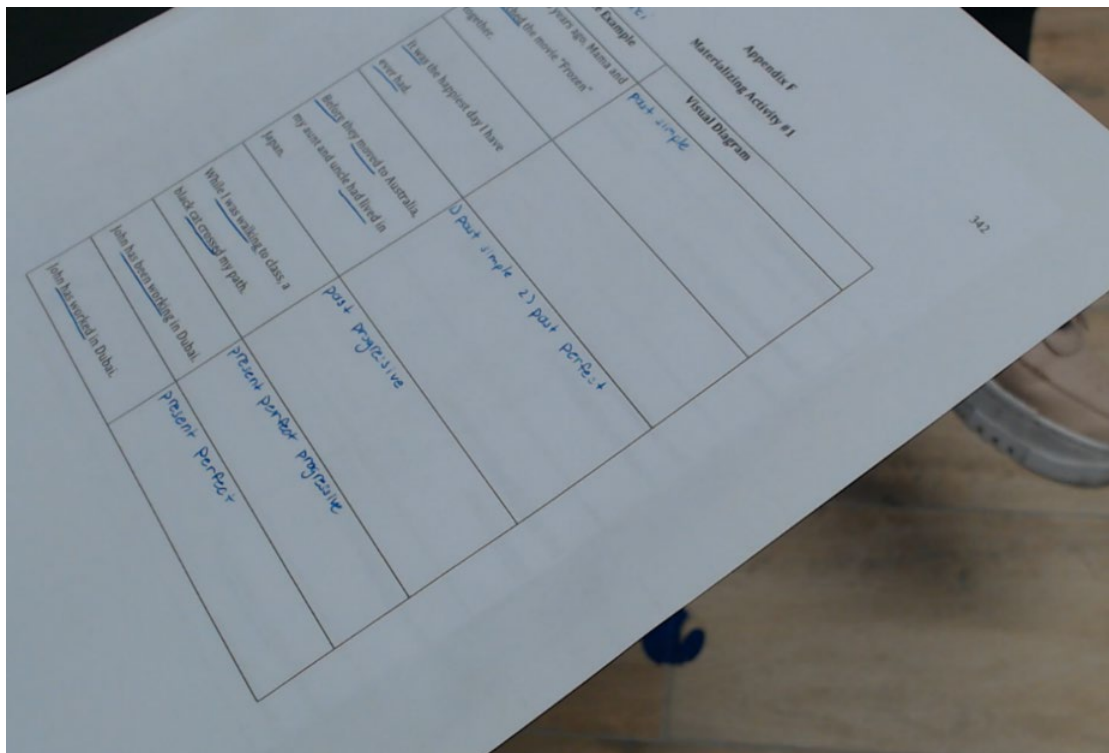


Lastly, the participants were asked to identify a tense like that in Italian, if it were to exist. This was meant to compare the differences between Italian and English or if they are the same. The group was instructed to work on these sentences alone first and then to check their answers with their other group members. For this round, it was not necessary to draw any diagrams but to identify the language and then associate it with the Italian tense and aspect diagram.

After a few minutes, the researcher began to assess the progress the group made. Donna had a few questions on the sentences, but she seemed to identify the tenses correctly. In working with Mary, they seemed to have identified all the important language correctly, but an answer is

noticeably missing from the second sentence. This example was a bit complex in nature and did not have a straightforward relationship with the diagrams that were handed out. As a result, the appeared to have some difficulty as there was no clear path to follow.

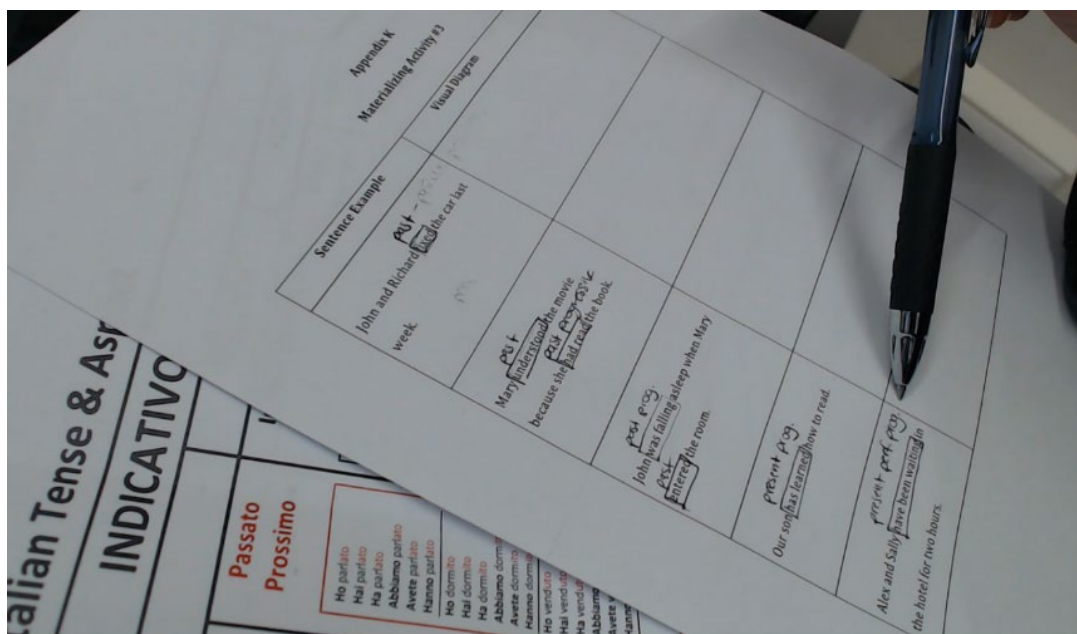
Figure 2: Materializing Activity



The focused shifted to Kimberly and Charlotte at the eight minute and forty second mark of the video. Kimberly is comparing some of the language in English to the tense and aspect system diagram in Italian with the identifying language that is associated with that tense in Italian.



Figure 3: Materializing Activity



Kimberly incorrectly identified the present perfect with the present progressive in sentence four and incorrectly identified the past perfect as the past progressive in sentence two. To not directly point out Kimberly’s error and give her an opportunity to self-correct, the researcher indicated that she correctly identified a past progressive tense in sentence three which were the words *was falling*, which was our initial example at the start of the session. An emphasis was placed on the ING ending of the word *falling* and a hint was given that *has learned* does not communicate the same idea even if some continuity remains with the truth value of the statement as it proceeds into the future. Charlotte correctly identifies the present perfect in the sentence where Kimberly made her error, which helped Kimberly realize her mistake.

Figure 4: Materializing Activity

| Sentence Example  | Visual Diagram               |
|---|------------------------------|
| <p>Past Simple<br/>John and Richard <u>fixed</u> the car last week.</p>                                     | <p>Presento<br/>Prossimo</p> |
| <p>Past<br/>Mary <u>understood</u> the movie because she <u>had read</u> the book.<br/>past progressive</p> |                              |
| <p>Past Progressive<br/>John <u>was falling</u> asleep when Mary <u>entered</u> the room.</p>               |                              |
| <p>Present Perfect<br/>Our son <u>has learned</u> how to read.</p>  |                              |
| <p>Present Perfect Progressive<br/>Alex and Sally <u>have been</u> waiting in the hotel for two hours.</p>  |                              |

However, they both associated the language *had read* with the past progressive and not with the past perfect as they should have, at least initially. Charlotte identified the remainder of what she had completed correctly.

Davide and Jayden seemed to get most of the tenses correct. Sentences three and five seemed to be where some confusion occurred for Davide and Jayden. In sentence five, Davide did not underline the word *working*, and Jayden missed the word *worked* in sentence three. However, despite these minor details they identified the great majority of the key words in all the sentences and perhaps they needed more time to check their ideas with each other.

Figure 5: Materializing Activity Jayden

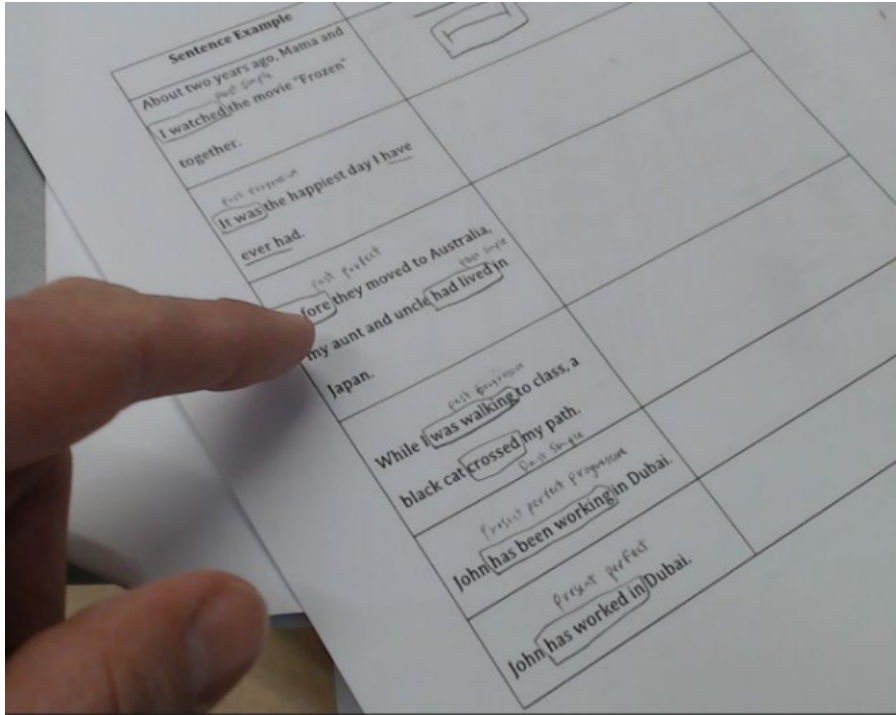
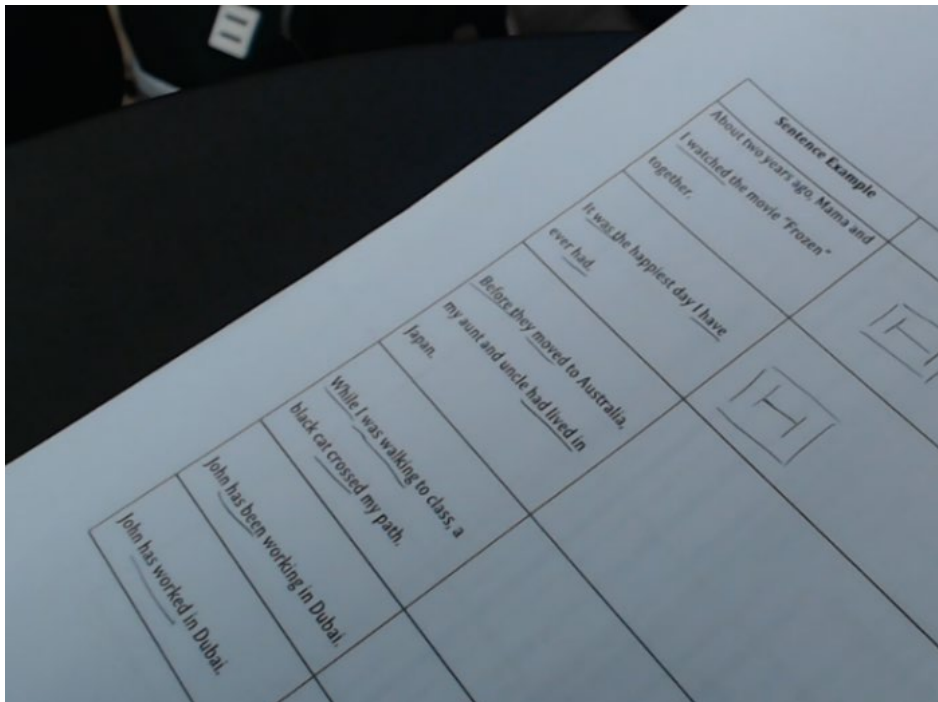


Figure 6: Materializing Activity Davide



It should be noted that Lydia and Emilia did not attend the third session. In addition, the researcher noticed that not all participants were correctly following directions. They found the key words related to the tenses in English, but they were drawing diagrams to reflect that language instead of identifying a potential equivalent tense in Italian, if it existed.

After the first round of checks, the participants were given additional time to finish the exercise and identify the tenses in Italian that they thought would convey the same idea in English. Therefore, once it was determined via dynamic assessment that the participants were on the correct path with identifying key language and English tenses, they were encouraged to utilize the Italian tense and aspect diagram to compare that to their analysis of the sentences and identify a possible equivalent tense in Italian.

Upon reviewing the Italian tense and aspect diagram, the participants were still confused about the use of the *passato remoto*, which the researcher had mentioned should not be confused with the *passato prossimo* (i.e., past tense) or the *trapassato prossimo* (i.e., past perfect) given Italians typically use it in literary texts, novels, and to describe something in the very distant past. In fact, Jayden incorrectly identified the *passato remoto* as the *passato prossimo*, but the researcher intervened to ask him if he was certain that was the correct tense in Italian.

Figure 7: Italian Tense & Aspect Diagram



He corrected himself by saying that it was used for past events that were very far into the past or used in writing books, which is correct. Jayden then identified the *passato prossimo* as the correct tense that matches the past tense in the sentence in English. As shown in the figure above, the *trapassato remoto* is left blank because it is out of use in Italian and the *passato remoto* is shown as even further in the past to indicate a longer distance from speech time and the present.

Potential factors for the participants' lack of understanding could be numerous but notably likely due to the short amount of time they had to review the information with respect to how much needed to be covered. In addition, it is possible they may not have been able to put the necessary time into studying the diagram to make connections, or it may be their proficiency level in Italian interfering with their ability to reason at this point. In fact, Kimberly asked a

similar question about the *trapassato remoto*, like Jayden did. Kimberly did correctly identify the *trapassato remoto* as something not used much in Italian, but she seemed very unsure of herself. It was pointed out to Kimberly on the Italian tense and aspect diagram to pay attention to how the timeline moves and the past tenses get closer to the present. Kimberly responds enthusiastically and positively by saying, “Oh! Ok!”

Figure 8: Italian Tense & Aspect Diagram



Kimberly asked if the *trapassato prossimo* was like the past progressive in English, which is not correct. It was explained that the past progressive in Italian was not placed on the diagram, because it would not necessarily be in a specific order in reference to the other tenses but could be something that happens in the past continuously and eventually finishes at some point. The main emphasis was to have the participants correctly order the events in which they occur from the oldest event in the past and progress towards the present depending on how the sentence was structured.



Donna and Mary got all the responses correct in English and she was adding in her responses for the potential Italian equivalents. Donna attributes her correct answers to spending two hours that day in Italian class and “it still being fresh in her mind.” Mary appeared to work independently and sporadically with Donna to confirm her answers, but the contact between them was not consistent, which was not clear why.

Figure 9: Visual Diagram Activity

| Sentence Example  | Visual Diagram                            |
|---|---|
| About two years ago, Mama and I <u>watched</u> the movie "Frozen" together. | past simple<br>Italian → passato prossimo |
| It <u>was</u> the happiest day I have ever had.                             | 1) past progressive 2) past simple        |
| Before they moved to Australia, my aunt and uncle had lived in Japan.       | Italian → 1) past simple 2) past perfect  |
| While I was walking to class, a black cat <u>crossed</u> my path.           | Italian → past progressive                |
| John <u>has been working</u> in Dubai.                                      | present perfect progressive               |
| John <u>has worked</u> in Dubai.  | Italian → present perfect<br>Italian      |

Davide and Jayden were checking their answers with each other to verify if they got the correct Italian tenses. One of the issues that came up was Jayden could not recall if it was the past perfect or the present perfect that existed in Italian. After some hints and a few wrong attempts at answering that questions, the researcher gave Jayden the answer, which was the present perfect. In addition, there seems to have been some common confusion about the progressive tenses in

English and when to use the gerund or where it falls on the timeline on the diagrams in English and Italian. Davide and Jayden got confused with identifying which tense does not exist in Italian, which would be the present perfect. Furthermore, it did not appear that they recalled that in previous meetings it was mentioned that there is a truth value in Italian, with events in the past, as being over, are no longer happening (i.e., true). The goal of the researcher was using the diagram together with the truth value explanation to help lead Jayden and Davide towards the correct answer given there is the *trapassato prossimo* (i.e., past perfect) listed on the diagram, which would logically lead them to deduce that the present perfect does not exist in Italian; hence, an example of English speakers confusing an event beginning in the past and proceeding into the future as still true, as in the case of their question. After that brief explanation, Davide was able to identify a sentence with language that had the past progressive and the present progressive tenses.

Jayden incorrectly asked if the *trapassato prossimo* was the Italian equivalent of the past progressive, something that also confused Davide. Eventually, Jayden corrected himself and says that the past perfect in English is the equivalent of the *trapassato prossimo* and the past in English is the equivalent of the *passato prossimo*. This seems to be a common error among all participants in this meeting as they attempt to find the past progressive on the diagram which is not located on the diagram. The diagram was meant to show the differences in tense regarding what mental spaces the language associated with them demonstrates. This could be a potential fix in future studies to show the past progressive and the present progressive on the timeline in relation to the other tenses in Italian to illustrate they do not necessarily happen in a certain order and must be further detailed with markers to specify when the progressive events happen.



Interestingly, Davide asked if the second sentence on the page refers to the past progressive in English given it contained the word *was*. Hence, it may be useful to point out that the use of the word *was*, while being the past tense of the verb *to be*, gave Davide some issues because he associated the word *was* with the past progressive, and kept thinking that if the sentence contained the word *was* then it must mean that it was the past progressive, which is not the case. Davide continued to forgo adding the ING form of the verb with the verb to be to create the progressive tense.

Figure 10: Visual Diagram Activity

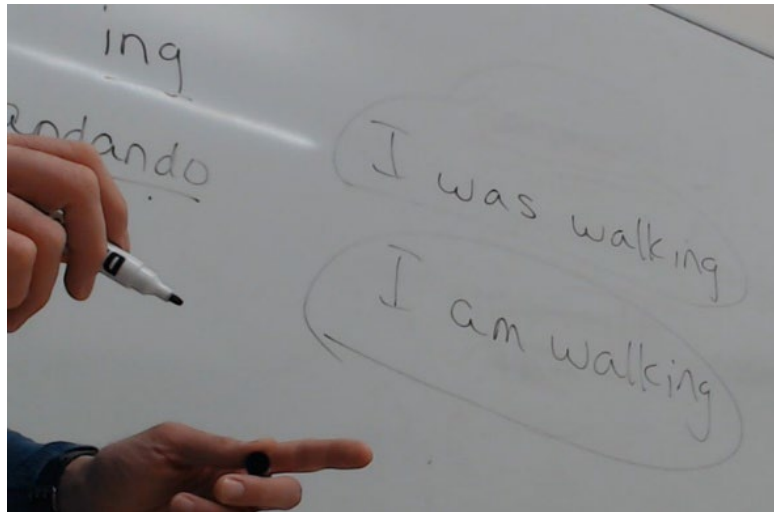


While the word *was* is a key word for the past progressive in English, it does not indicate that a sentence is utilizing the past progressive because it could just be referring to the conjugation of the verb *to be* in its past form.

At the 18-minute mark of the video, the participants were given a few more minutes to work on the exercise in pairs before we went over it as a group. Returning to Davide, he had a question about sentence three regarding the words *I moved*, which is the past tense and which he correctly recognized. Davide appears to have an issue with placing the past and past perfect together and identifying them on the timeline. As the conversation continues, the heart of the issue is identified as Davide and Jayden explained their logic. They referred to sentence two on the worksheet by saying that the entire sentence was in the past perfect and did not make the connection of separating the pieces of the sentences into two separate events (i.e., two event frames). The sentence includes one part in the past tense, and the other part in the past perfect. They reasoned that if you use the past perfect then you must have another item in the past, so therefore it is all inclusive (i.e., you can't have the past perfect without the past). While their logic could be followed, it was pointed out that they cannot associate language with other tenses unless the form requires it to make that tense and all parts of that form should be present. Otherwise, the tense will be incorrectly labeled.

At the 24-minute mark, a group review of the exercises begins. Given there were some issues with the progressive tenses and how they work in English and Italian, a brief review of the ING form of verbs was conducted in English given it was identified as a point of confusion during DA of the activity.

Figure 11: Gerund Explanation



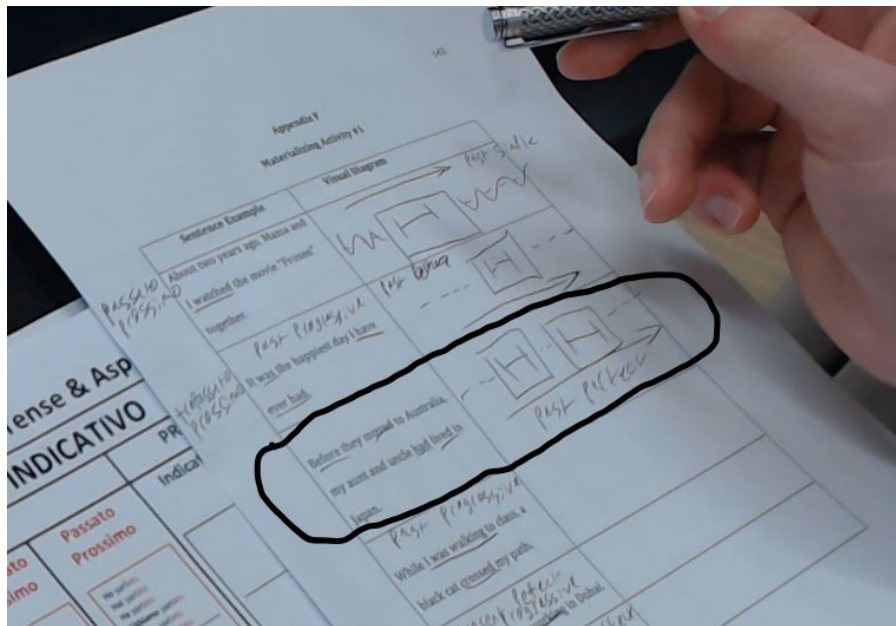
The first item the researcher reviewed was the use of the ING form in both Italian and English. The researcher wrote an -ING form of a verb on the board to indicate an ongoing action in the past, or the present, and reiterated that the meaning of the ING is virtually the same in Italian and in English. At which point, Davide brings up the example of *I have been living*, which seems to confuse him with the progressive tenses and the present perfect. Of course, this example is a progressive tense, but it is the present perfect progressive and should not be confused with an item that happened and was ongoing in the past. It should be noted that the discussion of meaning was happening regarding the participants native language, English. Despite having a lifetime of experience using the language and being at the level of an undergraduate education, there was still a good deal of confusion with how the tenses are used and what they intend to communicate. This data suggests that trying to explain these concepts in the target language (i.e., Italian), without addressing them first in the native language, may compound the problem if

instruction does not explicitly state their meaning and conceptualization, assuming this is possible, and the class is a homogeneous group.

At the 25-minute mark, a review of the first sentence begins. In the first sentence, the key words *I watched* were identified, and the group agreed that it was the past tense or simple past. When asked what tense this was in Italian, if it existed, Jayden responded by saying the *passato prossimo*, which was correct. Answers were solicited from the group for the second sentence, *It was the happiest day I have ever had*, and the answers varied. Some of the group said past progressive, because the word *was* in the sentence, as indicated above with Davide. However, it was made explicit to the group that the past tense would be the correct response because there was no ING verb that followed the word *was*. For the second half of the sentence, Jayden correctly explains that *have ever had* was the present perfect, which is correct. This sentence appeared to give the group some problems as a whole and likely points to the need to explicitly state the forms of the verbs in the progressive tenses which were not included on the diagrams.

Moving on to the third sentence, Jayden repeats the error that he made with Davide by trying to label the entire sentence as the past perfect. Their same logic followed as before that you cannot have the past perfect without having the past included in a part of the sentence. Effectively, they did not separate the pieces of the sentence properly to make a valid analysis. Instead, this time Jayden tried to label this sentence as the past simple, which is not the case, because there are two ideas in the sentence.

Figure 12: Visual Diagram Activity



The first half of the sentence reads *Before they moved to Australia*. The group was asked what the key words are, and they responded correctly by identifying *moved*. The focus moved to identifying the tense in English, and Jayden responded correctly with the past simple. Following Jayden's response, the group was asked which tense would be its equivalent in Italian. Kimberly responded correctly by indicating it is the *passato prossimo*. The attention of the group turns to the second half of the sentence, *my aunt and uncle had lived in Japan*. Davide and Kimberly respond simultaneously saying it is the past perfect, which is the correct response. To reinforce understanding, the group is asked to pinpoint the keywords in the sentence, and they responded correctly by saying *had lived*. Lastly, the group was asked which tense in Italian would convey the equivalent meaning and Davide, Kimberly and Jayden responded by saying the *trapassato prossimo*, a correct response.

Next, the participants were asked to identify the key words in the first half of the fourth sentence, *while I was walking to class*. The group responded by saying the key words was *walking*. Davide adds to the answer by stating the correct tense in English, which is the past progressive. This could be a sign that Davide has corrected his logic, despite his trouble understanding earlier, and now understands how the past progressive is formed. The second part of the sentence was *a black cat crossed my path*. The group identified the word *crossed* as the key word and associated it with the simple past in English. Lastly, Davide adds that the equivalent tense in Italian is the *passato prossimo*, which is appropriate. Jayden mistakenly wants to combine the past progressive with the past tense in Italian. However, Davide, who was having the same issue earlier, intervenes and explains to Jayden that is not the case and that both pieces of the sentence should be treated separately. Davide also goes on to explain that the past progressive does exist in Italian, which is not true, but Davide likely believed that because the past progressive in Italian was not listed on their diagram.

By the introduction of the fourth sentence, the group is used to the order in which the responses are given. Initially, the participants jointly identify the sentence *John has been working in Dubai* with an incorrect tense. However, they immediately self-correct and say it is the present perfect. After which, they identify *has been living* as the keywords in the sentence. When asked for an equivalent tense in Italian, the group responds by saying it does not exist, and they are correct. The goal of this exercise was to get the group to understand identify that the present perfect does not exist in Italian before we try to construct it in Italian.

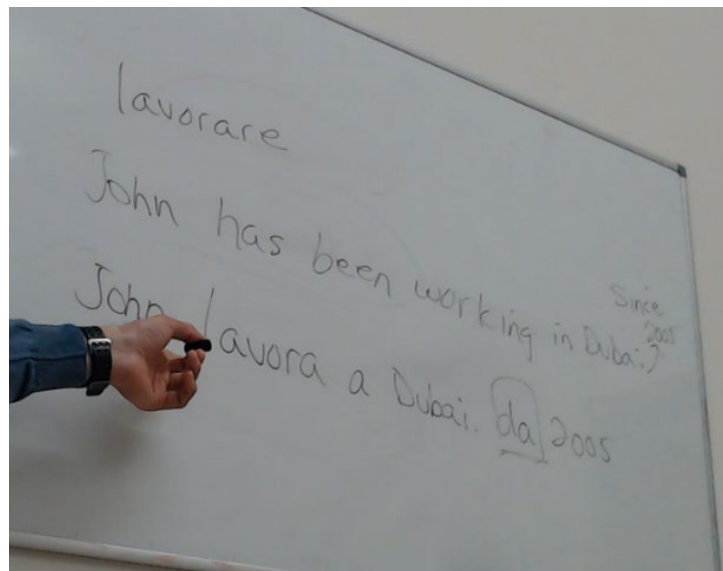
As a lead into the fifth sentence, the past and present progressive tenses are written on the whiteboard to re-emphasize that the tenses exist in Italian but were not on their diagram.

The key difference was that they cannot be placed in a particular order on the timeline because they are just past and present events that happen over an unspecified period. Following that explanation, the fifth sentence is written on the board, *John has been working in Dubai*. The participants correctly identify the key language and tense in English, which is *has been working* and the present perfect as the correct tense. Given this tense does not exist in Italian, the opportunity was taken again to explicitly state this concept to further solidify the idea in the minds of the participants. It was pointed out that there is no tense that connects the past and the present together, as is the case in English with the present perfect. Nonetheless, the same meaning can be conveyed in Italian but using different means. The participants were informed that when an event is placed in the past tense in Italian that the event is complete and is no longer true in the present. After establishing this key difference between the Italian and English tense and aspect systems, the researcher gave an explicit explanation of how to convey a present perfect meaning in Italian.

Based on the logic of tenses having a truth value in Italian between the past and present, the group was asked what tense they think they would use if they attempted to form the present perfect in Italian. Davide responded correctly by choosing a present tense but inaccurately signals the present progressive as the solution. Following Davide's incomplete answer, Kimberly correctly stated the present tense in Italian should be applied. Given the vocabulary for beginning level speakers of any language is limited, the activities in Italian were very controlled to mitigate the lack of sufficient vocabulary in Italian so that it might not have been a formidable obstacle in developing the concepts in the study. Hence, it was determined that the participants would learn how to recognize the associated language with each tense as it relates to English, which would theoretically form the basis for continuing to study Italian in the future.

In addition to the sentence in English, the Italian translation is written on the board along with the verb *to work* in Italian, which is *lavorare*. Attached to the translation *John has been working in Dubai*, the word *since* is explicitly written to illustrate a connection to the past. At this juncture, it was necessary to bring the prepositions *per* and *da* into focus which were mentioned during the introduction of the Italian tense and aspect system diagram to demonstrate how to connect a present event that is still true to the past. Without soliciting a response from the group, Davide offered the preposition *da* as a possible solution which was the precise answer. This gives conveyed the meaning that *John has been working in Dubai since 2005*.

Figure 13: Present Perfect & Italian Meaning



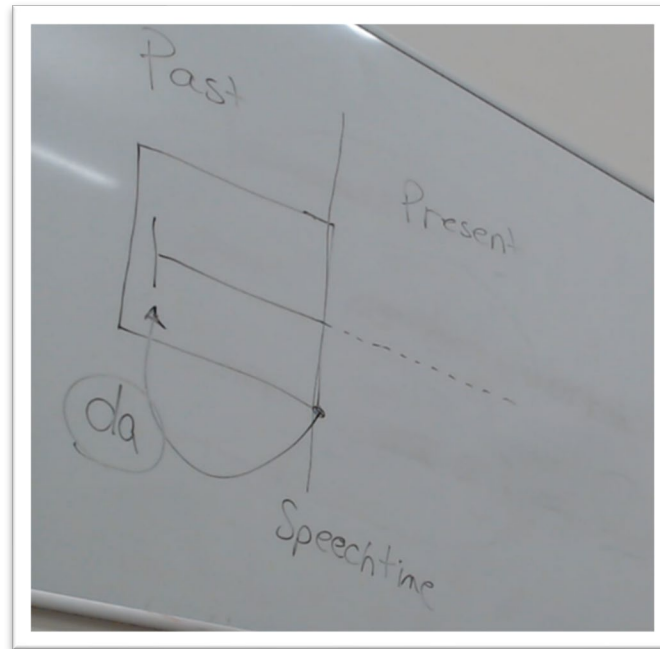
At the 36-minute mark, the researcher asked the group to attempt to create a diagram of the present perfect in Italian. In retrospect, this activity is likely too difficult for the participants to complete. However, it was thought to be an opportunity to see what they might be able to



produce at this stage of the study given there are no known diagrams of the present perfect in Italian like the diagrams Infante (2016, p. 333) created in English for ESL learners.

Donna and Mary came up with a pretty good version of what the present perfect might look like in Italian. Kimberly and Charlotte also had a strikingly similar diagram. While their start to forming the diagram looked promising, Davide did not include a red-dotted line which is fundamental in indicating the event may continue and was still unsure if he should have one; Jayden had a red-dotted line, but he had the diagram flipped which would indicate the action happening in the past and continuing further in the past. The diagram that Donna, Mary, Kimberly, and Charlotte was drawn on the board. The diagram resulted looking like the same present perfect diagram that the participants saw in their hand out. In taking advantage of this moment, it was mentioned that in Italian to the left side of speech time is the past and to the right side of speech time is the present. Once again, it was specified that in Italian something cannot be communicated in a past tense if it is still true. Hence, a line was drawn from speech time with an arrow to a point in the past with the Italian preposition *da* next to it to indicate the preposition that hooks a present event to the past, which still may continue for an indefinite period.

Figure 14: Italian Preposition DA



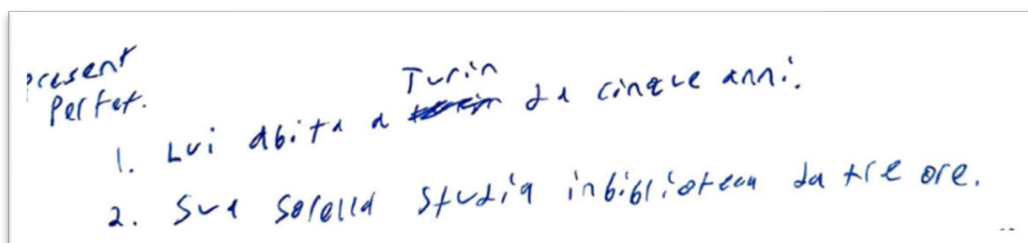
### ***Final Meeting***

At the start of the last group meeting, the participants were given a bank of words to work with in groups. During this activity, the participants had to form eight sentences: two in the present tense (*presente*); two in the past (*passato prossimo*); two in the past perfect (*trapassato prossimo*); and two in the present perfect (i.e., does not exist in Italian). To avoid any problems with vocabulary, students were given a very structured handout with specific language in Italian and their English equivalent but not exact translations. The objective of the exercise was for the participants to identify the correct language in Italian that would allow them to convey the tenses mentioned above to measure their understanding of what they know about how time and space is conceptualized in Italian. They were allowed to use the diagram of the Italian tense and aspect system to help with their reasoning.

Dynamic Assessment of the group initiated with Gary and Emilia. Gary starts with successfully completing two sentences in the present tense. Emilia was still reviewing the instructions and the information on the handout. Lydia and Charlotte were working together but are also working independently before they check their answers with one another. Kimberly and Mary are working together, and like Gary and Emilia, they started with making sentences in the present tense. Gary got the researcher's attention to ask a question about the present perfect and refers to a tense on the Italian tense and aspect handout. Emilia intervened and said, "doesn't present perfect not exist in Italian?" Emilia is correct in this case, but it demonstrates that the participants appear to not always recall that this is the tense that does not exist in Italian, despite repeating and illustrating this multiple times throughout the study.

Moving over to Jayden and Davide, Jayden correctly explained that the preposition *da* needs to go with the present tense to form the present perfect in Italian. Jayden explains that *da* means from something and it is continuous, which is correct. In addition, Jayden also explains that the preposition *per* is for a closed period of time, and it is used in conjunction with past tenses because it refers to a completed event, which he explained correctly. Jayden's sentences reflected that his understanding of the prepositions by creating two perfectly constructed sentences in the present perfect in Italian.

Figure 15: Participant Activity



To further verify his understanding of the use of the prepositions and forming the present perfect, Jayden was asked what the prepositions represent in terms of boundaries. While he was not able to explain the meaning using linguistic terminology, he explained the meaning in layman's terms that *da* means *from* and is an open-ended period of time. With additional scaffolding, Jayden was able to explain that the preposition *per* is closed, which is the opposite of *da*, and used in past tense sentences to indicate finished events.

On that same note, Kimberly wanted to verify her understanding of the present perfect in Italian, and unsure of herself, states that the prepositions *per* and *da* should be used when forming the present perfect in Italian. While Kimberly was correct about the preposition use in English, she erroneously states that the preposition *per* could be used in this case, likely owed to mental calquing (Danesi, 2015). With some guidance, Kimberly was reminded how the prepositions are conceptualized differently in Italian and do not necessarily convey the same meaning, and her mistake appears to stem from literal translation. It should be noted that no explicit hints were given but rather just raising awareness that the prepositions should be treated differently. At this point, Kimberly explains that *da* means since, and *per* means for, and now indicates that the preposition *for* (i.e., *per*) is used for past tense sentences that represent completed events. To solidify her point, she explains that the phrase *for five years* means it is no longer true in Italian, which is precise.

Next, in checking on Lydia and Charlotte, Charlotte was still relying on English first to translate her sentences into Italian and did not appear to be interacting with Lydia to complete the exercise. During this assessment of their progress, Lydia had a question similar to Kimberly's but deals more with how to interpret the language when thinking in English – note that Lydia was not present at the previous meeting but did seem to acclimate quickly to the exercise. Lydia

was having trouble with interpreting the Italian language *lui abita a Firenze per cinque anni*, which translated literally would mean *he lives in Florence for five years*. As Lydia is explaining her difficulty understanding the meaning, she recognized that something did not sound right about the phrase when interpreted in English. With an uncertain tone, Lydia asked if the statement conveys the meaning *was living*, which mistakenly includes the progressive tense, even though on some level the present perfect does have a progressive portion to it. Given this phrase represents something that is currently true, the idea of a truth value between the past and present in Italian was raised to Lydia. During the intervention, Charlotte interjected and mentioned the word *while* to indicate a continuous event, but she also referred to the past tense for when the event began. They were made aware that the event began in the past, but it is still true and not completed. As she processed this information, Lydia said the word *since* to indicate a link to the past for an event that is still going on in the present but did not mention the Italian preposition.

At this juncture, Lydia was reminded that if an event is still true in Italian but has a beginning in the past, then there needs to be a link. And interestingly, Charlotte and Lydia, get closer to the present perfect in English, but left out the past participle. Instead of saying *he has lived in Florence for five years*, they responded by saying *he lives in Florence since five years*, which would be a literal translation from Italian to English. Charlotte came up with the example *he has lived in Italy since college*. While focusing on the words *he has lived*, Charlotte was able to explain this connection to the past and that the event is not over. Lydia asked if the word *had* can be used instead to express this idea, but it is pointed out that this would refer to a completed action, so Lydia seemed confused on the boundedness and unboundedness of the words *has been* and *had been*. With further scaffolding, an emphasis was placed on the words *has* and *had*, and

the examples *he has a pen* vs. *he had a pen* were introduced to demonstrate the truth value and then connected to *he had lived in Florence*. At that point, Lydia appeared to understand the truth value and said that *he had lived in Florence* means he used to live in Florence but now he no longer lives there. Therefore, when posed the example *he lived in Florence* and asked how this could still be true, Lydia used the example *he has been living in Florence* to describe the present perfect in English, which put her on the correct path to the type of meaning she needs to communicate in Italian. Lastly, Lydia was given the possibility to choose between two prepositions and she was encouraged to think about them to generate the meaning of the present perfect in Italian by thinking about boundaries.

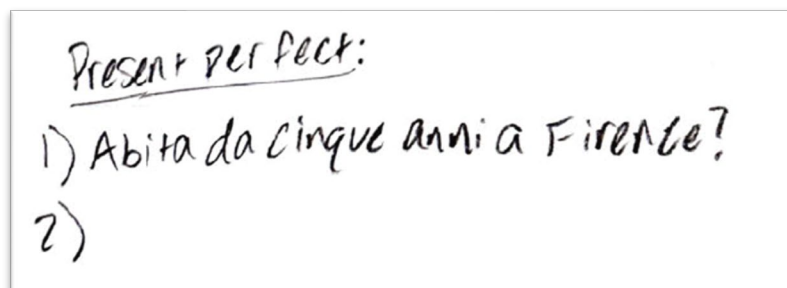
Proceeding on to Jayden and Davide, Jayden was having difficulty pairing the word *aveva* in Italian. Jayden correctly recognized the form *aveva* as being part of the imperfect in Italian, but this tense normally describes a continuous completed action in the past or something one used to do. Therefore, it does not get placed on the Italian tense and aspect timeline because the morphology of the language only places it in the past and would require more markers in the sentence to specify when the event happened regarding other events (i.e., unbounded in the past). Jayden was given a hint on the diagram of the Italian tense and aspect system, and he immediately appeared to understand how he could move forward by using the diagram. It should be noted that the participants often failed to consider how the combination of the *imperfetto* (i.e., imperfect) and the *participio passato* (i.e., past participle) work in conjunction to form the *trapassato prossimo*, which would be the past perfect equivalent in English.

Emilia and Gary were also reminded about the use of the prepositions in Italian and their importance in forming the present perfect, which still appeared to be a confusing point for the participants. The prepositions were omitted from the worksheet to give the participants the

opportunity to choose between them and assess their recollection of their use and significance. To be fair, it should be noted that Emilia missed the last session, and this might have been why she was having difficulty with using the Italian prepositions and remembering their purpose in the study. Therefore, the researcher gave some scaffolding to Emilia regarding the differences between the prepositions in terms of boundaries with *da* and *per* to bring the concept into focus and help guide her towards the correct response. In addition, she was encouraged to think about their literal translations which were *since* and *for* respectively.

On that same note, literal translations of the fragments of the sentences were provided on the worksheet and interpretations of the actual meaning were omitted to allow the participants to make inferences, when necessary, by using their new conceptual knowledge. In fact, Lydia was still confused with what the present perfect looks like in English because she wrote the literal translation *he lives in Florence since five years*, which obviously does not sound correct to her phonetically. By confirming that she was right in how she interpreted the phrases without any adjustment and letting her know there was an important omitted portion of the translation, she seemed to have understood how to move forward as seen below in Figure 16.

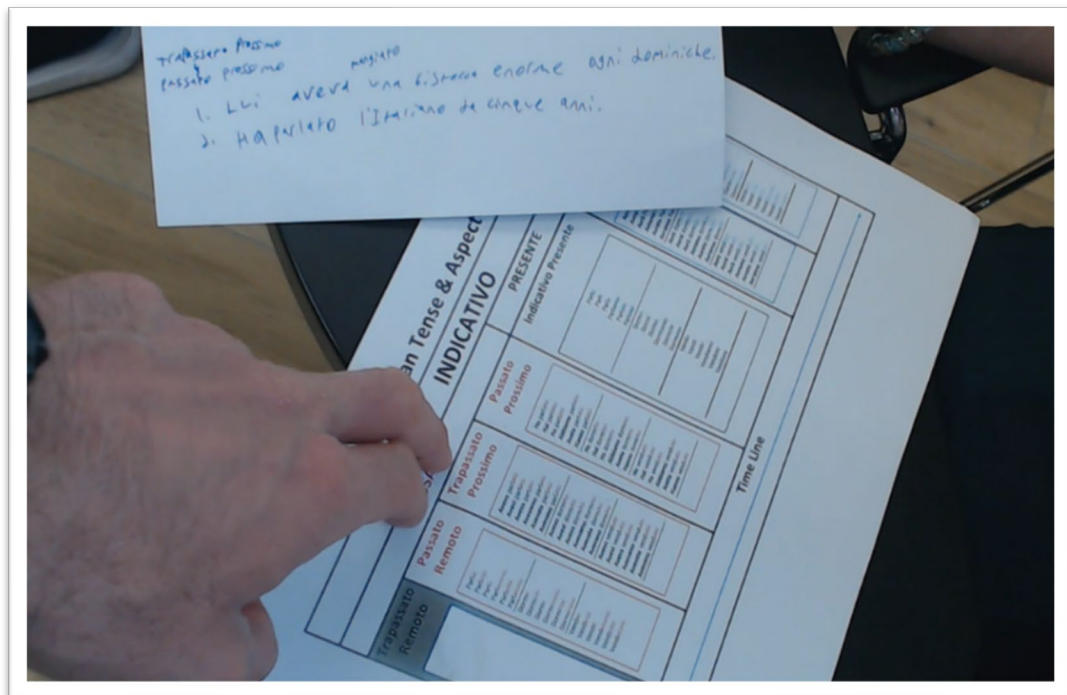
Figure 16: Participant Activity



Perhaps it was because of lack of time, but it is clear in the figure above that Lydia did not feel comfortable yet with the present perfect in Italian as she only provided one example by the end of the session, even if her only example was correct.

Jayden had a similar issue with failing to consider the conceptualizations in Italian when specific language is paired together. Jayden is confusing the imperfect (i.e., *imperfetto*), which in Italian would indicate a habitual past activity or an ongoing past action that eventually is completed, with the past perfect (i.e., *trapassato prossimo*). By encouraging Jayden to review the diagram as pictured in the Figure 17 below, Jayden is directed to the specific language that represent event frames in Italian.

Figure 17: Italian Tense & Aspect Diagram



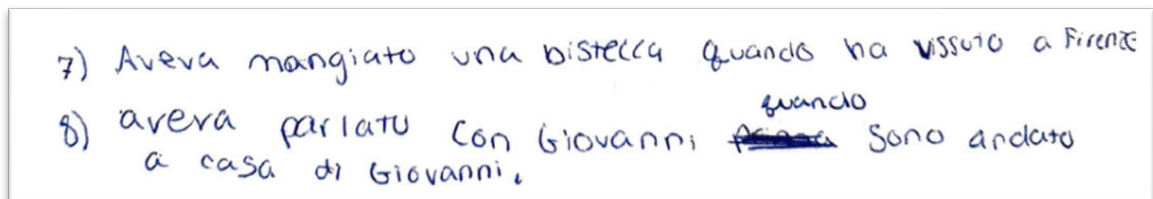


The *trapassato prossimo* is a combination of the imperfetto plus the past participle (i.e., *participio passato*). Visually, this could confuse an English speaker into thinking that because the imperfect conjugation of the verb is present then it would take on solely that meaning. However, the imperfect plus the *participio passato* (i.e., past participle) indicates the past perfect in Italian, which is shown in the Figure 17 above on the timeline to show where this type of mental space is relative to the other tenses. To fix his error, Jayden wanted to eliminate the phrase *every Sunday* in his example, which would still not give the desired meaning of *he had eaten an enormous steak*. Instead, it would convey *he used to eat steak*. This is explicitly pointed out to Jayden, and the researcher reminded him that the *trapassato prossimo* represents a completed and not habitual action. However, the researcher advised Jayden to review the timeline to compare the mental spaces and how the *passato prossimo* and the *trapassato prossimo* compare and how they function together in a sentence. A general announcement was made to the group given it became evident the *trapassato prossimo* appears to be confusing them. Like the advice given to Jayden, the researcher recommended to the group to use the *trapassato prossimo* and the *passato prossimo* together in a sentence as an idea.

As the researcher continued to circulate among the groups, Gary was still unsure if the present perfect exists in Italian. However, Emelia asserted that there is a way to convey the same meaning in Italian, but she cannot remember. The idea that something could be true now or no longer happening was introduced to Gary and Emilia again – an event in Italian in the past is no longer true once the speaker opts for past mental spaces to describe the event, rendering no current connection to the present or the future. Gary and Emilia were prompted to give examples of the present perfect in English to see if they could identify it. Ultimately, they were not able to provide examples of the present perfect in English, but once explicit examples were offered, they

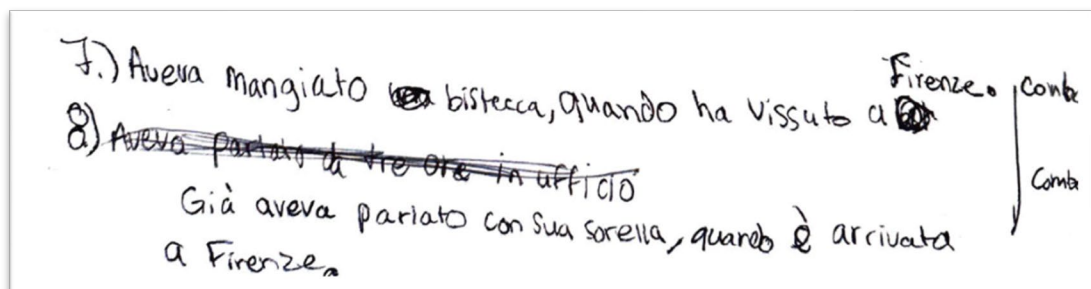
remembered what the present perfect represents in English and were urged to think about it further. Additionally, Emilia sounded confused with the *trapassato prossimo*. The example *I had already finished my homework when he arrived at my house* was given to guide Emilia toward the correct conceptualization along with clues towards two past actions and a reference to a potential order in which they occur. Using leading questions, the idea was to allow both Gary and Emilia to arrive at the correct conclusion with further analysis using the additional information they were provided.

Figure 18: Participant Response



7) Aveva mangiato una bistecca quando ha vissuto a Firenze  
8) aveva parlato con Giovanni <sup>quando</sup> ~~sono~~ Sono andato a casa di Giovanni.

Figure 19: Participant Response

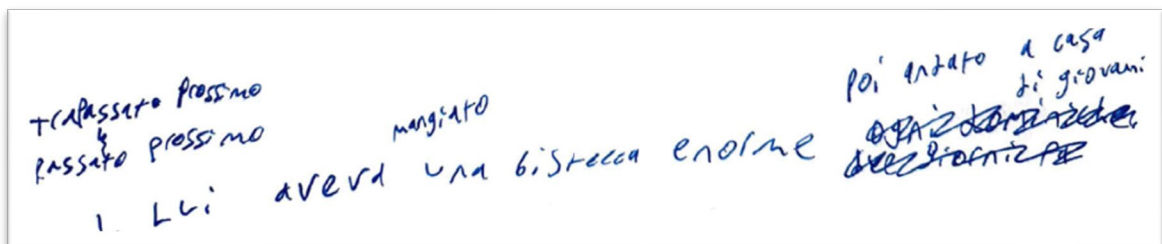


J.) Aveva mangiato ~~la~~ bistecca, quando ha vissuto a <sup>Firenze</sup> ~~Firenze~~  
8) ~~Aveva parlato di tre ore in ufficio~~ Combr  
Combr  
Già aveva parlato con sua sorella, quando è arrivata a Firenze.

As seen in the figures above, they get close to a solution, but their use of the word *quando* indicates their dilemma in trying to have two events clearly separated in time versus one happening at the same time as another.

After having confirmed Kimberly and Mary have eight cohesive and conceptually correct sentences, Davide asked for help on forming a sentence using the Italian prepositions, but the request was referred to Jayden instead to serve as a teaching moment and discover if Jayden understood the material well enough to guide Davide correctly. He adequately provided an explanation of the use of the prepositions and correctly advised *per* in the case of events that are bounded (i.e., completed in the past). While did not clear up Davide's doubts on the use of the prepositions, they used flawed reasoning when using the *trapassato prossimo* as shown in Figure 20 below.

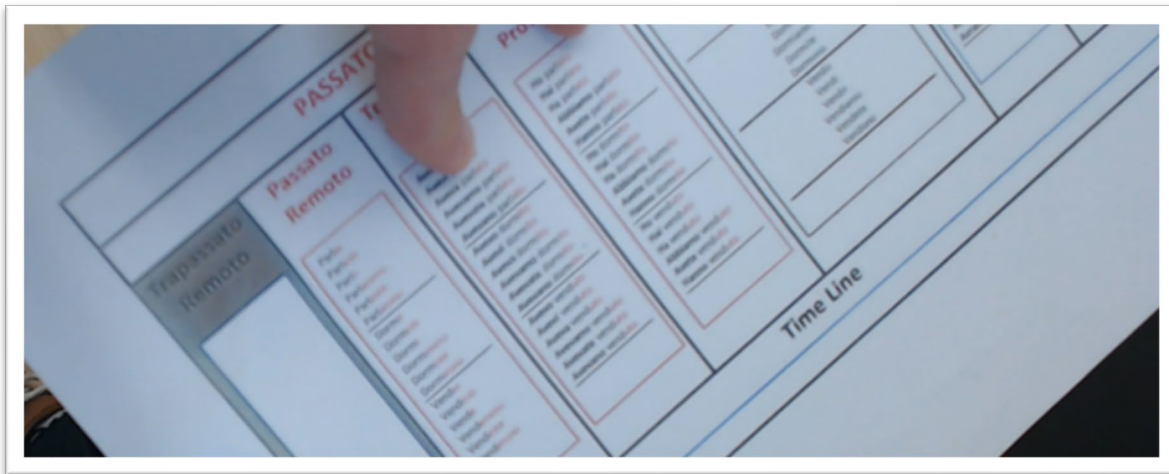
Figure 20: Participant Response



As seen in Figure 20 above and prior to correcting his error, Jayden still wanted to use the *trapassato prossimo* by itself without detailing an order of events which would include an event frame in the *passato prossimo*. Once again, the Italian tense and aspect diagram is referred to and

the order in which events happen is emphasized. Given his continued misconception of the *trapassato prossimo*, it is explicitly highlighted that the *trapassato prossimo* is the equivalent of the past perfect in English. Furthermore, the researcher explained the relationship between the *trapassato prossimo* and the *passato prossimo* again. The objective was to illustrate that the events happen in a specific order, and which language is used to convey that idea.

Figure 21: Italian Tense & Aspect Diagram



In Jayden's example, *he had eaten an enormous steak two days ago*, the meaning was dissected using the Italian tense and aspect diagram. With only one past event taking place in his example, the *passato prossimo* can be used and no order of events needs to be specified – *he ate a steak two days ago*. Jayden was shown on the diagram, because there is no additional event that needs to be accounted for, that the simple past in Italian could have been used to convey his original

sentence by covering up the *trapassato prossimo* and showing only the *passato prossimo* to emphasize the relationship between the tenses and the order of events in time.

Figure 22: Italian Tense & Aspect Diagram



After a few seconds of reflection, Jayden offered an alternative example, *he had talked with Giovanni for three hours, when I arrived*, which was much more cohesive and a better representation of how the *trapassato prossimo* should be used.

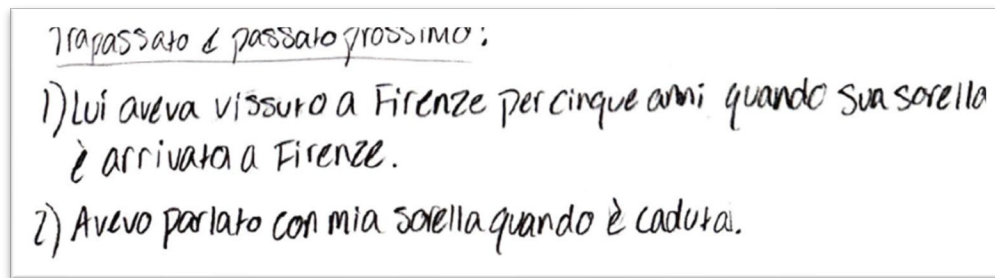
At the 22-minute mark of the recording, the researcher asked the group to present an explanation regarding their linguistic choices in the sentence structure. Gary and Emilia correctly explained their reasoning for the present tense in Italian by saying that we do not know when it is happening, but it is a true event that happens from time to time (i.e., habitual). They explained their use of the past tense in Italian as something that happened and is completed, such as *I went to Giovanni's house* or *sono andato alla casa di Giovanni*. Regarding the *trapassato prossimo*, Gary and Emilia described their example as the first portion of the sentence indicating an action

further in the past that happened before the second past action in the second half of their example, which is accurate. They highlighted the use of the *passato prossimo* and the *trapassato prossimo* together. Emilia reinforces their explanation with an example in English, *I had eaten* to indicate a past event that happens before another past event, and Gary agreed with her.

Moving forward to Charlotte and Lydia, Charlotte mentioned that she is still somewhat confused about the present perfect in Italian. She wrote the sentences in English first and then attempted to transfer them into Italian. Upon further examination, Charlotte was attempting to use the Italian tense and aspect diagram to create the present perfect in Italian. However, it was mentioned several times in the past and during the session that the present perfect does not exist in Italian, but the meaning can nonetheless be conveyed, for which she was reminded again. An additional observation about Charlotte was that she did not have the same sentences as Lydia, which indicates they did not work well together. In addition, Charlotte used the *trapassato prossimo* by itself with no other past event, as Jayden had done earlier. On the other hand, Lydia offered explanations for her sentences, saying that the present tense is something that is still true, but does not seem to be able to elaborate too much on the present tense in terms of it being a habitual action, or something that is currently true with no specific time period, which appears to be a common struggle among the participants. Regarding the past tense, Lydia correctly stated that a past event is something that is complete and over – her sentences match up well with her explanation. Regarding the present perfect, Lydia admitted to not understanding thoroughly how the present perfect is expressed in Italian. Lydia asked me what the meaning of *da cinque anni* and *per cinque anni* meant and how they were different. By that statement, it appeared she understands that there is a difference but cannot pinpoint it; nonetheless, Lydia's sentence was

100% correct. By elaborating more on her reasoning to opt for *da cinque anni*, she correctly reasoned that the conceptualization of *da* means from a point in time with no boundary.

Figure 23: Participant Response



Trapassato e passato prossimo:  
1) Lui aveva vissuto a Firenze per cinque anni quando sua sorella è arrivata a Firenze.  
2) Avevo parlato con mia sorella quando è caduta.

As far as the *trapassato prossimo*, Lydia correctly described it as a past event happening before another past event. While there was a small issue with the semantics of her one of her sentences, it was clear the structure of the sentence was accurate along with her conceptualization of the tense, as shown in Figure 23.

Next, Kimberly and Mary correctly explained the meanings of their present tense sentences as events that are still true but do not elaborate that it is a general truth. As stated earlier, the group appeared to have trouble when explaining the present tense in English but can use it without struggling.

Figure 24: Participant Response

Present:  
Sua sorella abita a Firenze.  
Studia in biblioteca.

Past:  
Sono arrivato in ufficio.  
Ha mangiato una bistecca.

Present perfect:  
Vive a Firenze da cinque anni.  
Gioca a basket da tre ore.

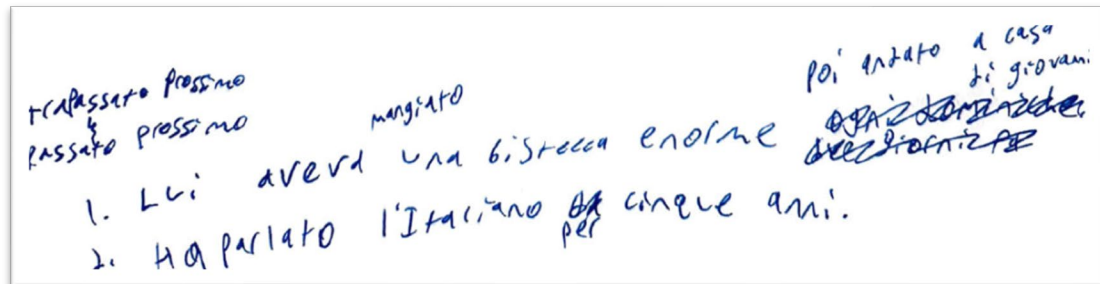
Trapassato e passato prossimo:  
Aveva parlato con sua sorella quando sono arrivato.  
Sono arrivato a casa di Giovanni ma aveva ha  
mangiato già.

Kimberly explained that the sentence, *my sister lives in Florence*, was in the present tense and then Mary added that their choice was the present because she still lives there. They both explained their past tense sentences, *I arrived to the office* and *I ate a steak*, as events that happened and are completed. Regarding the present perfect, they justified their tense choice by reasoning that the individual still lives in Florence, so therefore the present tense must be used in Italian along with the particle that connects it to the past because it started five years ago; it has continued since then; and, it is not known for how long it will continue. Lastly, their use of the *trapassato prossimo* was made to signal another event happening before another in the past, *he had spoken with his sister, when I arrived*, which is correct.



Jayden and Davide overall struggled in some areas to correct their errors. This is evident by the fact there is no correct version of the *trapassato prossimo* in their second attempt to use it, as shown in the Figure 25.

Figure 25: Participant Response




The *trapassato prossimo* is not used in the second sentence but is instead written in just the *passato prossimo*. While the present tense sentences are correct, both Jayden and Davide had difficulty explaining what the present tense meant in terms of actions being habitual or general truths; instead, they just offered the explanation that the events are “happening in the present.” On the contrary, they correctly stated that their sentences in the *passato prossimo* are events that are completed and in the past, *I went to Giovanni’s house*, and *he lived in Torino for five years*. Lastly, Davide and Jayden correctly explained that the sentences in the present perfect are still true but linked to the past and continue to progress into the future for an unknown period of time, which is an accurate description of the present perfect.

### **Italian Tense and Aspect Diagrams.**

For the second portion of the meeting, the researcher asked the participants to complete diagrams to visually represent sentences for how the language is conceptualized in Italian, which were the same sentences that the participants just worked on creating. Now, after having the experience of thinking about how to structure the sentences, it was intended they could now connect these diagrams to prior knowledge and with a higher accuracy rate. The first step was for them to identify the key words in the sentence and then proceed to draw the diagrams using the key words, or tenses, to guide their reasoning in the diagram formation and officially make the switch from drawing diagrams for English sentences to Italian sentences. The participants were encouraged to use the diagram of the Italian tense and aspect system to identify the key words and place the events on the timeline as they did in past exercises in English.


Gary and Emilia underlined all the correct key words on their worksheet. At the onset of the activity, they had a question about the third sentence on the sheet that they translated into English, *Giovanni lived in Florence for five years*. Emilia stated that they did not know when it started or when it ended, which is true, but they both agreed that it occurred and was over. As Emilia drew the diagram, the researcher reminded them that it must be a bounded event. After thinking it over, they placed lines at the beginning and ending of the solid line to complete an event frame that is bounded, correctly illustrating the *passato prossimo*. Regarding the rest of their diagrams, shown in the Figure 26, they appeared to get close to correctly showing the *passato prossimo* and *trapassato prossimo* in conjunction with each other. They correctly identified the key words, but it was clear they did not separate the diagrams to show the two past events in relation to one another.

Figure 26: Visual Diagram Activity

| Sentence Example   | Visual Diagram   |
|--|--|
| <p>Sono <u>andato</u> a casa di Giovanni, ma lui <u>aveva già parlato</u> con sua sorella.</p> |  |

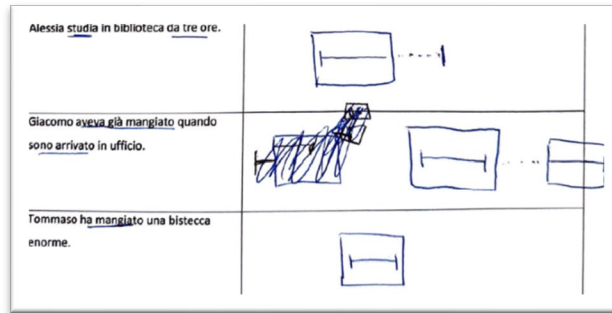
In the third sentence shown in the Figure 27, Gary and Emilia almost got the correct representation of the present perfect but had a solid line continuing after *speech time* which should be dotted instead to indicate an ongoing and unbounded event.

Figure 27: Visual Diagram Activity

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>Giovanni <u>vive</u> a Firenze <u>da cinque anni</u>.</p> |  |
|--|--|

In the second half of their diagrams, Gary and Emilia nearly completed them perfectly. There are just too small adjustments which would be no solid line for the sixth sentence because there is no definitive ending in the sentence *Alessia has been studying in the library for three hours*. Lastly, the dotted lines between the two completed events for the seventh sentence should be removed and a solid vertical line added in the event frame to the right to symbolize the start of the event. They underlined all the correct key language in each case.

Figure 28: Visual Diagram Activity



In the end, Lydia and Gary intended the dotted line between the two event frames in the Figure 28 to represent the continuation of time, which made good sense but was not necessary.


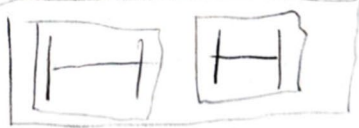
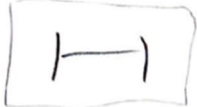
Charlotte and Lydia were able to make corrections to their diagrams with some guidance as shown in the Figure 29. The original diagram was correct for the *passato prossimo*, but they did not include the solid vertical lines that would have indicated the start and end time of the event frame to the left, which indicates the *trapassato prossimo*, and the event frame on the right which illustrates the *passato prossimo*. However, the order of the diagrams was correct but could have been labeled better to indicate what sentences referred to which event frames, as demonstrated in previous sessions.

Figure 29: Visual Diagram Activity

| Sentence Example  | Visual Diagram |
|---|----------------|
| Sono andato a casa di Giovanni, <u>ma</u> lui <u>aveva già parlato</u> con sua sorella. |                |
| Giovanni <u>ha vissuto</u> a Firenze <u>per</u> cinque anni.                            |                |
| Giovanni <u>vive</u> a Firenze <u>da</u> cinque anni.                                   |                |

Regarding the second portion of their diagrams, Lydia and Charlotte clarified their present perfect diagram. Their dotted line originally started slightly before speech time which they adjusted to correctly reflect the portion of the event that was completed and was their only error on this diagram for the sixth sentence, after being asked some leading questions. Even though they got the *trapassato prossimo* diagram correct with some scaffolding, Lydia and Charlotte were confused about the sentence *Giacomo had already eaten when I arrived at the office*. They originally tried to include both past events in one event frame instead of separating them to show both events in relation to each other.

Figure 30: Visual Diagram Activity

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>Alessia <u>studia</u> in biblioteca <u>da</u> tre ore.</p>                           |  |
| <p>Giacomo <u>aveva già mangiato</u> <u>quando</u> <u>sono arrivato</u> in ufficio.</p> |  |
| <p>Tommaso <u>ha mangiato</u> una bistecca enorme.</p>                                  |  |

As seen in the Figure 31, Jayden and Davide initially are confused how to approach the first sentence. They are advised to search for the key words first. Afterwards, they agreed this sentence dealt with the past perfect and the past tense, and Davide and Jayden were advised to locate these tenses in Italian on the Italian tense and aspect diagram. At that point Jayden correctly writes down a past event frame happening before another past event frame. His only mistake was putting a dotted line in between the two event frames to indicate some ongoing action, which would not be the case. It was reiterated there is no ongoing action between events, even though time continues, for these linguistic choices in tense. However, they indicate a separation between when the two events occurred. Davide and Jayden confirmed their understanding by changing the diagram in agreement as can be seen by the line crossed out between the two event frames. The *passato prossimo* was diagrammed correctly in the middle sentence. The last sentence, meant to illustrate the present perfect, was nearly correct but should not have had a dotted line prior to the start of when Giovanni begins to live in Florence. Jayden

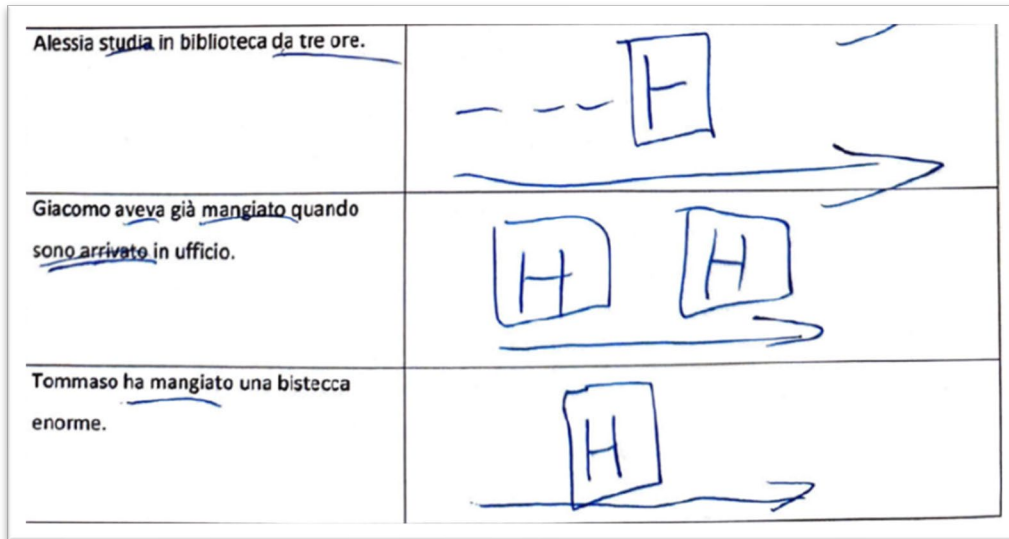
acknowledged there is a start time to this event after some brief questioning. In addition, the dotted line should have been a solid line inside the box until speech time to indicate the completed portion of the event.

Figure 31: Visual Diagram Activity

| Sentence Example  | Visual Diagram |
|---|----------------|
| Sono andato a casa di Giovanni, ma lui aveva già parlato con sua sorella. |                |
| Giovanni ha vissuto a Firenze per cinque anni.                            |                |
| Giovanni vive a Firenze da cinque anni.                                   |                |

Regarding the last three sentences, Jayden and Davide's only mistake was having the present perfect diagram flipped as the dotted line should be moving into the future on the right side of the event frame as shown in Figure 32.

Figure 32: Visual Diagram Activity



Mary and Kimberly appeared to have had the most success in this exercise as they were easily able to explain the use of the *trapassato prossimo* and the *passato prossimo* in sentence one. They both recognized that there are two events that happened in a specific order, which is accurate. Mary correctly explained the use of the *passato prossimo* as a completed event and that the key word *per* helped them distinguish between a bounded and unbounded event. The third sentence was conceptually correct but just needed a start time to the event outside the event frame, and the right side of the event frame should have been closed off to show speech time. Mary also correctly explained that number three shows an event that started in the past, which is still true at speech time, and it continues into the future, which she indicated correctly with the correct diagram.



Figure 33: Visual Diagram Activity



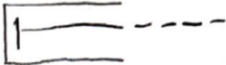
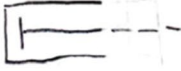

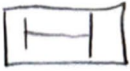
| Sentence Example  | Visual Diagram   |
|---|--|
| Sono <u>andato</u> a casa di Giovanni, ma lui <u>aveva già parlato</u> con sua sorella. |  |
| Giovanni <u>ha vissuto</u> a Firenze <u>per</u> cinque anni.                            |   |
| Giovanni <u>vive</u> a Firenze <u>da</u> cinque anni.                                   |  |

Figure 34 shows that Kimberly and Mary correctly conceptualized the *passato prossimo* and the *trapassato prossimo* in the middle sentence, which also holds true for the last sentence because it only deals with the *passato prossimo*. The first sentence, for the same reasons indicate above, should follow the same corrections advised for sentence three.

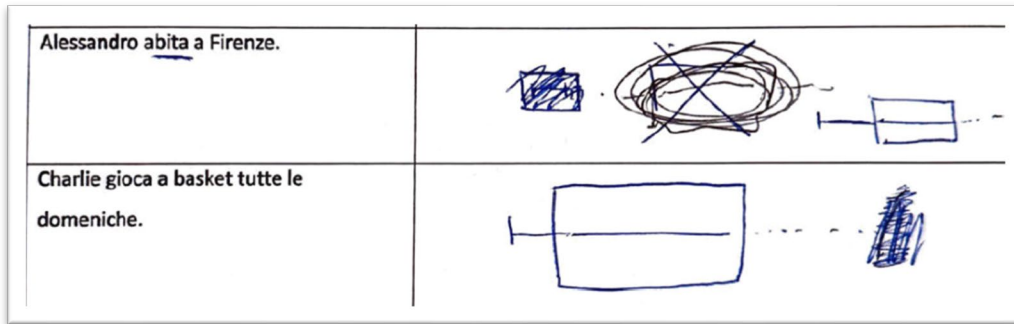
Figure 34: Visual Diagram Activity

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>Alessia <u>studia</u> in biblioteca <u>da</u> tre ore.</p>                    |  |
| <p>Giacomo <u>aveva già mangiato</u> quando <u>sono arrivato</u> in ufficio.</p> |  |
| <p>Tommaso <u>ha mangiato</u> una bistecca enorme.</p>                           |  |

### Italian Present Tense Diagram.

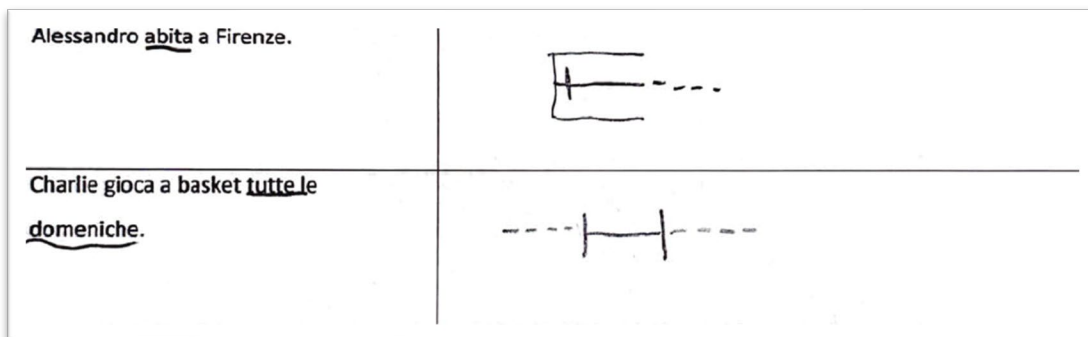
The fourth sentence was an experiment for the group to see what kind of diagram they could invent for the present tense in Italian. No known record exists of a such a diagram as Infante (2016, p. 333) did not create a diagram for the present tense in English in his dissertation study. The sentence given was *Charlie gioca a basket tutte le domeniche* or *Charlie plays basketball every Sunday*. In the Figure 35, Gary and Lydia invented a diagram that resembled the present perfect in English. It seems they could have shortened their line where the start time begins for the event they created, but their examples are consistent with each other.

Figure 35: Visual Diagram Activity



Kimberly and Mary came up with very different representations of the present tense. It appeared they tried to account for the activity ending on Sundays but continuing in the future. Their first diagram, however, strikingly resembles what Gary and Lydia invented.

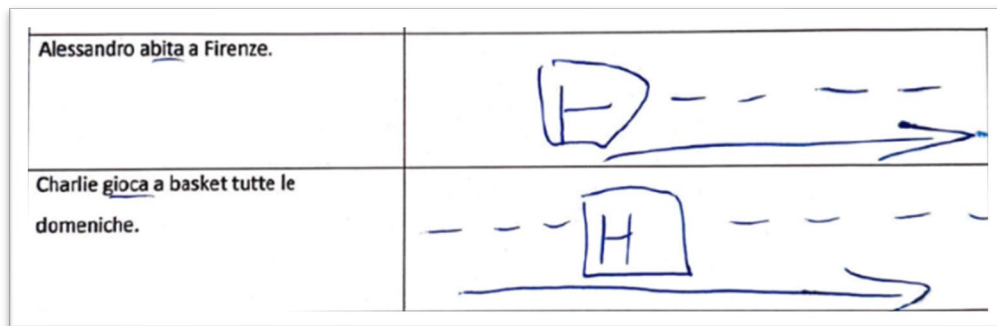
Figure 36: Visual Diagram Activity



Davide and Jayden also composed something similar in their first diagram in the Figure 37, and their second diagram is very similar to what Kimberly and Mary created. The words *tutte le*

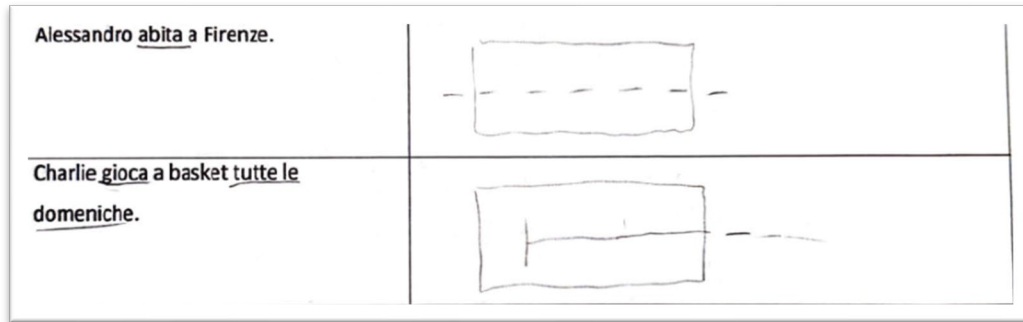
*domeniche*, which means *every Sunday*, appears to have generated interest in drawing a dotted line to represent the continuation of the event for an unspecified amount of time. These diagrams are almost identical to what Mary and Kimberly did for both sentences.

Figure 37: Visual Diagram Activity



Lastly, Charlotte and Lydia seemed to have designed something to the contrary of what Mary, Kimberly, Jayden, and Davide invented. Their diagrams are somewhat like Gary and Lydia's but with the solid line indicating part of an event that happened in their first diagram. Their second diagram resembles some of the others drawn by the other groups.

Figure 38: Visual Diagram Activity



These sentences were reviewed during the group feedback session and the group identified the correct key words which are *abita* (i.e., lives) and *gioca* (i.e., plays) correctly. The participants correctly categorized the words as being in the present tense in English, and they correctly stated the equivalent tense in Italian, which would be the present (i.e., presente). Despite their ability to identify key language and the correct tenses, the results on these diagrams are inconclusive given how different they tend to be, but the common denominator between the eight different diagrams seems to be something that represents the present perfect in English.

### **Italian Diagrams Review.**

At the 44-minute mark of the video, the group began a review to officially close out this exercise. The researcher asked the group to discuss the meaning and identify the key words that would indicate the Italian tenses utilized in the exercise, but the sentences are now given in English to make a direct comparison. All eight sentences were read to the participants in English to identify the tenses and the key word(s).

For the first sentence, Jayden identified *I went* and *had spoken* as the key words. After asking the group which tenses those are in English, Gary correctly stated they are in the past,

which is partially correct. Kimberly clarified this a bit further and said the past and the past perfect, which is correct. The researcher then asked the group to attempt to make the transfer in tense to Italian, and Kimberly responded that the past tense would be the same as the *passato prossimo*. For the past perfect, Kimberly and Mary responded simultaneously saying that the *trapassato prossimo* would be the equivalent of the past perfect in English, and they are correct.

In the second sentence, the group identified the key words, which they indicated as *lived*, and they also signaled the prepositional phrase *for five years* as another key piece of information. Identifying that prepositional phrase is significant and has implications in Italian as it refers to a closed period of time (i.e., bounded). The group precisely indicated that *lived* is in the past tense in English and that the *passato prossimo* is its equivalent in Italian.

Moving on to the third sentence, *Giovanni has been living in Florence for five years*. The group accurately responded by saying the key words are *has been living*. When asked for the correct English tense, Jayden correctly responded by saying the present perfect. Expecting to identify the tense in Italian, Jayden took the initiative, not by saying the present perfect does not exist in Italian but indicating that the prepositional phrase *da cinque anni* would be necessary, which is accurate. The researcher accepted Jayden's answer, and a hint was given that there is an additional piece of the sentence that must be included along with the phrase Jayden mentioned. At that point, Jayden successfully answered by saying the present tense must be used to convey this idea in Italian.

The participants appeared to get into a rhythm. The fourth sentence was quickly identified by the group as the present tense, *Alessandro lives in Florence*. They quickly identified the key word *lives*; Jayden said it is in the present simple in English, and Kimberly correctly responded that the equivalent is the *presente* in Italian. The group successfully did the same thing

for the fifth sentence, *Charlie plays basketball every Sunday*. The group noticeably responded slower as it appeared the habitual action of playing every Sunday caused them to think more about it, but they still identified the key word and named the tenses correctly in English and gave the Italian equivalent, which is the *presente*. In the fourth sentence, *Alessia has been studying in the library for three hours*, the group highlights *has been studying* and notes the prepositional phrase *for three hours*. Jayden automatically continued with the response by adding that the tense in English is the present perfect, and the present tense gets used in Italian along with the prepositional *da* to link it to the past, which is perfect. When pressed for further details on the use of the preposition *da*, Jayden explained that it is a continual action which means it is unbounded, and he is correct. In addition, Kimberly added that it is hooked to the past and indicates that it continues moving into the future for an unspecified period of time.

The seventh sentence, *Giacomo had already eaten when I arrived in the office*, contains two event frames. The group immediately identified the key words *had already eaten*, but Davide also indicated that *arrived* is another key word. Mary and Kimberly correctly associated the past perfect with *had already eaten* and *I arrived* as the simple past in English. When asked for their Italian equivalents, Jayden correctly stated the *trapassato prossimo* and the *passato prossimo* respectively. Lastly, *Tommaso ate an enormous steak*, was answered collectively by the participants. The group automatically said the key word was *ate*; the tense in English was the past; and the equivalent tense in Italian was the *passato prossimo*.

### ***Post-Study Assessment***

This section focuses on the findings in the exit interviews and how the participants fared on the post-study assessment of their understanding of the Italian tense and aspect system. The qualitative data tried to capture how the participants feel about their ability to learn a second

language now in terms of their motivation, confidence, and if they believe this new approach was helpful to their learning. This also seeks to explore the potential negative aspects of the study to inform future research and instruction. Another aspect of the data examined how the participants' view of themselves as an English speaker may have changed and how they perceive culture differently, if at all. Lastly, the study sought to understand what the participants liked and disliked about this method of teaching and what they found most beneficial about the sessions. It should be noted that at least a few weeks to a month past between the last session and the exit interview which makes the results more interesting given that participants had time to “forget the material”. This reflected positively on the study given the participants remembered quite a bit of information, and research indicates a certain amount of information to no longer be retrievable in long-term memory (Baddeley et. al, 2020) after longer periods of not being exposed to the concepts. Despite this gap, the findings were still encouraging, and the participants did show some knowledge development.

#### **Jayden Exit Interview.**

##### ***Language Ability.***

After the study, Jayden said he is very confident in his language learning ability. According to him, this was due to him studying two languages before. However, Jayden said the study helped him because he learned how the Italian and English tense systems were the same and how they were different, which helped him put the concepts he learned in Italian into perspective. And as a result, he thought that his ability to learn Italian had improved.

##### ***Diagram Evaluation.***

Jayden described learning the tenses in a language class like the future, past progressive, past, etc., as terms that are just “thrown out there” without giving much thought to what they



really mean, and he said he finds this to be true even for native English speakers taking English classes. Therefore, having a diagram to put the concepts into perspective and on a timeline was extremely helpful, because it “helps you understand how the tenses function.” The only weakness Jayden mentioned was it took time to write the diagrams out, and there is a learning curve when learning how to use them.

### ***Italian Usage.***

Jayden mostly used Italian in restaurants, coffee shops, and ice cream parlors; so mainly when he was ordering food. He mentioned that he tried, “to the best of his ability”, to use his Italian which he described as far from perfect. One thing that bothered Jayden was people responding and speaking to him in English when he was trying to use his Italian. Depending on the situation, it would be difficult to ascertain the reason why Italians opted for English. As stated earlier, it could be because of how many tourists visit Florence and if it were the high season, which would not give the locals Italians much time to help linguistically with those interested in refining their Italian language skills. Jayden also used English as a backup when he could not find the vocabulary necessary to express himself in his interactions with the locals, which also did not force him to use Italian at times. However, this also supports the idea that a lack of vocabulary may have been a weakness in this study.

### ***Italian Study.***

Jayden estimated that he studied Italian about one and a half hours per week. He used Quizlet, notecards, took automated exams randomly, and studied Italian vocabulary by quizzing himself in Italian and reciting the words in English, as well as quizzing himself in English and reciting the definitions in Italian.

### ***Present vs. Presente.***

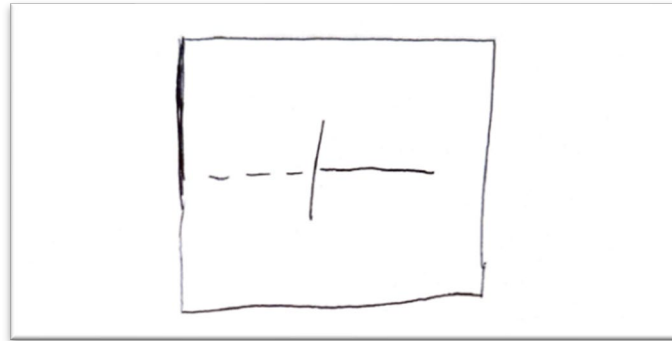
After the study, Jayden recognized that the present tense has multiple forms in English (i.e., aspect). He said that the conjugations of the present are slightly harder to learn in Italian than they are in English. It seems he was referring to how in English the verb conjugation remains mostly the same except for the third person and just requires adding the subject pronouns, whereas Italian has a different conjugation for each part of speech. One interesting point was that Jayden made no reference to the non-existence of the present perfect in Italian, but may have alluded to that at the beginning of his response.

### ***Present Perfect in Italian.***

When specifically asked, Jayden correctly states the present perfect does not exist. He adds that he is “pretty sure you have to use the *da* form”, which is referring to the preposition in Italian. Jayden is correct in his observation, but his word form is likely referring to a prepositional phrase and not a verb conjugation which is commonly referred to as a form. Jayden said that there is an extra step involved when forming the present perfect in Italian, but this also would depend on the cultural perspective from which you are looking at the language, because it could be seen that way from both the English and Italian perspective.

As far as creating the present perfect in terms of tense in Italian, Jayden said you use the present tense, but you “have to add the preposition *da* to hook something to the past”. Jayden uses the example of *since 2005* and then proceeds to explain how it is written in Italian by giving the example *da 2005*. Jayden was handed a piece of paper and asked to draw a diagram of what he thought the present perfect would look like in Italian and came up with the diagram in Figure 39.

Figure 39: Participant Present Perfect Diagram



As discussed earlier, Jayden once again placed the continuous action moving in the wrong direction as he did during one of the study sessions. The dotted line should have been to the right of the diagram after speech time, which would be at the right edge of the event frame box. The start time should have been just outside the left border of the event frame box. His rendition of the present perfect did represent some of the characteristics of the present perfect but did not seem complete or to flow well; there was also no reference to the preposition *da*.

***Italian Speaking Confidence.***

Jayden said he felt more comfortable now with the language and he attributed that to a “deep dive” into the “nitty-gritty” of the Italian language. By understanding these things at a deeper level, he feels he can understand Italian better now as a result.

***Top Benefit of the Study.***

Jayden said he liked the group activities because sometimes in a traditional language class you usually focus on your own work, and you do not get the type of interactive environment that you might encounter in interacting with the community to mimic real conversation. He felt it is helpful when learning a foreign language to be immersed in a group

setting, whether in a café, a restaurant, or something similar. Jayden believed one could absorb more of the language in those kinds of setting.

### ***Study Benefits vs. Old Teaching Techniques.***

Jayden described the methods in this study as definitely being different from anything he has ever experienced. Initially, he had some trouble adjusting to the way that you had to draw the diagrams and the group taking things on a step-by-step approach. Usually, he said that he likes to learn things on a broad scale, and then dive into the details after. Jayden described the process as being very deliberate, which is something he was not used to, but he described it as “refreshing.”

### ***English Language Awareness.***

Jayden said that his biggest realization about his English language awareness was realizing how different English was from the Romance languages “with its Latin and Germanic roots combined.” He described romance languages as being more uniform. In addition, he could appreciate more, and understands now, why some people could have difficulty in understanding and speaking English. Jayden seemed to have made the connection between the typography of languages and how the structure of the language can assist someone with learning a second language and how it might impede them. Jayden’s view of himself as an American English speaker has changed because he has a higher level of respect for the English language now.

### ***Attitude Toward Grammar.***

Jayden stated that he has a bit of a different background than most people on the program, and he is referring to the group of study abroad students with whom he is studying with in Italy. Jayden said he learned a bunch of Latin and Greek stems when he was in his high school’s enrichment program and throughout his middle school years. The aim of the program, and his teacher, was to help him learn more vocabulary. He attributes this program as the likely

reason why he is so interested in learning languages, and as a result, he feels that this could be the reason why he finds learning languages a bit easier compared to others.

### ***Motivation.***

Jayden said that his motivation increased a little bit because of the study sessions. He said he was already motivated to learn Italian but finding an interest in the details of Italian has made him more motivated to learn it. As he stated earlier, his background in languages that was introduced to him in his middle school, and high school years could be an additional motivating factor for why he feels this way.

### ***Biggest Challenges.***

Jayden stated that due to the study he felt better at being able to understand the tenses than before. He also referred to studying with his classmates in his Italian class. He feels that when they sometimes make mistakes using the tenses in Italian that he is now able to recognize some of those errors and feels more confident in correcting them. He listed no challenges that he overcame or that remained.

### ***Successful Language Learning.***

Jayden said the main thing the study made him realize was it takes dedication, most of all, and having a strong interest in the language. Jayden said you can schedule “as many study sessions as you want” and sign up for as many classes, but if you “do not accept that language and learn from it, then it won’t matter”. Jayden was adamant that if you do not have a passion for it, then you will not use the language in your everyday life.

### ***Post-study Assessment.***

Jayden was given a worksheet to complete and instructed to underline the keywords he thinks are important. He was also encouraged to write a translation of the meaning of the

sentence next to it to reveal how he processed the Italian phrase in English. Lastly, he was instructed to name which tense was being used in English and in Italian, and then draw a diagram to represent those events as we did in the study sessions. In reviewing Jayden's responses, he gave a good translation of the first sentence and correctly identified the tense in English as the present perfect. However, in reference to the Italian tense, Jayden wrote the present perfect as well, which does not exist. This could possibly be an oversight on his part because he stated in the interview earlier that it does not exist in Italian. The correct tense would be the *presente* (i.e., the simple present in Italian). Jayden missed the red-dotted lines and had them on the right side of the diagram, but they should have continued from speech time into the future. This was pointed out to him after he took the post-study assessment. He attributed that to not remembering well but did claim to recall the correct response when it was brought to his attention.

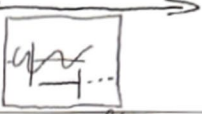
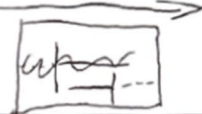


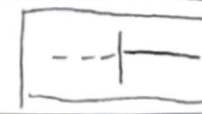
In the second sentence, Jayden once again provided an accurate translation of what the meaning was in Italian. However, he made the same error in labeling the wrong tense in Italian (i.e., present perfect, which does not exist), but he got the correct English tense, which is the present perfect. He had the same issue with his diagram. So, he appeared to understand the meaning but was still not able to correctly draw the present perfect conceptualization as a diagram as shown in Figure 40.

Figure 40: Jayden Post-test Exit Interview

JAYDEN

### Exit Interview Post-test

NAME: [REDACTED] DATE: 4-20-2022

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Mangia da un'ora.</p> <p>I've been eating for an hour</p>   | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: Present Perfect<br/>English Tense(s) Used: Present Perfect</p> <p>Diagram:</p>                                |
| <p>2. Abita in Italia da dieci anni.</p> <p>I've been living in Italy for 10 years</p>  | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: Present Perfect<br/>English Tense(s) Used: Present Perfect</p> <p>Diagram:</p>                                |
| <p>3. Ha aspettato in aeroporto per cinque ore.</p> <p>He waited in the airport for 5 hours</p>   | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: Past Simple<br/>English Tense(s) Used: Past Simple</p> <p>Diagram:</p>                                        |
| <p>4. Charlie gioca a basket.</p> <p>Charlie plays basketball.</p>  | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: Present Simple<br/>English Tense(s) Used: Present Simple</p> <p>Diagram:</p>                                |
| <p>5. Giovanni aveva già visto il film quando sono arrivato a casa sua.</p> <p>Giovanni had already watched the movie when I arrived at his house</p> | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: Past Progressive, Past Simple<br/>English Tense(s) Used: Past Progressive, Past Simple</p> <p>Diagram:</p>  |

Jayden also provided an accurate translation of the third sentence. This was a good indication that he was processing Italian and understanding the meaning on a deep level. In Figure 40, he correctly wrote the names of the tenses, but he did not write the tense name in

Italian. It is the simple past but in Italian it is called the *passato prossimo*. Jayden said he could not recall the name in Italian, so he just put the past tense for both.

A precise translation was provided for sentence four as well. Once again, Jayden got the tenses right for both Italian and English, but he also did not recall the name of the present tense in Italian, which is the *presente*. Jayden's diagram of the present tense appears to encompass many of the ideas communicated in using the present tense in English and Italian. However, a limitation to the study is that a STI diagram professional would need to evaluate and create a diagram for the present tense in English and Italian, to make an accurate comparison of what the students invented on their post-study assessment to evaluate their success. Lastly, Jayden provided a flawless translation of the Italian phrase, but he inaccurately labeled the tenses as progressive. This was an issue for him as well during the study sessions. He tended to include a progressive meaning when the past perfect or *trapassato prossimo* was used. He clearly showed in sentence three that he understands the past and how it is diagrammed by doing it correctly in that example.

Once he finished and reviewed the assessment with the researcher, the researcher reminded him that it should have been a combination of the *trapassato prossimo* and the *passato prossimo* in Italian; the past perfect and the past which are the equivalents to those tenses in English. Regarding the *trapassato prossimo* (i.e., past perfect) Jayden described that he wanted to have one event frame to describe the entire event instead of using two event frames to show that these events were separate and happened at different times. Jayden justifies the dotted line on his diagram in sentence five in Figure 40 as representing when Giovanni was watching the movie, and it was easy to see his logic. However, this would technically work if the language used had been *was watching a movie*. It was pointed out to Jayden that *watched a movie* conveys



a different meaning and is a bounded event. Jayden's error appeared to be attributed to him not connecting the language to the diagram and rather thinking of time as a continuum regardless of what the language was meant to communicate. The words *had watched* would indicate a completed event, rather than *was watching*, which would be continuous. This was an issue that also surfaced with some of the other participants in understanding a finished event versus one in progression. The participants seemed to want to describe the entire event for the length of time it was happening as opposed to just focusing on the language used to accomplish that. The second half of the sentence, *when I arrived at his house*, did not have an ending time. Jayden explained the reason why there was no ending time as someone arriving at his house, and the individual would be waiting at the door, which would not make it a completed event. Once again, it appears Jayden is not focused on the language but is also considering time as constantly in motion.

#### **Kimberly Exit Interview.**

##### ***Language Ability.***

Kimberly felt very confident about her language learning ability, but she said she needs to be more consistent and disciplined about it. So, it appears that spreading out the interventions a week apart, and sometimes even a little more for the post-study interview, appeared to be too large of a gap in Kimberly's mind. She said she felt like a lot of time passed between one meeting and the next and it may be beneficial to have more frequent meetings in a future study.

##### ***Diagram Evaluation.***

Kimberly said she is not a big visual learner, but she found the diagrams to be helpful despite that. She also said that it was very helpful to compare the sentences and the language to the diagrams and see how they correlate with one another. She pointed out to the timeframe in which the events happen on the timeline.

### ***Italian Usage.***

Kimberly used a lot of Italian outside of class in what she described as “a lot of smaller” conversations with the local Italians she encountered, such as ordering food and basic communication of essential information. Kimberly said she did not use the past tense that much but used the present tense a lot, which is common at the beginner level. This could also be an indication about how beginning-level language learners’ vocabulary can be limiting; and hence, the reason why providing the language in the study and focusing on the participants’ recognition of the language and its meaning might be the correct first step in this teaching approach.

### ***Italian Study.***

The researcher asked Kimberly to give an average of the number of hours per week that she spent studying Italian. She described her actual study time as “sitting down for three or four hours a week and concentrating on her work”. If she included the other smaller interactions that she had with the locals, and possibly with her classmates, then she would have increased her estimate to approximately ten hours per week. Regarding her study techniques, Kimberly referred to using examples but did not specify what she meant by examples. It was presumed she intended chunking language in this case, because she follows up by saying that she used “phrases that she heard on the street as a way to communicate”. She also referred to the surrounding environment (i.e., street signs, advertisements) to help her understand more Italian and increase her vocabulary.

### ***Present vs. Presente.***

Kimberly says that there is a present simple tense in both languages, which is correct, and described when using the present tense in both languages as things that “are happening now”. She stated that in English there is a present perfect, which includes an event that begins in

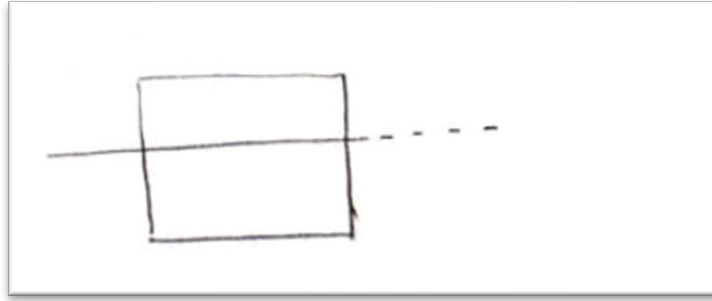
the past and is still currently true at speech time and could continue for an undetermined amount of time. Kimberly also explained that in Italian the present perfect does not exist and that you must make use of the regular present tense, or the *presente*, and connect the past to that phrase with another word, which means she is referring to the preposition *da*. Kimberly also included the preposition *per* in her response, which would not be true for the present perfect, because in Italian, it is used for a finished event frame that is bounded. This illustrated why the study emphasized the importance of the correct conceptualization of the Italian prepositions and their differences in English, because L1 interference could occur and direct translations could lead to misconceptions in space and time in the target language, as it apparently happened here.

### ***Present Perfect in Italian.***

Kimberly technically answered this question, but she was asked one more time in case she wanted to elaborate more on her response. She went on to say that it gets conceptualize by using the present tense of what is happening now and then using a connecting word that ties the start time of the event back to the past, which is correct. She continued to explain that this is done to make the receiver of the message understand that the event began in the past and is still currently true and going on into the future. She correctly stated there is no present perfect tense in Italian. And when the researcher asked by following up with asking which word associated with the present perfect in Italian to mark the start time of a present event that started in the past, she first said the words are *per* and *da*, but then she immediately corrected herself and said that it is just *da*, which is correct.

The researcher asked Kimberly to draw a diagram of the present perfect and how it is visually conceived. Kimberly gave a decent representation of the present perfect as a visual diagram.

Figure 41: Participant Present Perfect Diagram



She talked about an event beginning in the past, part of the event being completed, and then the event possibly continuing past speech time, which is all represented in the diagram above. The only thing she did not indicate is a definitive start time to the event and no reference to the preposition *da* is made.

***Italian Speaking Confidence.***

Kimberly said she felt more confident in her ability to speak Italian because she studied the concepts in the study sessions and is not just learning how to say something or repeat something without knowing why, which speaks to what (Feuerstein, 2010) called transcendence. Moreover, she mentioned that it is important and helpful for her to understand the reasons why the sentence is structured in a certain way and how it functions. In addition, she thought it was helpful to understand how the two languages are different and the same. She said it is very difficult for her to tie English to Italian and tie Italian to English, so this study helped her to do that by the diagrams assisting her to conceptualize the ideas.

***Top Benefit of the Study.***

Kimberly said that the different examples with different kinds of words really helped her. She mentioned that connecting the Italian words to English and explaining the reasoning for it

really helped her understand the concepts better. She pointed out that she really liked the last exercise that was in Italian where there was a word bank and they had to unscramble the words to make a cohesive sentence and give representations of the different tenses in Italian.

### ***Study Benefits vs. Old Teaching Techniques.***

She said that she prefers this method over other methods to which she was exposed in the past. As in her previous response, she repeats that she liked knowing why she was saying certain things, as opposed to just saying them, which apparently gave her a deeper understanding and satisfied her curiosities. She also felt like it moved away from rote memorization. In previous language classes, Kimberly said she would be asked to work with verbs and “just need to place them in the boxes”, or in the proper place without any real critical thinking to understand the concepts on a deeper level to explain why she was doing it. Kimberly also alluded to being told that “some things are not the same in English”, but she was never given an explanation why, which appeared to frustrate her according to the way she explained it. The only negative thing she said about the study was the time that it took to understand diagrams and deploy her new knowledge in Italian and use it effectively. Plus, she also referred to the time in between the sessions being too long – one week – and would have liked more frequent contact. However, she understood this was the nature of the study, but this could be adjusted in future research studies. Another suggestion was more homework assignments that would allow students to frequently use the new concepts while they wait for the next session to take place.

### ***English Language Awareness.***

She said that she now finds English a little wordy. However, Kimberly said growing up speaking a language does not really make her think about these things (i.e., English). Kimberly also mentioned something interesting about how she now empathizes more with people who

speak English as a second language. Interestingly, Kimberly always wondered why people would say certain things in English instead of the way a native speaker might say them. The study gave her a better understanding of how language is conceptualized differently across cultures, and how different perspectives manifest themselves linguistically. As a result, she has more perspective, and she feels like her curiosity has been addressed after participating in the study.

Kimberly realized that when she is interacting with somebody who has a first language other than English, or you are in another country, that is very important to simplify things as much as possible. She said that even sometimes when people have been speaking a second language for years, it may be hard for them at times to understand certain things. This made her feel like she would appreciate it if others would do that with her in Italian or any language she would be learning at the time. The study highlighted how difficult things could possibly be for someone when learning a second language, and Kimberly appreciates that struggle much more now after participating in the study sessions.

### ***Successful Language Learning.***

Kimberly said that she realizes that being an environment where the language is spoken could not mean much if the individual does not put forth the effort to “understand and speak the language.” A misconception that she had prior to this was that it would be easier to learn a second language in the country in which it is spoken, which is probably true given the higher likelihood of using the language in daily life for survival. However, Kimberly realized that just being in the country and being immersed in the language does not correlate to understanding and meaning making without connecting it to what you already understand. Her statement is particularly interesting because she referred to paying attention to the intricacies of the language and the deeper understanding of the meaning at the conclusion of the study. The aim of the study

was to explicitly state the differences between the tense and aspect systems in Italian and English, which likely gave Kimberly the understanding she was seeking. Another minor observation from her comments is the importance of attaching meaning to words and sounds in the target language at the beginning levels of language acquisition, otherwise comprehension can be severely impaired.

#### ***Attitude Toward Grammar.***

Kimberly realized how important grammar is to convey the precise meaning that you want. She went on to say that while it is possible to communicate ideas on a basic level, there is always the risk for misunderstandings and miscommunications. Therefore, according to Kimberly, if you wish to go onto higher levels of learning language and be truly fluent, then learning the grammar and knowing how to use it is fundamental.

#### ***Motivation.***

She said that her motivation level did not really change much because she was nearing the end of her study abroad experience in Italy. Therefore, the need to learn more Italian, or be able to utilize Italian daily, was not going to be a priority soon. She said the study motivated her to have a different approach and understanding to learning languages in general. She said that she studied French in high school and has a lot of family that speaks French, and she is now motivated to start studying French again. She said that once she has learned to speak French at a higher level, then she may return to studying Italian given how much they have in common being romance languages.

#### ***Biggest Challenges.***

Kimberly said conversation was difficult along with recalling the conjugations, which made it difficult to speak. Another thing that she said impeded her ability to speak in Italian was

the interference from Spanish, which was a potential concern raised going into the study. Kimberly said that in the area where she comes from in the States that she is surrounded by Spanish speakers. She says one of the challenges that she overcame was how to conceptualize the tension aspect system in Italian compared to English. She said it really helped her to understand how people view language in different ways and consider different points of view. Kimberly said, out of the four or five years she spent learning languages in middle school and high school, this is the first time that she realizes how things can be conceptualize differently in a language, which she attributed to her participation in the study. Furthermore, she mentioned that the grammar was difficult for her before but has become easier because of her the study sessions. Kimberly felt she can reason better in Italian, and she could explain why she makes certain linguistic choices now.

#### ***Post-study Assessment.***

Kimberly was given the post-study exam and given the instructions for how to complete it, which again consisted of highlighting the keywords in the language in the assessment that she thought were important, writing a translation of the sentence to reveal how she is processing Italian in terms of English, and lastly, naming the tenses the key words refer to and draw a diagram that represents that meaning.



Figure 42: Kimberly Post-test Exit Interview

| KIMBERLY   |   |
|--|---|
| Exit Interview Post-test   |   |
| NAME: [REDACTED]   | DATE: 04/11/22  |
| <p>1. Mangia <u>da</u> un'ora.</p> <p>She <sup>has been</sup> eating for an hour.</p>  | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: simple present<br/>English Tense(s) Used: present perfect</p> <p>Diagram:</p>   |
| <p>2. Abita in Italia <u>da</u> dieci anni.</p> <p>She has been living in Italy for 10 years.</p>  | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: simple present<br/>English Tense(s) Used: present perfect</p> <p>Diagram:</p>   |
| <p>3. Ha <u>aspettato</u> in aeroporto per cinque ore.</p> <p>She had been in the airport for 5 hours.</p>   | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: passato prossimo <i>tra presente passato prossimo</i><br/>English Tense(s) Used: past simple</p> <p>Diagram:</p>  |
| <p>4. Charlie <u>gioca</u> a basket.</p> <p>Charlie plays basketball.</p>  | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: presente<br/>English Tense(s) Used: present</p> <p>Diagram:</p>   |
| <p>5. Giovanni <u>aveva già visto</u> il film quando sono arrivato a casa sua.</p> <p>Giovanni had already watched a film when I arrived to his house.</p> | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: trapassato prossimo, passato prossimo <i>tra presente passato prossimo</i><br/>English Tense(s) Used: <del>past progressive</del> past perfect, past simple</p> <p>Diagram:</p> |

Kimberly gave an accurate translation of the first sentence in Figure 42 and highlighted the preposition but missed the verb. She said she could not remember the specific names of the tenses in Italian. At that point, the researcher named a few tenses to help jog her memory. She correctly named the tenses in Italian and English but does not recall the name of the present tense in Italian. Her diagram is almost perfect, but it needs to have a solid line that continues to speech

time. Kimberly said she thought the first one was the present perfect because of the key words has been eating, which is interesting that she is using the English translation to guide her Italian. She also said that she recognized the Italian preposition as a marker for time and was able to intuitively understand that the event was tied to a starting point in the past. She said in Italian it would be the present simple with a connecting word to the past to formulate the same idea. She then explains the diagram, showing the starting point, and said that it goes on for “possibly an hour” to represent the part of the event that is complete (i.e., the solid line until speech time). The continuous part of the event was correctly drawn with the dotted line into the future, representing an unbounded period of time.

In the second sentence, she gives another perfect translation and correctly identifies the key words in Italian. She explains that the event started ten years ago but can continue for an unspecified period of time. Kimberly gave the same reasoning for the preposition in that it connected the event to the past. Kimberly also gave the same explanation of tense for this sentence by saying it was the present perfect in English, but it is the present simple, plus a connecting word to the past in Italian, which is the preposition *da* in this case. She again does not recall the name of the present tense in Italian, but her explanation is flawless. The researcher asks Kimberly if there is a difference between the first and second sentences in English, and she claims there is no difference, which essentially there is not. However, from an Italian standpoint the preposition *da* gets translated differently depending on the meaning made in English, which could take the word *since* or *for*.

Third, Kimberly correctly identified the past participle in Italian, and identified its meaning as referring to the past. She did not know the meaning of the word, but she did recognize the morphology, and was able to distinguish it as a past sentence. However, her

translation was incorrect in this case, and she confuses the *trapassato prossimo* for the *passato prossimo*. Kimberly could not remember what the official name was for the past perfect in Italian and the simple past, but it did not appear to affect her understanding of how they work together. Kimberly said she guessed that the *passato prossimo* was the past tense that is closest to the future, and she was correct. Her diagram was completely correct, and she labeled the Italian tense correctly. In the fourth sentence, Kimberly correctly identified the key word and labeled the tenses correctly in English and in Italian as the present and the *presente*. Her diagram is almost perfect, and the only thing it lacks is the start time of the event. However, the participants were never given a diagram for the present indicative in English or Italian. This was an experiment to see what they may come up with when developing a diagram for the present tense in Italian, which is shown in Figure 42.

Kimberly mistakenly translated the fifth phrase as *I had been watching* instead of *had watched*. She did not reflect this in her diagram because her diagram showed a bounded and completed action, as it should be. So, her translation did not match the diagrams correctly. The researcher gave Kimberly some scaffolding and hints, and then she indicated the word *watched* instead of *watching*. The researcher asked Kimberly to correct her labeling of the tenses from the past progressive knowing this new information about her translation, and she correctly stated the past perfect instead of the past progressive. She recognized that there are two tenses that are being used in conjunction with each other and gave a correct translation. Kimberly, at that point recognized that the *imperfetto* does, or could indicate the past perfect in Italian, but she failed to state that the imperfect plus the past participle in Italian would be the complete form. It does not mean that her understanding is incorrect, but it is worth noting because it could mean that she did not fully understand what the past perfect is in Italian, even though she correctly identified the

language in the sentence. Kimberly also correctly identified the second half of the sentence as the simple past in Italian, and she interprets the events accurately by stating the correct order of the past perfect and past events, and her diagrams reflected that. She mistakenly called the past perfect the past progressive, but it appears to be just a lapse in memory rather than a gap in understanding.

### **Emilia Exit Interview.**

#### ***Language Ability.***

Emilia said that she felt a lot better about her ability to learn a second language now. Emilia said before the study she would normally confuse the tenses in Italian. But now, she has a better understanding of it. In addition, she liked the teaching approach and felt like she can use it with language learning in general.

#### ***Diagram Evaluation.***

Emilia said that the diagrams helped her understand when an event continues, and when things happen in the past. She said that she is a visual learner, and this approach gave her the opportunity to conceptualize language in that manner. Like some of the other participants, Emilia said that the diagrams can be a little confusing at the beginning but eventually make sense.

#### ***Italian Usage.***

Emilia said, like the other participants, that she used her Italian, mainly in restaurants, and in her everyday interactions with the locals. Emilia said that between using Italian every day and studying for her class, she thought at least 30 minutes a day would be fairly accurate to describe how much she studied, so around three and a half hours per week. Her study techniques included Quizlet and studying with her classmates in her Italian class if she was confused about a concept.

### ***Present vs. Presente.***

Emilia started to answer the question but continuously stopped to rethink her answer. She changed her approach and decided to start with explaining the Italian present tense but stopped short of giving an answer and immediately switched back to the English version. It seemed like she felt more comfortable explaining the present tense in English, and then trying to explain the present tense in Italian. Emilia stated that when she speaks English, she does not think about what she is saying, but in Italian she must think about which tense to use to convey the correct idea. Emilia never really reached a conclusion about the differences between both, but she added that the present tense is her go-to tense in Italian, which is completely normal at the beginner level and given the curriculum at Florida State University focuses only on the present tense during the first semester of studying Italian.

### ***Present Perfect in Italian.***

While Emilia is unsure of her diagram, she said that she knew the present perfect does not exist in Italian, which is correct. Emilia added that the preposition *da* needed to be used in conjunction with the present tense to effectively convey the present perfect in Italian. This demonstrates that she remembered and recognized the differences between the present and the present perfect in Italian and English.

### ***Italian Speaking Confidence.***

Emilia said she felt more confident about her ability to speak Italian because she had a better understanding of what her options were when placing events in time. She said she needed to study more to perfect it, so she was not completely confident. However, she was more confident about her ability to speak Italian after the study concluded than when she started studying Italian. Furthermore, she felt more confident in distinguishing which tenses she needed

to convey certain ideas. As an example, she pointed out using the imperfect versus the past tense in Italian, which would be used in different situations but are both in the past.

### ***Top Benefit of the Study.***

She felt that learning about the tenses was the most beneficial aspect of the study because it helped her speak Italian. Emilia also mentioned that she liked that the tense and aspect system was studied on a deeper level, and not just examples of language in certain situations but was accompanied by an explanation for how to choose one tense versus another. In addition, she said it helped her in her second semester Italian class, which is where they begin to introduce the past tense, the imperfect, the present, and the progressive tenses.

### ***Study Benefits vs. Old Teaching Techniques.***

Emilia said she liked the idea that the study had a lot of interaction with the researcher and focused on usage of the language in real examples. Putting the concepts into practice was very helpful to Emilia right after the researcher presented them in the study sessions. Emilia, like the other participants, mentioned that it would have been nice to spend more time on a specific topic before moving onto another so the interventions could have been more in-depth and focus on specific topics longer. More homework assignments could have been another option to keep the participants working on something daily, given that there was at least a week in between each group meeting, which was another common suggestion among the participants.

### ***English Language Awareness.***

Emilia said that she would just use whatever words she wanted to communicate an idea in a past. When we first started the study, Emilia said the ideas of past perfect, present, present perfect, and the names of the tenses in general, were not familiar to her because she had forgotten the terminology. Emilia mentioned that it was very helpful thinking about the language

in terms of time frames, and when events happen with respect to each other. This also illustrated the hypothesis that most native speakers will typically not recall the linguistic terminology in their native language. In addition, it also highlights that most adults who do not study their native language will eventually have lost some of their ability to analyze their native language.

Emilia said she felt like her view of herself as an English speaker changed and she was more conscious, or trying to be, of the words that she uses when she speaks in English. She also said that this new knowledge about tense and aspect in English was helpful for when she writes essays and papers in her other classes. As a result, she no longer writes without thinking about how the tenses function with respect to each other (i.e., cohesion). The main thing she mentioned is when she edits her writing, she felt more confident to make changes now that she feels are necessary when she reviews her initial drafts.

### ***Successful Language Learning.***

Emilia says that she realized the importance of understanding the reasons for when to use the different tenses now. Comparing the study to Duolingo, she said you do not just use the language and then do not have an explicit answer regarding why you choose certain language when communicating, which would fall in the realm of CBI and STI, in the sense that these approaches focus on the internalization of explicit concepts. Emilia acknowledged the importance of not just learning vocabulary but the context in which to use that vocabulary along with how the grammar concepts convey certain ideas in the second language. Emilia seemed to appreciate the differences in cultural perceptions of language, and how meaning making could be impeded if you do not learn to think from the cultural perspective of the target language.

### ***Attitude Toward Grammar.***

She believed she was paying more attention to grammar now, and not just learning words. Emilia expressed that she became more culturally aware because she “does not want to disrespect an Italian on the street unknowingly” with a miscommunication when speaking.

### ***Motivation.***

When Emilia initially picked her classes for the semester, she thought about not continuing with her second semester of Italian. However, the study seemed so interesting to Emilia that she decided to move forward and enroll in her second semester of Italian. The study motivated her to continue to learn more, because she wants to dive deeper into the semantics in Italian and possibly minor in Italian. Emilia compared this experience to her desire to challenge herself to learn Chinese in high school. Given she found the concepts challenging and interesting, she would like to learn to use Italian at a higher level and challenge herself to be able to communicate more clearly and fluently in the language.

### ***Biggest Challenges.***

Emilia claimed her biggest challenge were using the tenses, and when she first saw the Italian tense and aspect chart, she found it very daunting. In addition, the chart used in the study to demonstrate the differences between *per* and *da* in Italian was still confusing to her. Nonetheless, Emilia said she felt more confident now speaking Italian outside when she ordered food and interacted with the locals. However, English felt like a “crutch” given that she encountered spoke English pretty well for the most part, and Emilia perceived this as a challenge because she knew that if she had to, she could have relied on English to communicate her ideas instead of trying to do that consistently in Italian. Emilia also mentioned that she noticed Italians loved speaking English with native English speakers when the opportunity presented itself. Emilia credited the study with giving her more courage to speak Italian because she felt that



feeling like her skills were inadequate or not sounding native to an Italian made it difficult for her to speak in public at times for fear of being judged. Emilia said that one of the challenges that remained was her ability to speak more. In addition, she remained frustrated because of the difficulty in trying to have different types of conversations and lacking the experience and vocabulary to do so after two semesters of Italian. Specifically, Emilia referred to the vocabulary, recalling the different irregular verb conjugations, and irregular past participles that required additional thinking when trying to have a conversation as rendering a conversation more difficult for her.

### ***Post-study Assessment.***

The researcher gave Emilia some sentences to analyze. The researcher asked Emilia to underline the keywords in the sentences that tell us when events are happening, and she should also write which tense it is in Italian and the equivalent tense in English, if it exists. The researcher also suggested for her to write a translation of the sentence in the box below the sentence to reveal her interpretation of the sentence and how she processed it. Lastly, the researcher asked her to add a diagram that would visually represent the words and how they fall on a timeline.

In the first sentence, Emilia recognized the preposition *da* and identifies the sentence as the present perfect in English. Her translation *he eats for an hour* is too literal and should have included *been eating*. Her diagram is not correct and represents the past tense or *passato prossimo*. It appears that Emilia does not recall well how bounded and unbounded events are visually represented. In the second sentence, Emilia makes the same translation error by omitting the *has been living* portion of the phrase. However, Emilia correctly labeled the tenses as indicating the present, but she got the English tenses technically incorrect by not specifying the

present perfect. While she did not change her answer, she identified the second sentence as the present perfect with some scaffolding. Emilia's diagram also pointed in the opposite direction but was more accurate than her first diagram in sentence one as pictured in Figure 43.

Figure 43: Emilia Post-test Exit Interview

| EMILIA  |   |
|---|---|
| Exit Interview Post-test  |   |
| NAME: [REDACTED]  | DATE: April 21, 2022  |
| 1. Mangia <u>da</u> un'ora.<br>he eats for an hour  | Italian Tense(s) Used: present<br>English Tense(s) Used: present & perfect<br>Diagram:                                |
| 2. <u>Abita</u> in Italia <u>da</u> dieci anni. She lives in Italy for 10 years                             | Italian Tense(s) Used: present<br>English Tense(s) Used: present<br>Diagram:  |
| 3. <u>Ha aspettato</u> in aeroporto per cinque ore.<br>she <del>was</del> waited in the airport for 5 hours | Italian Tense(s) Used: passato prossimo<br>English Tense(s) Used: <del>present</del> past perfect<br>Diagram:         |
| 4. Charlie <u>gioca</u> a basket.   | Italian Tense(s) Used: present<br>English Tense(s) Used: present<br>Diagram:  |
| 5. Giovanni <u>aveva già</u> visto il film <u>quando</u> sono <u>arrivato</u> a casa sua.                   | Italian Tense(s) Used: Trapassato prossimo, passato prossimo<br>English Tense(s) Used: past perfect, past<br>Diagram: |

In the third sentence, Emilia correctly identified the past tense in Italian but does not give an accurate translation. Emilia included the word *has* in her initial translation which should not have been included in the meaning, given it is just the past tense. This is also a common error with the other participants who were confusing and viewing the five hours of time the individual waited in the airport as a continuous event instead of treating it as one completed event. The language in the sentence would indicate what kind of meaning needs to be communicated and Emilia seemed to understand this during our conversation at the end of the post-study assessment. She mistakenly drew a diagram of the present perfect, which is flipped, in English, and she also labeled the English tense as the past perfect. Even though she was still able to find the correct key words, she had difficulty remembering the tenses in Italian and English.

In the fourth sentence, Emilia correctly underlined the key words and correctly identified the present tense for both Italian and English. The diagram for the present tense, like the diagrams the other participants drew, highly resembled the diagram of the present perfect given they share some common characteristics. Lastly, Emilia got the pass perfect and the past tense correct in the fourth sentence along with underlying the keywords that were necessary to identify the tenses in both Italian and English. Her only error was not adding a box around her event frame to make it two separate events instead of one event given there are two sentences.

### **Gary Exit interview.**

#### ***Language Ability.***

Gary felt more confident and emphasized how this study highlighted that practice is an integral part in learning a second language. Gary also mentioned that by participating in the study he understood the way time is conceived better in Italian and was more aware of cultural differences. Gary said that consciousness was tied to your feelings and those feelings manifest

themselves in language, which he could have been referring to being aware of meaning making in a second language now.

### ***Diagram Evaluation.***

Gary added that having a visual aid to understand concepts is always helpful in demonstrating how those concepts transfer to real-world experience. The study helped him to dissect sentences in the second language and physically show what they represent on a conceptual level. When referring to the sentences associated with the diagrams in Italian as examples, Gary wished they had more context and said they seemed arbitrary. Therefore, it could be helpful in the future to create a short paragraph that is cohesive in which the participants can identify the language the researcher wants to examine.

### ***Italian Usage.***

Gary used Italian to order food and go to the grocery store. When it came to doing more complicated things such as going to the post office, or things of a more consequential nature, Gary used English to convey those ideas to be sure he was communicating effectively and accurately with the locals. At times, he said he also used a translator. Regarding studying, he studied about two hours a week on average, but he said it could reach as many as ten hours a week. It was not elaborated on what caused such a fluctuation in study time, but presumably it dealt with midterms, finals, and assignment due dates. As far as vocabulary learning, Gary used Quizlet often to create quizzes to study along with Duolingo for additional practice. Gary utilized Connect which was the online homework modules that Florida State University typically assigns to Italian language students. Between Connect and Duolingo, Gary liked that Duolingo was readily available on his phone, and he could practice from wherever he wanted if he had an internet connection. The online system for Florida State University, which is provided by

McGraw-Hill publishing, is only accessible on a PC or Apple computer, and students must decide where and when they can allocate time to study. Gary mentioned he liked the competitive nature of Duolingo because it allowed him to compete against other Italian language learners, which gave him incentive and motivation to study because it “was fun.”

### ***Present vs. Presente.***

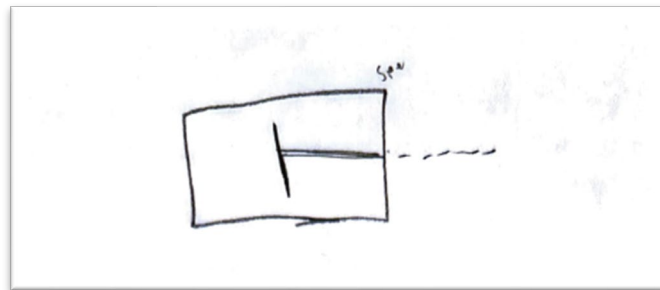
When the researcher asked Gary to describe the differences between the present tense in English and the presente in Italian, Gary asked the researcher to repeat the question, which made him appear unsure of how to approach the question. The researcher specified that he should describe the conceptual differences between the two tenses in English and Italian. While the intent of this question was to ascertain if the participants could recall the present perfect as an aspect of the present tense in English and it not existing in Italian, Gary took a different perspective and explained that the subject is built into the present tense conjugations of verbs in Italian, which is accurate, and English needs to have the subject pronoun specified to make sense. Although not related to answering this specific question, Gary made an interesting comment at the conclusion of his answer stating that this difference method of instruction changed the way he thought about language.

### ***Present Perfect in Italian.***

Gary did not answer the question immediately and he took a moment to think about his answer. He eventually stated correctly that the formation of the present perfect in Italian depends on the use of a preposition, which is the preposition *da* that Gary was alluding to, and he was correct. Gary said the preposition gets incorporated into the sentence to what he refers to as a “time zone”. In this case, he seemed to refer to the tense and the timeline on the diagrams that were given to him during the study. When asked if he could remember the preposition in Italian

that is used to form the present perfect, he was not able to do so, even with some leading questions. The researcher asked Gary to draw a diagram of the present perfect, and he responded confidently saying he believed he could do it. Impressively, Gary began to explain his diagram of the present perfect and reproduced an almost perfect copy as shown in Figure 44. He first introduced a start time within an event frame, and he correctly called it a mental space. After he identified the completed portion of the event, Gary correctly identified speech time, which is the moment in which the speaker is communicating an idea.

Figure 44: Participant Present Perfect Diagram



He included the dotted lines to indicate the unbounded portion of the event. Gary was able to perfectly recall the diagram but was not able to recall some of the terminology or the particles in Italian that are required to convey the present perfect in Italian. Gary mentioned that he really liked the visual diagram because it helped him work through his perception of the present perfect and be able to see it. In the diagram, his only flaw was where the start time is in the event frame.

***Italian Speaking Confidence.***

Like the others, Gary said he felt more confident speaking Italian and had a better understanding of how languages function in general and not just regarding Italian. Having a better understanding of the time periods in language made him more comfortable with speaking in general. In his second-semester Italian class, Gary revealed he had been having difficulty incorporating the different tenses and ordering them in time, and the study sessions helped increase his confidence in this regard.

***Top Benefit of the Study.***

Gary, once again, mentioned consciousness, and how we could help him better understand the world as the most beneficial aspect of the study.

***Study Benefits vs. Old Teaching Techniques.***

The personalization of the sessions was something Gary liked and that it was with a small group of people. As a result, he was able to receive more feedback and get more attention. Gary mentioned that having a partner was extremely helpful besides being part of an intimate group of students. Immediate feedback was important to Gary, so he emphasized how helpful it was that the researcher continuously walked around the room to check on everyone to evaluate their progress and give guidance on the material (i.e., DA in the classroom). However, there may have been some limitations in terms of giving an adequate amount of attention to everyone during a one-hour session. In addition, Gary mentioned having the combination of practice exercises, groupwork, working with a partner, and immediate instructor feedback as the things he thought were the most helpful.

***English Language Awareness.***

Gary was more aware of the way words and tenses are used in English after the study concluded and when events are happening in English and how those thoughts should be

structured linguistically. As a result, he began to think about language more and started to ask himself about completed actions and when they happened relative to other events, if those actions were continuing, or if they will happen in the future. His confidence to speak Italian rose because of the study, and he also mentioned that he felt that he could understand things from a different point of view now (i.e., more culturally aware). Gary understood that his linguistic point of view as an American English speaker is not the only way to interpret the world and express thoughts through language.

### ***Successful Language Learning.***

Gary stated he believes that practice and applying yourself were extremely important when studying a second language. Relative to his stay in Italy, Gary mentioned the importance of interacting with the locals and seeking authentic conversations to use the language as much as possible for continued progression in the language.

### ***Attitude Toward Grammar.***

In general, Gary was never a huge fan of grammar, and he added that he was never very good at it. His views on grammar changed due to the study and he did not view grammar as only an academic activity any longer but understood the integral role of grammar in real-life communication. The study made him take grammar more seriously and feel more invested in learning Italian, which ultimately changed his perspective on grammar and shifted the focus to communication and understanding rather than solely a scholastic activity. He said it was “not just about writing, essays and getting good grades”, but grammar could really affect the meaning you are conveying to another person. Hence, Gary was more aware of how his everyday life can be affected if he does not communicate effectively when he is writing or speaking.

### ***Motivation.***



In general, Gary was very invested in learning the language by going out and interacting with the locals. Beyond that, he was very inspired by a fellow classmate who he witnessed successfully communicating in Italian with the locals, which motivated Gary to do the same. In combination with this, he mentioned that the study was also a motivating factor as it gave him more insight into how to think in Italian.

### ***Biggest Challenges.***

His biggest challenge was applying Italian to his life outside the classroom. In addition, he spent a lot of time interacting with the other American students, and he spent a lot of time in his room studying. Both factors were a challenge for Gary because he was not able to speak Italian on a consistent basis. He explained that he was unable to apply Italian to the same kinds of situations in which he uses English (i.e., contexts that mirror his life as an American student). It appeared that Gary would have found it more helpful to be fully immersed in Italian and be forced to use Italian in every facet of his life. As a result, he felt like he could only practice Italian under certain circumstances, and in specific contexts. Regarding challenges he overcame, Gary said Italian was extremely intimidating upon his arrival to Italy, given he had no cultural ties to Italy, and it was a completely new situation in which he never found himself before. He felt at this point in his stay in Italy that he could understand more Italian because it is more audible (i.e., understanding). Gary started to recognize specific words and meanings in Italian when it was spoken to him, something not possible before. Another challenge Gary described was how Italian seemed very fast when it was spoken when he first arrived in Italy. He described being very intimidated and worried as a result because he was not able to understand what was happening around him.

### ***Post-study Assessment.***

The researcher gave Gary the post-study assessment sheet of sentences to analyze and the same instructions as the other participants. Even though Gary was encouraged to work on the sentences by himself he continued to verbalize his thoughts out loud as he worked through the sentences. In addition, he asked for assurance from the researcher to gauge if he was reasoning through the sentences correctly as he worked through the sentences. For the first sentence, Gary correctly stated that the first sentence was in the present tense, but he said he believed there was a present perfect in Italian. The researcher reminded him to think about that again and try to modify his answer. He eventually indicated there is a start time to the event, and that the preposition *da* is in the sentence, indicating that it happens for a period of time but continues. At that point, Gary correctly identified that the present tense is being used in Italian and the present perfect is being used in English. In the second sentence, Gary used the first sentence to guide his choices given he recognized the similarities between the two. While he correctly labeled the tenses in Italian and English here, his diagram was slightly flawed, as it was in the first sentence, because the start time of the event should be right outside to the left of the event frame as shown in Figure 45.






Gary correctly underlined the key words in the third sentence and recognizes that the tense in Italian is the *passato prossimo* and he incorrectly labels the tense in English as the past present, which does not exist. Gary's translation of the sentence was precise. Based on the event happening with a start and end time, Gary asked if his diagram showing a completed event was correct, and it was.

Figure 45: Gary Post-test Exit Interview

GARY

### Exit Interview Post-test

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: 20-APR-22

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1. <u>Mangia</u> da un'ora.</p> <p>Prise</p> <p>I have been eating for an hour.</p>  | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: <u>Presente</u></p> <p>English Tense(s) Used: <u>Present Perfect</u></p> <p>Diagram:</p>             |
| <p>2. <u>Abita</u> in Italia da <u>dieci</u> anni.</p> <p>I have lived in Italy for 10 years</p>  | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: <u>Presente</u></p> <p>English Tense(s) Used: <u>Present Perfect</u></p> <p>Diagram:</p>             |
| <p>3. <u>Ha aspettato</u> in aeroporto per cinque ore.</p> <p>I waited in the airport for 5 hours</p>   | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: <u>Passato Prossimo</u></p> <p>English Tense(s) Used: <u>Past Present</u></p> <p>Diagram:</p>        |
| <p>4. Charlie <u>gioca</u> a basket.</p> <p>Charlie plays basketball</p>  | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: <u>Presente</u></p> <p>English Tense(s) Used: <u>Simple Present</u></p> <p>Diagram:</p>             |
| <p>5. Giovanni <u>aveva già visto</u> il film <u>quando sono arrivato</u> a casa sua.</p> <p>G had already watched the film when I arrived at his house</p> | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: <u>tra passato Prossimo</u></p> <p>English Tense(s) Used: <u>Past Perfect</u></p> <p>Diagram:</p>  |

— = when

Gary correctly stated that the fourth sentence was in the present tense in both English and in Italian, and he accurately translated the sentence. The diagram that he provided is like what the other participants were able to generate, which highly resembled the present perfect.

The fifth sentence proved to be problematic for Gary. The presence of the *imperfetto* in this sentence confused Gary, he automatically wanted to consider the meaning as that of the

*imperfetto*, but he forgot to take into consideration the past participle that comes right after the conjugation of the verb in the *imperfetto*. His difficulty to understand was evident in the flawed translation he provided, and he errantly processed the Italian sentence as *has watched* or *was watching*. The researcher gave Gary a hint, which was to remember when events happen in time with respect to each other. After which, Gary correctly identified *I arrived* as being in the past tense, but he still wanted to translate the other part of the sentence as *Giovanni was watching* or *Giovanni watched*. Gary did not recognize that the *imperfetto* plus the *participio passato* indicated the past perfect in Italian in that example. At that point, the researcher explicitly brought the key words in that sentence into focus for Gary by pointing out the past participle in the first part of the sentence, which was an attempt for Gary to notice the use of the past participle in the second half of the sentence. At that point, the researcher referred to the word *seen* in the second part of the sentence as the past participle to see if Gary would recognize the tense used in that sentence, but Gary remained confused. To try to lead Gary to the answer, the researcher showed him the form of the *passato prossimo*, which usually takes an auxiliary verb plus the past participle. Using that example, the researcher pointed out to Gary that it was not just the present form of the auxiliary verb plus the past participle in the sentence, but rather the imperfect plus the past participle. Gary was encouraged to think about the order in which events happen in time. As Gary continues to struggle, the researcher offered another clue to attempt to guide him closer to the right answer. The researcher asked him to think about the word *had*, and Gary responded with *had watched*, which is now correct. Now that Gary correctly translated the sentence, the researcher asked him to draw the diagrams based on those sentences. Once again, Gary referred to the imperfect by itself, and he still did not identify the correct tense, which was the *trapassato prossimo* in Italian. An additional hint was given to Gary that the event happened

in a specific mental space that was completed, at which point he was able to draw the diagram correctly. Following, the researcher perceived that Gary was struggling greatly with understanding the concept. The researcher decided to move forward by explaining the concept in further detail and showing him the two separate sentences with two separate time frames. When the researcher asked Gary what he noticed about these sentences and events, he was able to explain that one event happened before the other. This took several cues from the researcher to reach this level of understanding, and Gary could not recall the names of the tenses in English or Italian.

#### **Charlotte Exit Interview.**

##### ***Language Ability.***

Charlotte said she felt much better and good about her language learning ability and did not elaborate any further.

##### ***Diagram Evaluation.***

Charlotte thought the diagrams were useful because it was helpful to see how all the tenses were different from each other. She also mentioned it was easier for her to see a visual of what those ideas and concepts looked like instead of “keeping it all in her head”, and just reading it. So, the diagrams helped her make connections between the language visualizing time and space. Charlotte specifically stated that the diagrams helped her to distinguish when an event was ongoing and continuing.

##### ***Italian Usage.***

Charlotte explained that she was trying to learn Italian, but probably not as much as people following a class during the semester. As a result, she indicated that she used Italian a bit less than the average student taking a course.

### ***Italian Study.***

Charlotte specified she averaged approximately two hours per week studying Italian. Charlotte did not specify which apps she used on her phone, but she said was using apps on her phone to learn Italian. In addition, Charlotte also credited conversations with the locals and with her classmates as ways she was able to practice Italian.

### ***Present vs. Presente.***

Charlotte explained that she believes the present tense in Italian, and in English are very similar and did not offer any further explanation.

### ***Present Perfect in Italian.***

Charlotte said that she remembered there being a difference with the present perfect. Charlotte was unsure of what the researcher meant by conceptualize so the researcher explained to her that she should be approaching this question from a time and space standpoint and how that it is perceived in both languages. After observing Charlotte's difficulty in responding, the researcher encouraged her to use examples of the present perfect in both languages in the form of sentences to explain the difference in meaning if she was not able to explain it from a linguistic standpoint. Charlotte began to explain that the present perfect "gets very confused in Italian." She explained that "does not really happen in English" and that tense is very similar to another one, but it was not clear what Charlotte was referring to in this case. It seemed she was trying to provide some sort of answer, but her intended meaning was not clear.

Figure 46: Participant Present Perfect Diagram

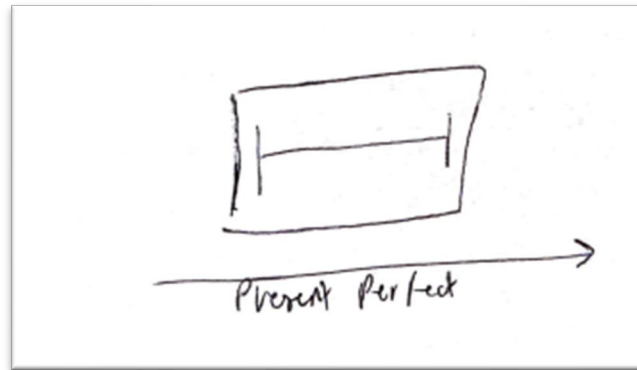


Figure 46 shows Charlotte's rendition of the present perfect in Italian, but the diagram was of the past tense. While she drew the diagram, Charlotte admitted to not remembering the language to describe the tenses, but she did remember, or at least she said, how the diagrams were formed, which seemed to be the in case according to Figure 46 but only in the sense of what the diagrams look like. Therefore, it was unclear if the incorrect diagram drawing was due to a misunderstanding regarding which tense she could remember, or if there was a flaw in how she conceptualized the present perfect.

### ***Italian Speaking Confidence.***

She said that during the study she was able to see the grammatical similarities between Italian and English. Charlotte said because of those connections she was able to make between Italian and English that she felt more confident in her ability to use Italian. The researcher asked Charlotte to elaborate on her ability to speak Spanish by asking if she mediated her thinking in both Spanish and English, or just English, when she was trying to understand these concepts in Italian. Charlotte mentioned that she did reason in Spanish at times to try and understand the concepts in Italian, rather than just in English.

### ***Top Benefit of the Study.***

The most beneficial part of the study according to Charlotte was learning more about the technical sides of the language, and it was helpful instead of just knowing specific phrases in daily language that she typically studied and used. This marked an interesting shift in her thinking given Charlotte placed tremendous importance on only spoken language at the beginning of the study, as she referred to language courses at university being too academic and not language used in everyday life.

### ***Study Benefits vs. Old Teaching Techniques.***

She said that given the study focused more on the grammatical aspect of the language, it was sometimes harder to grasp. Charlotte mentioned that in school, she felt like the language was used first, and then the grammatical aspects were analyzed after, but in this case, it was reversed. During the study, the grammatical aspect was analyzed prior to using the language. Put in other words, she described our study going from “harder concepts to easier”, and she was referring to abstract concepts to everyday use of the language, which is the aim of CBI.

### ***English Language Awareness.***

Charlotte’s native language is Spanish, and she said by studying Italian in this manner that she realized how similar Spanish and Italian were. Charlotte mentioned that she had studied French in the past but realized that Italian was even more like Spanish than French, which some research might support but was not noted in this study. Charlotte said that most of the students were confused when they had to make the connections between sentences but for her it was easier by using Spanish, and she could eventually figure it out. However, based on her performance, this did not appear to be the case when she used the diagrams and attempted to convey the concepts in Italian. Throughout the interventions, Charlotte’s analysis of the



diagrams, and her interpretation of the diagrams were not always accurate. It seems that a portion of this belief is attributed to the false idea that all romance languages are the same. Perhaps her reliance on Spanish might have made her too confident about her ability to understand Italian. While Spanish and Italian may share many things in common, they are not the same language, and they do have inherent differences in their grammatical structures and how tense and aspect is conceptualized in Spanish culture.

Charlotte described English as being “isolated because it’s not similar to European languages”. Charlotte said that she was glad that she spoke a second language and a little bit of a third. Charlotte did not elaborate on her own personal view of herself as an English speaker based on her responses to the pre- and post-interview questions of the study. Charlotte seemed to be more attached to her Spanish identity than her American one. This could be the reason why she did not see herself as a native English speaker, which she is. Her strong cultural roots have remained important to her throughout her young adult life and appeared to have heavily shaped her identity.

### ***Successful Language Learning.***

The study influenced Charlotte to believe there is a lot more than only learning phrases when studying a language and that there is a grammatical side to the language that is important. Charlotte’s explained that her new belief system recognized grammar as an important aspect of language to be familiar with, especially if one wants to learn to write well in that language.

### ***Attitude Toward Grammar.***

As mentioned in the previous section, Charlotte said that she realized that learning grammar is a big part of any language, and she was not aware of how much she actively learned grammar when she learned English and Spanish as a child. For Charlotte, the study brought into

focus that aspect of learning Spanish and Italian that she was not conscious of previously but was now aware. In addition, Charlotte explained how much the study made her realize how hard grammar can be when learning a second language when one did not grow up speaking it.

***Motivation.***

The study motivated Charlotte even more to learn Italian, because she realized it could be a lot easier for her to learn than for somebody else. She viewed her knowledge of Spanish as an advantage in her favor when learning another romance language, which research states it could be (Vallerossa, 2021). However, it is worth noting that there should be a distinction that is made given Charlotte is a native English and, by definition, a heritage Spanish speaker, which may not have been the language of instruction during the early years of her schooling (Polinsky & Scontras, 2019, p. 4). Therefore, it does raise the question if she has ever truly gone through learning a second language as an adult to know how to face those challenges. While knowing Spanish is definitely advantageous, if Charlotte has never gone through the second language acquisition process as an adult, then this would imply that she would be learning Italian for the first time just like anyone else. Lastly, it should also be noted that this study examined the level of language awareness in English for native English speakers, which the results showed the native speakers in this study did not have a high level of language awareness in their native language. This study cannot consider all the factors of language proficiency and its effect on second language learning, and future research can be conducted to take these factors into consideration. Heritage speakers grow up learning a language with a variety of factors that can influence their conceptual understanding of that language (Polinsky & Scontras, 2019, p. 4). Therefore, when Charlotte spoke of the comparison between Italian and Spanish, it should be noted she was likely referring to the academic version of both, and consequently her conceptual

understanding of Spanish would need to be evaluated to determine if she lacks the same kind of conceptual understanding in Spanish that the native English speakers in this study did in English to avoid the conceptual errors referred to by Danesi (2015).

### ***Biggest Challenges.***

Charlotte said her biggest challenge in learning Italian was when she tried to speak it, she would get interference from other languages she knew or studied. Given the similarities of words and phrases in Spanish and Italian, it is feasible to understand how this can happen. In addition, given Charlotte has been speaking Spanish her entire life, so she naturally processes some things in Spanish. The similarities between Italian and Spanish coupled with her being used to saying them in Spanish, would make this a normal phenomenon at the beginning stages of learning Italian but thinking in both languages will naturally develop as her level of proficiency in Italian rises. Charlotte described having to “think about it after the words came out” and rephrase things. She also mentioned French as interfering with her Italian in addition to Spanish.

### ***Post-study Assessment.***

The results of Charlotte’s post-study assessment did not have promising results. For the first sentence, Charlotte did not identify the present perfect English, but she identified the correct tense in Italian but wrote the name in English. The diagram she drew was representative of the past tense in English, and she did not offer any explanation of how the present perfect works (e.g., describing it as an event starting in the past and continuing until speech time and beyond). She recognized that the preposition *da* ties an event to the past in Italian, but her analysis stopped there. Charlotte offered no translation for the first sentence. In the second sentence, Charlotte’s diagram of the present perfect was missing many key elements. She gives a vague translation of the sentences and recognized that the prepositional phrase (starting with *da*) gives information on

how long the event took place. She correctly labeled the tense correctly in English this time but noticeably left the name of the Italian tense blank. Given Charlotte struggled to draw the diagrams and identify the tenses, the researcher offered some clues that the present perfect is the tense used in the first two sentences. The researcher also pointed out that the diagrams should have been modified to correctly reflect the present perfect in Italian, but the tense used is the *presente*.

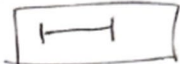

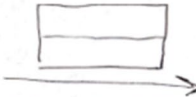
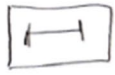
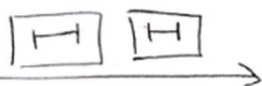
For the next sentence, Charlotte incorrectly labeled the English tense as the present perfect when it should have been the past but labeled the tense correctly in Italian as the *passato prossimo* after the researcher hinted that the simple past in Italian would be what the language *ho aspettato* represented. Her diagram of the past tense was partially correct because it lacked the vertical lines on either side of the solid line in the event frame to show a start and end to that event, as shown in the Figure 47.

Figure 47: Charlotte Post-test Exit Interview

CHARLOTTE

## Exit Interview Post-test

NAME: [REDACTED] DATE: 04/26/22

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>1. <u>Mangia da un'ora.</u></p>  | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: <u>present tense</u><br/>           English Tense(s) Used:<br/>           Diagram:<br/> </p>                             |
| <p>2. <u>Abita in Italia da dieci anni.</u><br/> <i>lives in Italy for 18 years</i></p> | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: <u>Present</u><br/>           English Tense(s) Used: <u>Present perfect tense</u><br/>           Diagram:<br/> </p>     |
| <p>3. <u>Ha aspettato in aeroporto per cinque ore.</u><br/> <i>5hrs</i></p>             | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: <u>presente prossimo</u><br/>           English Tense(s) Used: <u>Present perfect</u><br/>           Diagram:<br/> </p> |
| <p>4. <u>Charlie gioca a basket.</u></p>  | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used:<br/>           English Tense(s) Used: <del>present</del> tense<br/> <u>Past</u><br/>           Diagram:<br/> </p>      |
| <p>5. <u>Giovanni aveva già visto il film quando sono arrivato a casa sua.</u></p>      | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: <u>passato</u><br/>           English Tense(s) Used: <u>past perfect tense</u><br/>           Diagram:<br/> </p>      |

Charlotte offered no translation for the remaining sentences and incorrectly identified the English tense in sentence four as the past when it should be the present. Nonetheless, Charlotte got the past tense diagram correct, and she did not give the tense used in Italian. In the fifth sentence, Charlotte labeled the tenses correctly but only offered one each in Italian and English. Despite forgetting the tense names in English and Italian, she managed to draw the correct diagrams that

would illustrate the past and past perfect, which was correct in this case. Oddly enough, Charlotte successfully identified most of the key language in the sentences but her trouble appeared to be remembering the tense names and the process of drawing the diagrams.

### **Lydia Exit Interview.**

#### ***Language Ability.***

Lydia felt much more confident now especially in her second-semester Italian class because they were learning the tenses reviewed in the study, which Lydia mentioned at the simple past and the future. She explained the study helped her understand the connection to English, which led to a deeper understanding of Italian.

#### ***Diagram Evaluation.***

Lydia described the diagrams as confusing at first, and she indicated that drawing the diagrams was more helpful than just looking at them. For the most part, she said that it made sense during the moments in the study when the participants reviewed the diagrams with the researcher, but once she was “on her own”, she no longer knew what she was doing. However, Lydia said that over time she was able to reflect on the initial meetings of the study and understood the diagrams better after a few sessions of working with them and doing examples.

#### ***Italian Usage.***

Lydia said that she used Italian pretty frequently for exams in class and assignments, but she also used it to go to the grocery store and speak with the locals. Lydia said she studied an average of three hours per week in Italian and used the diagrams to study for her Italian class while they were learning the *imperfetto* and the *passato prossimo*. She said that she also looked over the English versions to understand how those tenses work for her exams in Italian too. In addition, she studied vocabulary that was required for her class and used flash cards. Lydia said

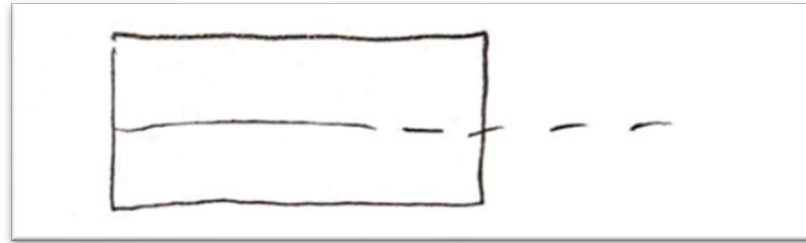
that by using the diagrams she understood the meaning through English to decide when to use certain tenses in Italian, which illustrated the purpose of this study.

***Present vs. Presente.***

Lydia began to say, with visible signs of doubt, that English speakers have a tense that Italians do not (e.g., present perfect). She started by saying the present progressive was something that exists in English but does not in Italian, but that was not correct. Encouraging Lydia, the researcher gave her a hint that the name of the tense begins with a *P*. After a few seconds of reflection, the researcher offered the word *perfect* for the sake of time in the interview, and Lydia remembered that it was the present perfect. After which, she began to explain that the present perfect is something that does not exist in Italian and was something she struggled with because it did not directly transfer from English to Italian. Lydia correctly stated that she did not feel that the *presente* in Italian was that much different from English, which for the most part is true and is largely used in the same manner. When asked how the present perfect was conceptualized in Italian, Lydia started explaining the prepositions that were introduced in the study. She explained that you must use *da* to render the present perfect in Italian, which is correct. Lydia also correctly explains that *da* means *from a certain point in time* and is unbounded, so it is an event that continues with a starting point in the past.

Next, the researcher asked Lydia to draw a diagram to show how the present perfect is conceived in Italian. Lydia talked it through with the researcher, and eventually remembered that there was a starting time to the event. She also remembered that there was a dotted line but did not explain what it meant. The researcher confirmed with Lydia the meaning of the dotted lines, which would signify a continuous action. She produced a pretty good version of the present perfect in Italian in Figure 48.

Figure 48: Participant Present Perfect Diagram



Again, this exercise was included to see how the participants might transcend their new knowledge over time (Feuerstein, 2010). An expert in developing SCOPA would need to develop one to represent the present perfect in Italian for a fair assessment to be made of the diagrams that the participants produced. However, the participants demonstrated some ability to utilize their new knowledge within a new context to try and solve a linguistic problem.

***Italian Speaking Confidence.***

She said she has never been good at speaking Italian, but she felt somewhat more confident now. The study helped her with writing and reading in Italian when a decision needed to be made regarding tense choice. She said the study did not hurt her confidence and she could make an informed decision on when to use the tenses. Lydia explained that the study did not necessarily help her speed up the rate at which she speaks Italian but helped develop her knowledge of the language and how it functions.

***Top Benefit of the Study.***

Lydia liked that the study did not immediately focus on Italian during the first meeting and focused only on the tenses in English. She also mentioned that everyone, because they are not fluent in Italian, were much more comfortable going over the concepts in English. She also said that the order in which the information was presented, which was gradually from English to



Italian, made her feel less confused and more confident when the target language began to get used. Furthermore, she described herself as feeling less overwhelmed and like she understood the material better.

***Study Benefits vs. Old Teaching Techniques.***

Lydia said that she had her Italian class four days a week. She recognized that this could not have been done for the study given the participants' class schedules and the times at which there were able to meet needed to be considered. As mentioned by other participants, Lydia mentioned that a week in between the study sessions seemed "a little long" because they began to forget the concepts and ideas that were covered in the previous session. Therefore, she felt the method could have been much more effective if it were something that had been done daily.

***English Language Awareness.***

Regarding English, Lydia said she already knew how to use the past, present, and the future, but did not know the reasons why. As hypothesized, she explained that language in English automatically made sense, or does not, when she speaks and writes. Hence, she did not have to think about it. As expected, Lydia said she was not aware that the present perfect existed in English, but she knew how to use it. This is also indicative of expert blind spots when we become highly proficient in an activity or a skill. Being highly proficient in an activity, one does not think much about the steps on a detailed level given that knowledge has become procedural. Hence, one of the intentions of the study was to verify and/or reinforce the tense and aspect concepts in English to be certain that the participants knew how to properly dissect meaning in English, and ensure their reasoning was not based on faulty logic. Consequently, Lydia said she could identify the tense whereas in the past she could not.

Unsure of herself, Lydia said she felt that she was pretty good at English, but she could not explain why she says certain things in English, which verified the researcher's hypothesis about the level of language awareness among the participants. Essentially, Lydia conveyed that she could audibly verify the correct sound and structure of an English sentence but was not capable of performing a linguistic analysis of language on a technical level. Being more aware of conceptual differences in language due to the study, Lydia commented that she understood that when ESL learners committed errors when speaking and writing in English that they were likely due to their L1 conceptual system interfering with language production.

### ***Successful Language Learning.***

Prior to the study Lydia said she would try to translate directly from English to Italian, which she attributed to not being able to think in Italian yet. She realized that direct translation was not always going to work from a grammatical and semantic standpoint (e.g., the present perfect rendered in Italian).

### ***Attitude Toward Grammar.***

Lydia said that her attitude towards grammar changed. She commented that the timing of her participation in the study combined with taking her Italian class was good. Lydia learned most of the tenses covered in the study in her Italian class. Therefore, she applied what she learned in the study to her exams and homework. As a result, she appreciated learning grammar more because she could directly apply it to something she was doing.

### ***Motivation.***

Lydia said during the study, she was highly motivated, because it was directly related to what she was studying in her class. Thus, she viewed the study sessions as a form of additional support to her Italian class. Consequently, her grade in her Italian class was a motivating factor

because she said “the more I study the better I’m gonna do in Italian“. In addition, there was an inverse effect because she tied higher performance in her Italian class to performing at a higher level in the study sessions. It should be noted that other participants, who were taking their second-semester Italian class mentioned feeling the same way. Participating in the study made Lydia feel like she could learn more than anyone else in her Italian the class who was not participating in it.

### ***Biggest Challenges.***

Lydia felt she was pretty good at grammar on exams and decent at deciphering other words in a sentence that she does not know by using words she does know to interpret the meaning. Besides, she mentioned speaking with an accent, and not having more vocabulary as the two things she viewed as a challenge. Regarding usage of Italian, Lydia used Italian when she ordered food and for general communication with the locals in what she perceived to be a fast-paced environment (e.g., many tourists and long lines). This stopped her from speaking in Italian, because it was faster to order in English and not keep others waiting in line. Moreover, Lydia still did not feel completely comfortable speaking Italian because she still had some reservations and fears about making mistakes. On the contrary, Lydia commented it was nice to be in Italy because there were a lot of chances to practice Italian. She repeated that she felt more confident using the right tenses because of the study. Lastly, Lydia identified one of her biggest challenges, which she still did not overcome, as still being afraid to make mistakes in Italian. Subsequently, Lydia felt that this makes it hard to practice because she had not overcome the fear of feeling vulnerable when speaking Italian and potentially making a mistake.

### ***Post-study Assessment.***

The researcher administered the post-study assessment to Lydia with directions on how it would be conducted. Lydia asked some questions about the tenses in English to confirm if there was a past perfect in English, and the researcher confirmed that it existed. Lydia opted to not offer translations of the sentences. Once Lydia finished the post-study assessment, the researcher and Lydia examined the results. The researcher started by asking Lydia if she believed there was a difference between the present perfect in English and the present tense in Italian. Lydia responded that sometimes there was a difference in the present tense in Italian and the present tense in English (e.g., no present perfect in Italian). Lydia correctly indicated that the first two sentences were in the present tense, but these sentences gave a present perfect meaning. To verify her understanding further, the researcher followed up by asking Lydia if there was a way to compare the present perfect English to the present tense in Italian, and she said the present perfect did not exist in Italian, which was correct.

When asked if the present tense in Italian and the present perfect an English shared anything in common, Lydia was not sure. The researcher asked Lydia if the phrase *he eats steak* is different from *he has been eating steak*. She responded that the latter ends up linking it to the past, even though both were in the present tense. She referred to *he eats steak* as something that was happening in the present and did not refer to the past in anyway, which was correct. Lydia underlined all the correct key words in the first two sentences and drew a fairly accurate diagram of the present perfect. She also listed the correct tenses for the first two sentences as the *presente* in Italian and the present perfect in English as shown in Figure 49.

Figure 49: Lydia Post-test Exit Interview

| LYDIA  |   | Exit Interview Post-test |  |
|--|---|--------------------------|--|
| NAME: [REDACTED]   |   | DATE: 4/16/2022          |  |
| 1. Mangia <u>da</u> un'ora.  | Italian Tense(s) Used: <i>Presente</i><br>English Tense(s) Used: <i>Present perfect</i>                                   | Diagram:<br>             |  |
| 2. <u>Abita</u> in Italia <u>da</u> dieci anni.  | Italian Tense(s) Used: <i>Presente</i><br>English Tense(s) Used: <i>Present perfect</i>                                   | Diagram:<br>             |  |
| 3. <u>Ha aspettato</u> in aeroporto per cinque ore.  | Italian Tense(s) Used: <i>Passato prossimo</i><br>English Tense(s) Used: <i>Past</i>                                      | Diagram:<br>             |  |
| 4. Charlie <u>gioca</u> a basket.  | Italian Tense(s) Used: <i>Presente</i><br>English Tense(s) Used: <i>Present</i>   | Diagram:<br>             |  |
| 5. <sup>L1</sup> Giovanni <u>aveva già visto</u> il film <sup>L2</sup> (quando sono <u>arrivato</u> a casa sua). | Italian Tense(s) Used: <i>trapassato</i> , <i>passato prossimo</i><br>English Tense(s) Used: <i>perfect</i> , <i>past</i> | Diagram: L1  L2          |  |

In the third sentence in Figure 49, the researcher asked Lydia if there was a difference between the past tense in English and the past tense in Italian, or if they were the same. Lydia explained that the *imperfetto* (i.e., a past tense in Italian) in Italian explains something that you used to do, and instead, the past tense represented something that happened and was finished. She classified the phrase, *he waited in the airport for five hours*, as being a completed action. She added that

the past in Italian could fully correspond to the past tense in English, which was true. Lydia correctly drew the diagram illustrating the past tense and she labeled the tenses correctly in Italian and English.

Regarding the fourth sentence, Lydia identified the key word *gioca* and correctly stated that the tense in Italian was the *presente* and the corresponding tense in English was the present. However, Lydia did not elaborate on defining the present tense as also being habitual actions or general truths. For the last sentence, Lydia chose to label the sentences using letters and numbers (i.e., L1 and L2) which was how the researcher instructed the participants to label the sentences during the study sessions. However, her interpretation of the precise meaning of these two sentences in Figure 49 was wrong as she mistook the past perfect for the past progressive, so *has been watching* instead of *had watched*. Gary also committed the same error when he was translating this sentence into English. The exact solution would have required that the event frame was complete with no ongoing action. The researcher gave Lydia additional cues about events preceding other events and Lydia realized her error and decided to change her diagrams. In following, Lydia put her first diagram in an event frame but had a dotted line to show a continuous event, which is incorrect. The second event frame, which represented the second part of the sentence, was placed to the right of the event frame in the previous sentence was correctly drawn with a starting and endpoint. At some point Lydia realized that the tense used in the sentence was not the *imperfetto* and then changed her diagram to make it a completed event.

This was likely another reason why Gary interpreted the past perfect in Italian as the *imperfetto*. In Italian, the combination of the *imperfetto* plus the *participio passato* makes the past perfect in Italian. However, if the students do not have enough experience, as in this case, then they could get confused. Lydia understood her mistake and immediately corrected her

diagram. In addition, Lydia mislabeled her first diagram as the past progressive instead of the *trapassato prossimo*, which seemed to be a common mistake among the participants on the post-study assessments. As hypothesized, most participants were not able to recall the names of the tenses in Italian, as well as in English. Regarding the order of the tenses, Lydia correctly placed the tenses in the order in which they should occur in Italian by stating “you have the *trapassato prossimo*, the *passato prossimo*, and then you go into the *present*.” On sentence five in Figure 49, she guessed that both parts of the sentence would be the *passato prossimo*, but the researcher intervened by saying only a piece of it would be the *passato prossimo*. The researcher presented pointed out the difference between saying *I had seen* versus *I saw* in Italian. It was possible Lydia needed to see the difference between the use of the auxiliary verb plus the past participle, and the use of the imperfect plus the past participle to understand the difference between both tenses. As a result, Lydia appeared to guess the correct answer by saying *past imperfect*, but the researcher placed an emphasis on the word *imperfect*, to which she correctly said the past perfect. Lydia clearly understood the concepts correctly through some investigative questions, but it appeared she simply did not recall the technical terms in Italian to describe the past tense, so the researcher supplied the answer. At that point, she identified the diagram that the tense belongs to, which is the *trapassato prossimo*, which she correctly identified.

### **Donna Exit Interview.**

#### ***Language Ability.***

Donna felt that because of the study sessions that it was easier for her to apply concepts from English into Italian and felt more confident in Italian as a result. She mentioned that understanding the actual differences between the tenses was helpful and not just knowing the names of them (likely referring to the tenses in Italian). Donna added that her experience was

that English grammar was never covered much in school, and “you just learn how to speak in the correct way”, so she found it helpful to refresh her knowledge of English. However, it is also worth questioning what *the correct way* means to Donna. Donna said they just spoke English correctly and did not think about it. However, it should not be assumed that our spoken language is always within the rules of the English tense and aspect system. Moreover, Donna said that it made it easier to learn Italian when she could compare Italian to something she knew and could reason out the meaning she wanted to convey. To that point, Donna said that she never really thought about the present continuous, the present tense, and things of that nature because English was her native language, and she did not think about the linguistic aspects at all. However, she reiterated that understanding the meaning of the tenses in English made it easier to identify the correct tense in Italian.

### ***Diagram Evaluation.***

Donna said that the diagrams and event frames were very helpful because it allowed her to visualize the language regarding where the events were taking place on the timeline, and if they were completed or not. Donna said that the main issue with the diagrams was there was a substantial amount of information to remember (e.g., tense names). Donna’s concern seemed to be similar to the other participants regarding their comments that more time was needed to thoroughly study the tense and aspect systems to digest the information. Furthermore, she mentioned that it would have been helpful to study and practice more often, but she understood the study had limitations, such as only having a few meetings at our disposal. Hence, Donna suggested that meeting more times in a future study might be more effective and helpful.

### ***Italian Usage.***



Donna said her four years of studying Italian in high school helped her somewhat. In addition, Donna mentioned the positive effect of living in Italy and being able to speak the language daily was extremely helpful. Donna shared that she spent time with Italians and spoke Italian often with them, which made it easier to learn the language while living in Italy. Regarding her time spent studying in addition to her class, Donna said she spent about two hours per day on average speaking Italian with her friends, going to the supermarket, and using it in her everyday life in Italy. As far as her study techniques, Donna reviewed her notes frequently and she often thought of phrases in English that she would normally use often to learn in Italian. So, she mentioned chunking language as a way that she could learn new phrases and communicate better with the locals.

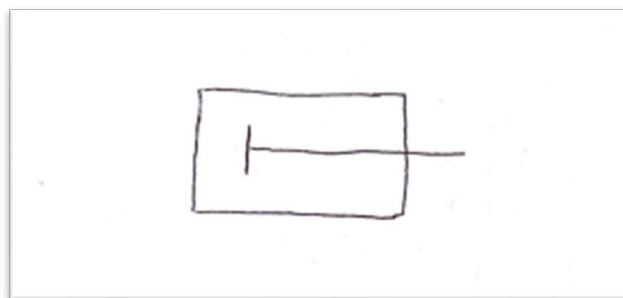
***Present vs. Presente.***

When describing the differences between the present and the *presente*, Donna said that she remembered the present tense could be used in more ways in English – likely referring to the perfect tenses. She also referred to remembering that something in the present tense was still true, and if it is not, then it is in the past and false in Italian. This corresponds to how the tense and aspect system works in Italian given a past tense in Italian indicates an event that happened and is no longer connected to the present. Donna initially did not understand the question and asked if the researcher wanted to know what the present perfect was an Italian, which would be a difference between the two present tenses. The researcher explained to Donna that the response should have been how the present perfect could be conveyed in Italian. The researcher continued to explain as Donna was still confused by the question. At that point, the researcher gave Donna a verbal example of what she might need to explain to answer the question. The researcher used *John has lived in Florence for 10 years* as an example. Immediately, Donna realized what she

needs to explain and started her explanation. Donna explained that in Italian you must use the present tense for the statement to still be true, and it should be linked to the past using the word *since*, which is time frame for which the event has been true. The researcher followed up with a question to verify that Donna could remember the preposition that gets used to convey the present perfect in Italian, and she responded correctly with *da*.

Donna was asked to draw a diagram of the present perfect if she felt capable. The researcher asked Donna to explain the steps she took to create her diagram when she finished. Donna indicated that there needed to be a starting point for the event and continued to explain that because the event is still true that there is no ending point. In addition, Donna indicated speech time after the researcher pointed it out, and she said that the event continued to be true. She explained her diagram and reasoning well but should have had a dotted line leading into the future instead of the solid line after speech time as seen in Figure 50.

Figure 50: Participant Present Perfect Diagram



***Italian Speaking Confidence.***

Donna felt more confident after the study in her ability to speak, because she understood exactly what the tenses meant. She also mentioned that her previous language class instruction involved giving the names of tenses, giving the conjugations, and maybe some examples, but there was no conceptual explanation of what they meant or how they should have been used. Even in her English classes, Donna explained that the corrections made to her writing and speaking never got fully explained. At the same time, Donna felt that while explanations were given in her Italian classes regarding tense and aspect usage, it was extremely helpful to understand how the Italian tenses compare to those in English, which deepened her understanding of the tenses. When the researcher pointed out that how Italian tenses compared to each other was another helpful way to distinguish using them, Donna immediately agreed. Lastly, Donna said that visualizing the Italian tense and aspect system on a timeline along with the event frame boxes to illustrate them made absorbing their meaning simpler than just using words. She specified that it got her to think about when things happen and what tenses are used to express those events in the correct order.

***Top Benefit of the Study.***

Donna credited the timelines and the visuals in the study as the top benefits of participating in the study sessions, which she felt made things easier than just memorizing a bunch of rules about tense that explain when and why they get used. Donna explained that when she studied a foreign language in the past that she only learned a piece of grammar, practiced it for a specified period, and then continued to another grammar point. She felt that it was useful to compare the tenses and how they function cohesively as opposed to learning these concepts independently of one another. Donna thought it was not a good idea to receive too much information at the same time given how overwhelming it could be. Therefore, reminding

students of the relationship each grammar point had with another while teaching it would be effective, according to her. Reflecting on her time spent studying Italian, Donna said after the study she felt like learned the tenses completely out of order in her previous Italian classes. Consequently, Donna did not have the opportunity to compare the tenses because the previous teaching approaches to which she had been exposed made them seem too disconnected and they seemingly lacked a logical sequence. Therefore, teaching the tenses as they are related to one another appeared to positively effect Donna's understanding of their meaning and made them become more distinct.

Donna emphasized the importance of understanding the underpinning reasons why a tense gets used rather than just learning the conjugations, which appeared to be in line with lower-level processing and rote memorization. Conjugations, more than just forms, have rich semantic value which should be given its proper place and time in the classroom. An interesting comment that Donna made was that her fear of speaking did not stem from not knowing the conjugations, but instead knowing what she was saying in Italian made sense to the locals. She stated "I don't feel like when I'm speaking with Italians that I say thank God I know the conjugation so well, but oh my god, what if I don't use this correctly. "

### ***Study Benefits vs. Old Teaching Techniques.***

Donna enthusiastically stated that she loved how the tense were studied in the study sessions and presented in the order in which they happen (i.e., sequenced), something she felt was very advantageous to the participants. Donna reiterated the main complaint of nearly all the participants which was that she wished that there would have been more sessions and the meetings would have been more frequent. She added that if this would have been a formal teaching environment (i.e., a course), then she said it would have been amazing. Donna asserted

that if the approach used in this study were connected to a curriculum with specific assignments and weekly meetings for instruction, then it would be a very effective teaching method.

### ***English Language Awareness.***

Donna was astonished by how she could not identify tenses in her native language. She also questioned if it were just English speakers that would have had this problem, but the researcher explained it to be normal for a native speaker of any language to become unaware of some of the characteristics of their native language if it is not actively studied. Nonetheless, Donna was surprised about her inability to analyze English, which was one of the points this study wished to bring into focus. And, by bringing the English tense and aspect system into focus, the study measured to some degree if doing so would have assisted the participants in learning Italian and would have made meaning making easier in the target language.

Donna realized, through participating in the study, that she did not focus on English as much as she thought she did. This made her recall that when she spoke to her Italian friends, and she could not give adequate explanations to their questions about English because her language awareness in English was not high enough. A common question Donna's Italian friends asked her was "why do you say it like that?" These questions put Donna in the position of being a language teacher and highlighted that there was more to teaching than being a native speaker who fluently knew the spoken and written forms of the language, such as truly thinking about the meaning the language conveyed and why those linguistic choices were made. Vygotsky stated that native speakers and second language learners would have inverse strengths and weaknesses, which is what Donna said she noticed, given she could understand and explain grammar rules better in Italian than she could in English.

### ***Successful Language Learning.***

Donna believed that learning the basics was fundamental before you could begin explaining more complex ideas. Donna also said that knowing the whole picture and understanding how things fit together in English was a good base to build on to learn Italian, and not just assume that “that’s just the way you say it “. She seemed to value the importance of a technical explanation after going through the study, and she emphasized the importance of consistent practice. And not just any kind of practice, but she emphasized that real-world practice versus just knowing how to conjugate verbs was essential. Nonetheless, Donna highlighted the importance of having a targeted vocabulary list that would enable a learner to speak in the most common situations in which they might find themselves in daily.

#### ***Attitude Toward Grammar.***

Donna expressed her disappointment that she wished she could have learned Italian grammar according to a more organized timeline, like in the study sessions. Up until her participation in the study, Donna said she learned tenses but in no logical order which made all the tenses seem disjointed and unrelated. Therefore, she thought learning the grammar in a more systematic way would have been more beneficial to her, which she never would have thought about prior to her participation in the study.

#### ***Biggest Challenges.***

Donna stated that “there are just different tenses in Italian than there are in English” because she said you cannot always directly compare them. Given there are things she would have liked to say in Italian that she said in English, she found they did not always transfer well, and this was frustrating for her, which made learning the language seem more challenging. In addition and somewhat related, her need to translate from Italian into English when she read in

Italian bothered her because it was the only way she could grasp the full meaning of the sentence, which was not yet automatic.

### ***Motivation.***

Donna mentioned that one of the biggest motivating factors was that the concepts covered in the study were also being studied in her second-semester Italian class, like what other participants mentioned as positive influence on motivation. A deduction that could be made, at least for the Florida State University curriculum, that second semester Italian appeared to be an optimal time for introducing the diagrams, as the utility of the diagrams really seemed to motivate the participants. Donna felt it was very interesting and helpful to utilize what she had learned in the study and then apply it in her Italian lessons and “see it all come together and get put into practice”, which Donna described as “exciting”.

### ***Biggest Challenges.***

Donna said a big challenge was that she used to be very shy and embarrassed about using her Italian. However, she also emphasized the importance of practice to facilitate continuous learning in Italian, which she knew could not happen if she did not overcome her challenges. Being in Italy forced her to use the language, regardless of how she was feeling about it. As a result, she overcame her fear of saying something incorrectly, or using a wrong tense. A challenge she did not overcome at the conclusion of the study was Donna second-guessing herself, because she still got a little nervous when she spoke.

### ***Post-study Assessment.***

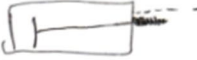
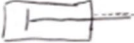
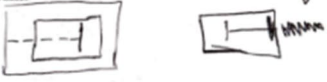
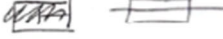
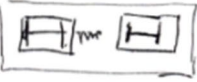
The researcher gave the post-study assessment to Donna along with the same instructions given to the other participants. Figure 51 shows Donna’s final assessment of the tense and aspect system in Italian.

Figure 51: Donna Post-test Exit Interview

DONNA

### Exit Interview Post-test

NAME: [REDACTED] DATE: April 27

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>1. Mangia da un'ora.</p> <p><i>He ate from one hour</i></p>   | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: present simple<br/>English Tense(s) Used: present perfect continuous</p> <p>Diagram: </p>                     |
| <p>2. Abita in Italia da dieci anni.</p> <p><i>He lives in Italy since 10 years ago</i></p>  | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: present simple<br/>English Tense(s) Used: present perfect</p> <p>Diagram: </p>                                |
| <p>3. Ha aspettato in aeroporto per cinque ore.</p> <p><i>He waited in the airport for 5 hours</i></p>   | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: passato prossimo<br/>English Tense(s) Used: past simple</p> <p>Diagram: </p>                                  |
| <p>4. Charlie gioca a basket.</p> <p><i>Charlie plays basketball</i></p>   | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: presente<br/>English Tense(s) Used: present simple</p> <p>Diagram: </p>                                     |
| <p>5. Giovanni aveva già visto il film quando sono arrivato a casa sua.</p> <p><i>Giovanni was watching the film when I arrived at his house</i></p> | <p>Italian Tense(s) Used: imperfetto / passato prossimo<br/>English Tense(s) Used: past perfect / present simple</p> <p>Diagram: </p> |

In the first sentence, Donna got the sentence confused with the past. With some guidance, she saw her error and changed her translation from *ate* to *eats*. It was also pointed out that there was a timeframe in which this action began, and Donna started to think about it. The researcher told Donna to not make her interpretation of the sentence too literal and think of how that idea



was conveyed correctly in English, and she recognized the tense. She got closer to the correct answer by saying it was a continuous action and initially identified the progressive tense as the answer, but it should have been the present perfect because there was a link to the past. The researcher pointed out to Donna that it could have been progressive in a sense, but not the way in which she imagined it. The researcher gave an example that if somebody started eating an hour ago, it would not be described by saying *he eats since an hour ago*. Donna responded with *he has been eating for an hour*, which was the correct interpretation of the sentence. Donna continued to think and eventually gave the present tense as her answer but still did not link the language to the present perfect. The researcher gave an additional cue that indicated the correct tense did not exist in Italian. Like some of the other participants, Donna continued to confuse the present perfect with a progressive tense, which can have a progressive form but does not convey the same meaning. Donna seemed confused by the idea that an event can continue that is happening now, versus an event that continues but started in the past. After a few seconds, Donna asked “is it the present perfect?” Subsequently, she confirmed that the present perfect did not exist in Italian and said that the tense used in this sentence to convey the present perfect in Italian was the *presente*, which was accurate. Donna tried to draw a diagram and got the diagram almost completely correct. The only necessary change would have been a dotted line instead of a solid line after speech time, as seen in Figure 51. Using the first sentence as an example, Donna corrected the second sentence which was also in the present perfect, but uses a different preposition in English, which is *for* (i.e., *per* in Italian) instead of *since* (i.e., *da* in Italian). Donna got the rest of the second sentence correct, but her translation was not accurate and too literal, as it should have been *he has been living in Italy for 10 years* and not *he lives in Italy since 10 years*.

In the third sentence, Donna's translation was perfect, and she got the tense names correct in English and Italian. When she needed to visualize the tenses, she ran into some difficulty because she omitted the start or end time of the event. She was reminded that dotted lines indicate a continuous action and that the tense was the *passato prossimo*. As shown in Figure 51, Donna shifted her attention to the event frame on the right by drawing the correct closed event frame, but initially wrote out the diagram for the present perfect. She corrected it and placed a vertical line ending the event, which was correct. In drawing the diagram for the fourth sentence, Donna had some difficulty like the rest of the participants given a present tense diagram was never introduced in English or Italian. Her interpretation of the Italian phrase in English was accurate and she correctly named the *presente* and the present as the tenses in Italian and English respectively. Her diagram was slightly different from some of the others that resembled something closer to the present perfect. However, Donna's diagram was interesting because she made a distinction that the present tense was different from the present perfect, and therefore, should be visualized differently. While her diagram likely needed work, she conveyed some of the characteristics of a present tense action well (e.g., habitual actions).

Lastly, Donna also missed the combination of the imperfect plus the past participle, like most of the participants, and did not realize immediately that this was the *trapassato prossimo*. Once again, she, like the other participants, mistakenly believed this was simply the *imperfetto*, which was not a focal point of the study sessions as an independent tense. This error mainly happened with second-semester Italian students who had already been exposed to the *imperfetto* in Italian. Donna admits that she was confused by the imperfect conjugation of the verb *to have* with the *participio passato* (i.e., *visto* or seen) right next to it. Donna correctly identified the past tense in English and the past tense in Italian for the piece of the sentence that utilized the past

tense. However, Donna did not recall what the past perfect was in Italian once she determined that there were two events happening in the past that needed to be ordered properly. The researcher pointed out that the past perfect version English was the type of tense used in the fifth sentence. Donna almost got the diagrams, but she needed to have two separate event frames for it to be correct. Donna got the correct diagram for the past tense but did not successfully draw the diagram for the past perfect in Italian (i.e., the second event frame). The researcher indicated that the event frame for the past perfect in Italian would be visually represented like the one used to represent the past tense in Italian, but the event frames needed to be ordered correctly to accurately depict when the events took place with respect to one another on a timeline. At this point, Donna drew the diagrams correctly with no further cues necessary.

#### **Mary Exit Interview.**

##### ***Language Ability.***

Mary said that after this semester, she “definitely felt more confident” in her ability to speak Italian, because she felt like she picked up “a lot of different concepts.” In addition, Mary explained that prior to the study, she did not think about when events happened in time when using languages, and she was more aware of it after participating in the study.

##### ***Diagram Evaluation.***

Mary stated that she was typically not a visual learner, but she believed that the diagrams helped “a lot”. She mentioned visualizing the language and putting it on the timeline as some things that made the concepts easier to comprehend. Mary also said that drawing the diagrams gave her more perspective in Italian in terms of the meaning that each tense communicated.

##### ***Italian Study.***

Mary described using Italian often when she went to eat at the restaurant across the street from the FSU Study Center where the waiters would speak to her in Italian. She also mentioned shopping around Florence as a key moment when she would use Italian. Overall, Mary indicated restaurants as the main places as the main places where she used Italian the most. Regarding time dedicated to studying, Mary said that in addition to the four hours a week in class that she studied about two to three hours outside of class. She mainly studied vocabulary, took exams, did homework assignments, and whatever contact she had with the locals, as stated above, to describe what her time spent studying Italian consisted of. Regarding studying techniques, Mary said she had lots of quizzes, and she wrote out diagrams illustrating the different grammar concepts that were covered in her class. Lastly, she used the vocabulary sheets that were given to her in her Italian course which served as her main source of vocabulary to study.

***Present vs. Presente.***

When asked to describe the differences between the present tense and the *presente*, Mary said that they were typically used in the same way, but she added that the present tense had multiple uses in Italian. It seemed like her interpretation of the present tense in English did not include the present perfect as a different aspect in which the present tense could get used. Instead, in Italian, the present tense does not have a perfect tense, so her description may have been more accurate if it were the contrary. It appeared that she may have switched the concepts around. Mary also referred to the different endings in the present tense in Italian (i.e., the conjugation endings), but she explained English is not like that, which was something that Gary also pointed out. While this difference in the present tense in English and Italian does exist, it was not what the question intended to uncover. Instead, the question aimed to uncover, if any, the participant's realization that there are multiple forms of the present tense in English, such as

the present perfect, which does not exist in Italian. Nonetheless the difference that Mary and Gary pointed out about the conjugations in Italian and English was valid.

***Present Perfect in Italian.***

When asked to describe the present perfect in Italian, Mary continued to think about her answer, and she slowly began to remember some of the elements that rendered the meaning of the present perfect in Italian. Mary referred to two words as possibilities that could be used to form the present perfect in Italian, and the researcher clarified that she was talking about the prepositions *per* and *da*. After identifying the Italian prepositions, she said that there was one specific word that was always necessary to form the present perfect, which the researcher presumed she meant *da*. The researcher gave Mary a cue by saying *for* and *from*, and she correctly stated both prepositions in Italian but was initially unsure which one meant *for* or *from*. On her own, Mary recalled that the preposition *da* was the preposition that should be used to render the present perfect in Italian. The researcher noted that Mary did not mention the use of the present tense plus the preposition to render the present perfect meaning in Italian but just the preposition alone. Mary's diagram of the present perfect was very close to being accurate as shown in Figure 52. It was missing two things which is a definite start time, and she would have needed to switch the positions of the solid line and the dotted line.

Figure 52: Participant Present Perfect Diagram



Mary stated that the dotted line meant an action was ongoing, and she correctly stated the direction in which English and Italians view the progression of time, (i.e., the past to the left and the future to the right) as the researcher verified Mary's understanding of the direction in which time travels on the diagram.

### ***Italian Speaking Confidence.***

Mary mentioned that this was the first time that she had a consistent language teacher when learning a second language. As a result, she thought that was of major importance to her confidence alone. She felt the instruction was helpful this semester, and she felt much more confident in her ability to speak Italian. Like in her preliminary interview, Mary stated again that she did not have consistent instruction when she was studying language in high school. This was also the first time Mary had an instructor that was able to explain concepts to her, because her past experiences learning languages just involved "worksheets to fill out" and was expected to figure out the answers on her own. Mary complained that in the past she would never know if she wrote a sentence correctly because no one ever checked. This comment spoke to the importance of the use of DA in a group setting and implied its success during the study as a motivating factor. One of the main points that this study aimed to achieve was concept development through DA and managing student motivation by keeping them positive (Infante, 2016). A communicative approach to language learning is essential but does not seem to guarantee learning in the absence of feedback or emphasis on concept development.

### ***Top Benefit of the Study.***

Mary explained that the combination of group work, instructor feedback during the exercises, and working through examples on her own were key factors that made the sessions very informative and useful.

### ***Study Benefits vs. Old Teaching Techniques.***

Regarding anything Mary disliked about the sessions, Mary, while laughing and inferring her previous experiences were not great, says, “well, just everything was better.” Mary continued to explain that, even though she did not consider herself a visual learner, it was “really nice” to have those diagrams. Furthermore, she found it helpful to have multiple perspectives to approach language learning through the study and in the classroom.

### ***English Language Awareness.***

Mary pointed out that during the preliminary interview she realized that she had forgotten what tenses were. The study was instrumental in helping revitalize her language awareness in English. Mary mentioned that by reviewing this information that she realized that she did not even know what the tenses were, which was proof that she “did not think about these things anymore”.

### ***Successful Language Learning.***

Mary found it very impressive when people speak multiple languages. She stated that her thoughts have evolved, but did not elaborate any further, and just referred to a fellow student who spoke multiple languages and how impressive it was to her.

### ***Attitude Toward Grammar.***

Mary said she was not sure about how much language she was going to be able to learn before she arrived in Italy. She thought she was going to “pick up a few words here and there”, but instead she was able to make sentences and have small conversations. However, throughout her explanation, Mary did not make any reference to grammar.

### ***Motivation.***

Mary thought that just being in Italy was very helpful for her motivation. She stated that being on the main campus in Tallahassee, Florida would likely lead to less motivation because there were less opportunities to use the target language. Given that Italian is the official language in Italy, Mary felt much more motivated to learn it because of the importance of using it in her daily life. “Knowing what everyone was saying” and being aware of her surroundings were something that she described as an important motivating factor, which Gary also mentioned. The intervention made Mary realize how many different aspects there are to language learning and how sentence structure could change, despite being enrolled in her first Italian class, which she thought would have had more of an impact in that regard.

### ***Biggest Challenges.***

Mary heard that once you reach the age of 20 that it was more difficult to learn language than when you were younger. Her motivation was affected because of having that preconception before entering her Italian class and was a mental challenge for her. She reiterated having a terrible experience learning Spanish, and consequently she remained apprehensive about languages, which made Mary’s challenges seem more psychological than physical. Regarding language use, one of Mary’s challenges was her lack of speed when speaking Italian. She referred to putting together sentences, but sometimes struggling when doing so with the words coming to her slowly. Therefore, unless it was a phrase that she was used to saying or hearing, she reported having difficulty producing and understanding Italian spontaneously. The combination of trying to comprehend what the locals might be saying to her coupled with her trying to put together a response was a significant challenge and stressful.

### ***Post-study Assessment.***



Mary was given the post-study assessment along with the directions to complete it. She was instructed to underline the key words in the sentence that identify the tenses, write down the tense in Italian and in English, draw a diagram to illustrate the meaning of the sentence in Italian, and was encouraged to include a translation in English to reveal how she was processing the meaning in Italian.

In the first sentence, Mary successfully identified the tenses as the present in English and in Italian. However, in English, it should have been the present perfect which was a detail she missed, even though she underlined the correct key words *da un'ora* to indicate that the event was continuing. In her diagram of sentence one, she correctly showed that part of the event was ongoing for an indefinite amount of time, but she failed to show the start time of the event, the completed part of the event, and have the dotted lines continuing past speech time.

In the second sentence, Mary appeared to have drawn a more accurate diagram, but she again did not recall the proper names of the tenses in English and Italian. Her translations of the first and second sentences were fragmented and did not convey the full meaning of the sentence. In her second diagram, she seemed to recognize that there was a part of the event that was going into the future but did not represent it properly because there should have been a dotted line instead of a solid one as shown in Figure 53.

Figure 53: Mary Post-test Exit Interview

| MARY  |  |
|---|--|
| Exit Interview Post-test  |  |
| NAME: <span style="background-color: black; color: black;">[REDACTED]</span>        | DATE: 2/4/22   |
| 1. Mangia <u>da un'ora</u> .<br>eat from 1' o'clock                                 | Italian Tense(s) Used: present<br>English Tense(s) Used: present<br>Diagram:<br>   |
| 2. Abita in Italia <u>da dieci anni</u> .<br>Lived in Italy for 10 years.           | Italian Tense(s) Used: past perfect<br>English Tense(s) Used: past<br>Diagram:<br> |
| 3. Ha aspettato in aeroporto <u>per cinque ore</u> .<br>Be in airport for 5 hours.  | Italian Tense(s) Used: past<br>English Tense(s) Used: past<br>Diagram:<br>         |
| 4. Charlie <u>gioca a basket</u> .<br>Charlie                                       | Italian Tense(s) Used: present<br>English Tense(s) Used: present<br>Diagram:<br>   |
| 5. Giovanni <u>aveva già visto</u> il film quando sono <u>arrivato a casa sua</u> . | Italian Tense(s) Used: past perfect<br>English Tense(s) Used: past<br>Diagram:<br> |

Furthermore, the solid line should have been switched with the dotted line and the diagram flipped so the portion of the event that was continuing would have been going in the direction of the future and not the past. It should be noted that Melinda's vocabulary was likely limited and caused difficulty in her interpretations of the sentences. The results indicated it may

have been more beneficial to work on a more abstract level to give an overview of the entire tense and aspect system in Italian for someone at Mary's proficiency level, given the limitations on her vocabulary. The results also showed that second-semester Italian students seemed to have less of an issue with vocabulary, even if only one semester ahead of the other participants.

In the third sentence, Mary's lack of exposure to the past tense in Italian showed as her translation misinterprets the meaning of the sentence which was *he waited in the airport for five hours*. Mary interpreted this as *he has been in the airport for five hours*, instead. However, Mary got the tense description correct in English and Italian, although she does not include the Italian name (i.e., *passato prossimo*). She also used the diagram from sentence two and appeared to have associated it with the past tense, given she wrote that as her answer for the names of the tenses in sentence two and three. It appeared that the prepositional phrases may have lead Mary to think that the phrases are in the past, which could be possible in certain instances, but she did not seem to make the distinction between the concept of the past and the present perfect in Italian.

The fourth sentence illustrated a sentence in the present tense in Italian, which Mary correctly recognized. She also correctly wrote that the equivalent tense in English was in the present but did not give a translation of the sentence. She only underlined the key word, which is the conjugation of the verb *giocare*, or *gioca*. Mary showed no signs of confusion on this sentence and drew a diagram for the present tense that was similar to Donna's. She correctly conceptualized an event that was a habitual action but the diagram was flawed because it does not account for all cases of the present tense. At the same time, no such diagram of the present tense is known for Italian, or English based on the research that Infante (2016, p. 333) did to

create the English tense and aspect diagrams. Hence, this sentence was just an experiment to see how the participants may have applied their new skills in drawing diagrams.

Mary correctly identified the last sentence as being comprised of the past perfect and the past tense. She also underlined the correct key language but left out the past participle in the first half of the sentence, *visto*, which should have been included. It appeared Mary recognized two event frames happening in the fourth sentence by her identifying the correct language, but she did not reflect that in her diagrams. Mary did not indicate the correct name of the tense in Italian that mirrors the past perfect in English, but she gave the correct tense in English. Mary did not give an answer to indicate the tenses in Italian, as she should have written the *trapassato prossimo* and the *passato prossimo*. When the researcher explained how both event frames relate to each other when working with the *trapassato prossimo* and the *passato prossimo*, Mary immediately intervened to explain by stating one event frame should be before the other, which indicated she recalled the concept that we covered in the sessions.

### **Davide Exit Interview.**

#### ***Language Ability.***

Davide said he felt good about his ability to learn another language after the study. Davide described the approach in the study as “very systematic and approachable”, and as a result, he felt that it made learning the language less daunting. Davide was monolingual so this approach gave him the ability to understand and approach language from a different standpoint. He talked about how not knowing anything about a language, such as having no romance language experience, could have probably made it difficult for someone to comprehend things if they must rely on another language for their reasoning and thinking (i.e., their dominant language). Davide also made a reference to learning English, and that he never remembered

learning it but just knew how to use it. Therefore, he added that the approach in his study gave him the ability to learn the language in a conscious way, as opposed to unconsciously learning English as a child (i.e., using his dominant language as a learning tool).

### ***Diagram Evaluation.***

Davide said that visualization for a lot of people helps, and visualizing time was a hard thing to do. Therefore, being able to visualize time in Italian was helpful to Davide. Overall, Davide did not feel that there were any drawbacks to the diagrams, but he felt confused sometimes and needed time to process the information. Davide continued and said if the study was a class that met a few times a week for three months that it would have been even more effective. Davide also mentioned that if there would have been more demanding assignments that it would have been helpful to reinforce the concepts taught in the study. He also mentioned that having more complex homework assignments would cause the students to think more critically and foster a deeper understanding of the concepts presented throughout the study.

### ***Italian Usage.***

Davide reiterated that he was not fluent in Italian, but he studied it a little bit. He said he could not hold a conversation “for more than probably 30 seconds at this point”. It should be noted that Davide never formally studied Italian and, he had no Italian language experience up until he moved to Italy for the semester. He said about one to two hours per week of spoken Italian was part of his routine (i.e., daily use with locals). In regards to formally studying Italian, he studied approximately five hours in a three-month period during the study, which he described as “sad”. Davide said that he overestimated his ability to learn without structure, and he thought taking an Italian class during the semester would have been beneficial. Davide was relying strictly on himself and his own self-discipline to learn, which he said was a mistake. He

focused on the vocabulary and specifically studied things he normally would have talked about in English to use in his typical day (i.e., common phrases). Davide gave ordering wine at a restaurant as an example. There were no specific learning techniques to which he specifically attributed his learning, but what he described as “typical memorization techniques”. Davide explained he mainly studied things that he likes, and phrases that he thought he would have encountered in a typical conversation (e.g., things that he likes, how he was feeling), and more “practical topics”.

### ***Present vs. Presente.***

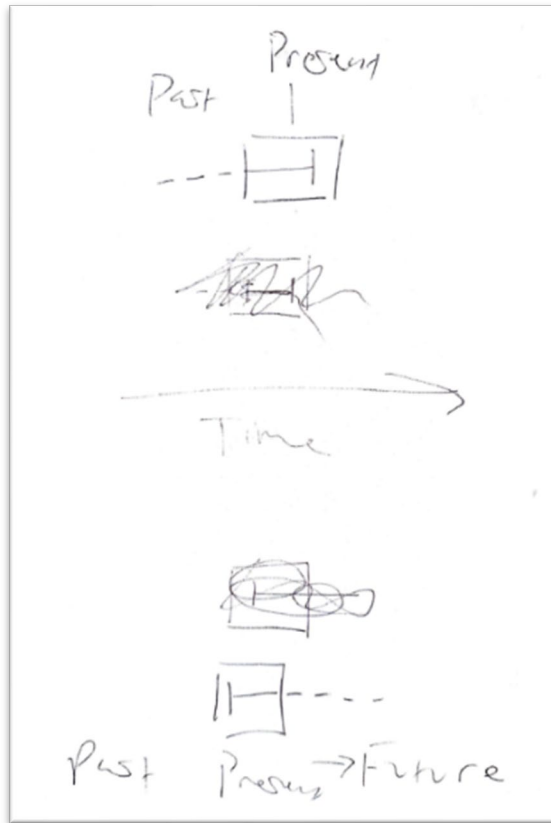
Davide said he did not remember any differences between the present tense in English and the *presente* in Italian. Davide vaguely remembered using a present tense with the word *since* in the study (i.e., the present perfect and the Italian preposition *da*). It should be noted that Davide missed one of the study sessions, which may have diminished his ability to answer questions like these on a deeper level. In addition, he also mentioned that there are certain “contexts” that did not exist in Italian – likely referring to the present perfect – but he could not remember the specific names. He continued to explain that he did not remember, but through his explanation and without realizing it, without knowing, he touched on some of the ideas examined in the study.

### ***Present Perfect in Italian.***

When asked about the present perfect in Italian, Davide remained silent for a few seconds, and the researcher reminded him that he mentioned some keywords earlier such as the word *since*. He responded by saying he was “a little in the dark”, and not sure, but said that the present perfect in Italian should be “pointing somewhere “. He appeared to refer to my explanation that *da* indicated a starting point of an event in the past and continued without a

definitive end. Davide described the rendering of the present perfect in Italian as “more versatile and simpler than the one in English”. In addition, he said that there were more aspects to the use of the present tense in English”, whereas in Italian you could just use the present tense for multiple things, which was a description Mary gave as well. While there was some truth to Davide’s explanation, it was at a very shallow level. Figure 54 illustrates Davide’s rendition of a diagram in the present perfect in English. Despite saying he could not recall much; he nearly got the diagram correct on the first attempt. Davide said that the “progressive imperfect” tense has often confused him, and it was difficult to remember what meaning it conveyed and which key language was associated with it. Davide finished the diagram, but there were a few things to clarify such as the direction in which time was going. He clearly showed that time was moving to the right, which is the future, which was correct. It appeared Davide’s diagram was accurate, but it was a mirror image of the correct diagram and needed to be inverted to be accurate. This was an error many of the participants made at this stage of the study. Davide originally had time going from the future to the past, as opposed to the past to the future, which should read from left to right. Davide confirmed that the dotted lines on his diagram symbolized an event that was continuing, and it was not known when it would end.

Figure 54: Davide Post-test Exit Interview



The researcher also gave Davide some cues on what a past action was by hinting towards completion. Davide asked to have another attempt to redraw the diagram, and he drew his second diagram. His second attempt was successful and accurate. So, it was interesting to know that while Davide could not recall certain tense names or explain how they function conceptually, he was able to draw a diagram of the present perfect with minimal scaffolding, which seemed to indicate some form of concept acquisition. In addition, Davide gave an example of the present perfect, which was *I have been a straight a student since 2000*, which illustrates that Davide had some understanding of the present perfect after a minimal number of cues. Therefore, he was not as lost as he originally had indicated. One of the issues with remembering the present perfect for



Davide was the word *perfect* itself in the name of the tense, as he explained that it did not give him much context and did not seem very intuitive like the word *past* or *progressive*. He was the only participant to make such an observation regarding the name of the tense.

***Italian Speaking Confidence.***

Davide said he did not feel less confident but not necessarily more confident after the study sessions but added that he felt knew more. At the same time, he would not commit to saying he was very confident in his abilities. Davide said he believed this teaching approach would be a big catalyst for someone taking a course over three months – something that would have built-in structure – but it was not a catalyst for someone like himself who relied on his own self-discipline and only put in five hours of studying in four months outside of the sessions he attended. Davide said that throughout the course of the study when he was in full rhythm, he felt like he was understanding the concepts better. While he believed he still could not speak very well, he felt much more confident about talking about language from linguistic a standpoint. It was notable that someone like Davide – with no formal background in Italian and was currently not taking an Italian class – might be a good, but not sufficient sample, to inspire future studies to introduce the Italian tense and aspect system in its entirety to first-semester Italian students given how enthusiastic he felt about the teaching method.

***Top Benefit of the Study.***

Davide explained that one of the most beneficial things was the opportunity to be corrected on the spot while he was working on the exercises, a reference towards the researcher doing assessments in each of the groups as they worked on the exercises with immediate feedback (i.e., DA). Hence, he explained that this type of approach was essential to participant development so they could make progress on understanding the concepts and avoid faulty logic

as their base of reasoning, which seemed to highlight the utility and the importance of dynamic assessment in the classroom.

***Study Benefits vs. Old Teaching Techniques.***

Davide reiterated how much he liked the teaching style and he referred to enjoying the ability to find ways to transfer language skills (e.g., English to Italian), even stating that he thought this might be the “future of language learning”. Regarding dislikes, Davide did not dislike the method of teaching, but he did dislike feeling at a disadvantage by not having enough vocabulary; he would have liked more homework; and he would have liked the study to have been longer. Davide pointed out that the study abroad environment made it difficult to find participants who are fully invested in learning these concepts given how easily distracted they could become. He mentioned that introducing ways to incentivize participation in the study – like if it would have been a class where students get a grade – might be something to think about for future research. Davide mentioned things like a competition that would result in a cash prize at the end of the study as something that could boost participants’ motivation to higher levels to engage in the study.

***English Language Awareness.***

Davide felt much more aware of how automatically he used English in terms of expressing himself. He also believed that the study revealed to him that English was a very complicated language and not as easy as one would think, and he questions if Italian may be easier to learn. However, how one would define easier would depend on from which cultural perspective the target language is being approached. Therefore, depending on the L1 background, and how different it is from the target language, it could prove to be easier or more

difficult to learn the target language, something Davide may not have considered when giving his answer.

Davide did not have a strong identity of himself as a native English speaker, and he did not perceive it as a big part of his identity. However, his stay in Italy and focusing on language in the study brought into focus “how essential multilingualism is” for learning. He argued that it does not just help with language acquisition but in multiple areas of your life. Davide felt that there was “a bit of ignorance” among native English speakers that believed that they could depend on English for communication in foreign countries, whereas in the United States “English is nearly essential”. In essence, Davide felt that English, as it becomes the lingua franca of the world, disincentivized Americans to learn other languages, which he found problematic. Likewise, he felt being at the Florida State University study center in Florence was a disadvantage in learning Italian because he was “living in a bubble” and was not forced to practice and learn more Italian, which was what Gary stated as well. In addition to Davide’s point about being surrounded by English speakers at FSU, another problematic aspect of studying in Florence is not having to depend on your foreign language skills and communicate with the locals in English. Student motivation to learn a second language when they know they can depend on their mother tongue to communicate is definitely an impediment to learning the local language.

### ***Successful Language Learning.***

Davide explained that “everyone knows themselves fairly well in order to make decisions about what is best for them”. He seemed to refer to being disciplined and dedicated by that statement, something he referred to quite often throughout the interview. He could have felt that he did not dedicate himself at the level he realized was necessary to successfully acquire a

second language. Davide mentioned time management and prioritizing activities as keys to successful language learning, which for him personally would have been a class he invested money in to motivate him to study. His intrinsic motivation appeared to be more connected to wasting of his financial resources, rather than acquisition of the language. Regardless of the level of dedication he realized it took, he said that he would not want to prioritize language learning over other things in his life that would require replacing those activities with studying language. Davide added that consistency, in addition to motivation, was of the utmost importance. Regarding vocabulary, Davide mentioned that it was a skill that could be practiced in any environment and was not an activity that should be deemed as essential when living in the country where the language was spoken. On the other hand, he felt that being in the country where the language was spoken, gives you the ability to practice forming sentences and speech spontaneously. Lastly, he suggested that studying the language prior to arriving to the country in which it was spoken would be extremely beneficial to a second language learner.

***Attitude Toward Grammar.***

Davide said that grammar had more of a conceptual role to him than it did before he participated in the study. He referred to how he saw the role of grammar in language prior to the study as being very mechanical, and “just the way you should do things”. Basically, before the study, he thought grammar was only essential for writing. Instead, he felt grammar was the way we conceptualize our ideas after the study, which was emphasized during the sessions. He continued to explain that grammar was not just what we wanted to say, but how we thought about things, and he specifically gave examples in the study of how cultures could view time and space differently. The study appeared to have shifted Davide’s attention to not just grammar being rules but also how grammar governs the way we think as a culture, and the importance of

communicating your ideas effectively in terms of when they happen and for how long. Davide made an interesting point in that he found it would be difficult to learn these concepts in English from someone who did not speak “perfect English “ and could not imagine doing the study with a native Italian speaker. Hence, his comment provoked a question. How beneficial is it to have an instructor who speaks the native language of a homogeneous group of students in the classroom and has a high level of proficiency to teach the target language? Davide made the comment that “I understand their point of view as an English speaker”. Therefore, he believed in his ability to convey the conceptualizations correctly in Italian in relation to English. In fact, Davide’s comment spoke to one of the research questions of this study, which was to better understand the implications and advantages of using the native language in a homogenous classroom to understand tense and aspect conceptually in the target language. His comment also touched on the importance of not using a one-size-fits-all approach to language acquisition and keeping an open mind to different language teaching techniques, which could be informed by the demographics of students enrolled in the class.

### ***Motivation.***

Davide’s level of motivation did not change very much. Because of the study, he felt like his motivation went up, but “the actual outcome did not change” (i.e., how much language he learned). Davide said the study did not have an overwhelming effect on his motivation, but he believed that it had the potential to have an enormous impact on participants. Davide suggested the same ideas as the other participants to have more sessions, more homework, incentives, and more time to work on the concepts in the study, if motivation would be affected positively. Davide reiterated the importance of having a specific purpose for learning the second language to increase motivation, and he gave examples such as having a romantic relationship, studying for

an exam, and possibly wanting to work in Italy as intrinsic forms of motivation beyond just loving the language.

### ***Biggest Challenges.***

Davide's not sure about which challenges he has overcome in learning Italian. One of the challenges he points out that he has had was memorizing things as easily as he would have wanted to. He lists conjugations, simple vocabulary, and concepts as problematic areas to memorize. Davide says that "language is not just what you say, but how you say it". He is learned more vocabulary and his pronunciation has gotten better. Along with those improvements, he has noticed that the process of understanding and responding has sped up, which would involve parsing out words in a sentence instead of hearing one big sound and being able to formulate responses quicker in spontaneous conversation.



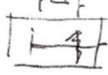


### ***Post-study Assessment.***

At this point, the researcher gives Davide the sheet of sentences to analyze. He is encouraged to write an English translation of the sentence to reveal his thoughts on what the sentence means. He is instructed to underline the key words in the sentence that reveal which tense is being used in each sentence. The researcher asked him to list the tenses both in Italian and English, and then draw a diagram to illustrate the concept.

As expected, Davide is having difficulty with the sentences because of his lack of vocabulary in Italian. Davide seems to be able to intuitively figure out some of the words in the sentences and he tries to use those context clues to interpret the rest of the sentence. The researcher encouraged Davide to not focus too much on his lack of vocabulary, but to see if he can at least identify the key words that are in the sentences which represent the tenses being used in Italian. Davide points out that he does not know the conjugations very well and it is

problematic, but he appears to do a decent job in identifying the key words that he can. The diagram illustrating the Italian tension aspect system displayed the language associated with each tense in Italian. The desire was that this may have been sufficient to at least recognize when events are happening in Italian, without knowing the vocabulary, and just relying on the morphological aspects of the language.

Figure 55: Davide Post-test Exit Interview

| DAVIDE   |   |
|--|---|
| Exit Interview Post-test   |   |
| NAME: <span style="background-color: black; color: black;">[REDACTED]</span>   | DATE: 17/4/22   |
| 1. <u>Mangia da un'ora.</u><br>I ate for 1 hour  | Italian Tense(s) Used: <i>Presento prossimo</i><br>English Tense(s) Used: <i>Past indicative</i><br>Diagram:      |
| 2. <u>Abita in Italia da dieci anni.</u><br><del>I have</del><br>I lived in Italy for 10 years   | Italian Tense(s) Used: <i>Presento prossimo</i><br>English Tense(s) Used: <i>Past indicative</i><br>Diagram:     |
| 3. <u>Ha aspettato in aeroporto per cinque ore.</u><br><del>have</del><br>I waited in the airport for 5 hours                            | Italian Tense(s) Used: <i>Trapassato prossimo</i><br>English Tense(s) Used: <i>Past progressive</i><br>Diagram:  |
| 4. <u>Charlie gioca a basket.</u><br>?   | Italian Tense(s) Used:<br>English Tense(s) Used:<br>Diagram:   |
| 5. <u>Giovanni aveva già visto il film quando sono arrivato a casa sua.</u><br>Giovanni: will start the movie when I arrive at his house | Italian Tense(s) Used: <i>Futuro</i><br>English Tense(s) Used: <i>Future</i><br>Diagram:                        |

The researcher encouraged Davide to think back to the language associated with each tense on the diagram to assist him in identifying when these actions happened and for how long. The researcher noticed that hint guided Davide to correctly drawing the diagrams. Davide mentioned that he did not remember the names of the tenses in Italian as well, so the researcher named some of the tenses in Italian to stimulate his memory.

In the first sentence, Davide mistakenly used the past progressive to represent the present perfect. Davide also got confused with the past progressive in the study sessions, and this problem manifested itself again. This also illustrated, one of the concerns of the study, that an event that should be conceptualized in the present perfect would instead be associate with and represented in the past. In English, while an event in the present perfect begins in the past and a portion of it is progressive, this would be problematic in Italian and was what the study hoped to expose. Hence, Davide drew a correct diagram in the first sentence but a flawed one to represent the past tense. He also labeled the tenses wrong, but it would have been all correct if the language reflected a past event.

In the second sentence, Davide committed the same error and placed a present perfect event in the past mental space. His translations of the first and second sentence confirmed his confusion between the past perfect and the past by using the words *I ate* and *I lived* in the first and second sentences respectively. However, it should have read *he has been living in Italy for 10 years* or *he has lived in Italy for 10 years*. In Italian, the keywords were in the present tense for the second sentence along with the prepositional phrases including *da* that hook the event to the past, which Davide did not notice in this case. Recognizing Davide's flawed logic, the researcher asked a leading question and stated it was not a past tense, and Davide responded with minimal cues that the correct tense was the present perfect, which is correct.



Davide correctly translated the third sentence and was extremely surprised he deduced the meaning of it. He began to draw a past perfect diagram, and the researcher hinted that it was not a past perfect sentence. He immediately corrected himself by saying it was the past tense, which was accurate. While he got the diagram correct, we can see from the labeling of the tenses in Figure 55 that he did not remember the correct name in Italian (i.e., *passato prossimo*) and he mistakenly wrote the past progressive in the initial part of his assessment, which he later corrected. He also modified the diagram to make it a bounded event, as a past event should be. The fourth sentence Davide did not attempt because he said there was no specific time when the event was occurring, which to some degree is true. However, he could have described this event as a habitual action. In the fifth sentence, Davide did not translate the sentence, label the tenses, or draw the diagram correctly, but he managed to identify the key language. Once again, Davide had limited vocabulary and openly admitted to studying very little, but he showed great potential and remembered much more than he expected and sometimes required minimal intervention to lead him to the right answers. As we reviewed the diagram in the fifth sentence, once the researcher gave the correct translation of the sentence, Davide immediately corrected himself and described a past action occurring before another past action. Lastly, correctly identified the *trapassato prossimo* in Italian as the tense used in that example.

### **Overarching Themes**

Rubin and Rubin (2012, as cited in Saldana, 2011, p. 258) states that “themes are statements *qua* (in the role of) ideas presented by participants during interviews that summarize what is going on, explain what is happening, or suggest why something is done the way it is.” Saldana (2011, p. 258) also states that themes should max out at six, but other published studies have claimed as many as ten could be appropriate. After completing the analysis of the data (i.e.,

transcripts, video, semi-structured interviews, and group activities and assignments), the researcher examined several themes in the data by theming the data categorically given the reliance on interviews and participant generated materials and assignments to generate the data corpus. Through code mapping of the structural and descriptive coding of the pre- and post-study interviews and study sessions, the first iteration of coding listed the codes associated with each of the pre-study interview, the study sessions, and the post-study assessment interview.

Consolidation of the codes through axial coding produced 18 categories which were narrowed down to six major themes for discussion (Saldana, 2011, p. 37). Boeije (2010, as cited in Saldana, 2011, p. 308) states that the purpose of axial coding is to determine which are the dominant and the less important codes in the data set to reorganize and choose the best codes for data representations. As stated by Saldana (2011, p. 259), themes do not magically or mysteriously emerge but are instead constructions and interpretations of the researcher. This approach is justified given that axial coding is appropriate for studies with numerous types of data, namely interview transcripts, video, and artifacts, which were part of this study (Saldana, 2011, p. 309). Hence, the codes were narrowed further to determine the major themes in the results of the study.

## Chapter Five Discussion

This dissertation examines the ways in which the native language can influence and support the development of tense and aspect in second language acquisition, and if teaching tense and aspect in a sequential manner would increase comprehension of the Italian tense and aspect system:

- 1) How does focusing explicitly on tense and aspect in the L1 as framed within the STI approach facilitate comprehension and production of tense and aspect in the L2 for undergraduate US English native speakers who are beginning-level learners of Italian?
- 2) How does teaching L2 tense and aspect in the specific sequence of past perfect (*trapassato prossimo*), past (*passato prossimo*), present (*presente*), present perfect (i.e., how it is expressed in Italian), and the gerund (*il gerundio*) as framed within the STI approach facilitate comprehension and production of the L2 for undergraduate American beginning level university students learning Italian?

Table 2: Major Themes

| Themes  |
|---|
| Language reflects culture                               |
| Language acquisition requires time and conceptual study |
| Diagrams help visualize time                            |
| Timely instructor feedback                              |
| Increased motivation                                    |
| Grammar is successful communication                     |

### Literature Connections & Participant Performance

At the conclusion of the study, the participants took a post-test to measure how well the study sessions, if at all, changed their perception of time in Italian. It should be noted that the last

meeting with the participants took place on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022. Given the different class schedules of the researcher and the participants, it was not possible to schedule the post-exit interviews within a week's time as previously planned. Some of the interviews were conducted within a week to ten days, while others were conducted as late as April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Surprisingly, even with the passage of time, the participants managed to recall a substantial amount of the material but not without assistance. During the post-test, the researcher provided scaffolding when necessary to guide the participants as they did not seem to remember all the material covered in the four group sessions. Baddeley et al. (2020, p. 279) states that as time passes forgetting increases and cites the results obtained from a study by Hermann Ebbinghaus in 1913 which Ebbinghaus referred to as the forgetting curve. The results of the Ebbinghaus study showed that forgetting slowed down gradually as time went on (Baddeley et al., 2020, p. 279). According to Murre & Dros (2015, as cited in Baddeley et al., 2020) Ebbinghaus's results are still valid today and are valid for both implicit and explicit memory (Averell & Heathcote, 2011, as cited in Baddeley et al., 2020).

Regarding foreign language learning, research in memory retention (Spanish, in this case) by Dr. Bahrick et. al (1975, as cited in Baddeley et. al, 2020, p. 281), a professor at Ohio Wesleyan University, considered the difference between events that are poorly learned, and information learned more deliberately and in detail. The results of the study were conducted over a 50-year period. Overall, both good knowledge (i.e., knowledge learned well) and poorer knowledge (i.e., knowledge acquired at a superficial level) saw a drop in retention with good knowledge showing a less steep drop over the first few years. Correspondingly, Spanish knowledge scores also declined in both good and poorer knowledge at a similar rate over time. However, good knowledge held a clear advantage as the Spanish knowledge scores remained

almost double of those with poorer knowledge over the 50-year period (Baddeley et. al, 2020, p. 281). Baddeley et. al (2020, p. 281) determined that retention of the material overall mainly was a function of how well learners absorbed the material at the first level of learning. Baddeley et. al (2020, p. 281) also states that “recognition is generally easier than recall”, which aligns with the findings in this study where recall proved difficult at times when taking the post-study assessment.

Participants showed difficulty in recalling the material at times but did recall it without too much difficulty when given gradual cues by the researcher (i.e., Mediated Development). Baddeley also made the distinction of what constitutes forgetting when there is still knowledge in memory that recall would not reveal but recognition exercises would (i.e., sentences on the post-test with verbal cues from the researcher) (Baddeley et. al, 2020, p. 281). This would support the level of recall demonstrated by the participants who completed their exit interview later than some of the other participants. With research showing that recall is stronger at the initial stages of learning, this also implies their results regarding how well the study sessions worked may be just as valuable, if not more, than those who completed the exit interview a week or so after the final group meeting. This provoked the thought if conceptual knowledge of the Italian tense and aspect system made it to long-term memory and is still available (i.e., the accessibility/availability distinction) (Baddeley et. al, 2020, p 282). Baddeley et. al (2020, p. 282) states that it is very difficult to differentiate inaccessibility from unavailability in the absence of the right memory cue, but reduced accessibility is memory failure, making inaccessibility and forgetting synonymous. Therefore, by definition, the information was accessible to the participants because they were able to retrieve it, even if cues were needed. Baddeley explains several types of interference that could take place that would impede memory

retrieval and there were no checks made for such interference in this study. However, the above cited research merely serves as a reminder that perhaps the success of the study sessions should not be judged solely on recall and performance, which may not be accurate, and to consider if the information was accessible, which seemed it mostly was. Baddeley's research was cited to explain any differences in the time frame in which the participants did their exit interview and minimize any doubt that time itself was a major factor in the post-study assessment results. MD (i.e., Mediated Development) used in the post-test interview sessions assisted learners to recall with graded cues, if possible, the information to form the diagrams and name the tense. Hence, the participants had the advantage of working with the researcher (e.g., DA) to stimulate memory recall.

### **Sentence One & Two**

The first sentence in the post-test assessment was *Mangia da un'ora (he or she has been eating for an hour)*, and the second was *Abita in Italia da dieci anni (he or she has been living in Italy for ten years)*. The examples in the first two sentences in Italian would need to be expressed in the present perfect in English. Seven of the nine participants successfully underlined the key preposition *da*, which indicates an event in time with a starting point and is continuous in Italian. Despite the high percentage of participants identifying the particle correctly, only five of the nine participants conceptualized the form of the present perfect in Italian correctly in the form of a diagram with some cues from the researcher, hinting towards some participants being closer than others to the next level of development (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 85-86). Out of the five that conceptualized the diagram correctly, two of them identified the tenses with the correct names in Italian and English. In some cases, the participants wrote the name of the tense in English when they could not remember it in Italian. Of the four that performed poorly on the first two

sentences, three of them (Davide, Emily, and Charlotte), identified the first sentence as in the past (i.e., *ate* instead of *eating*) which shows the L1 conceptual framework in their thinking and what Danesi (2015) called conceptual errors caused by mental calquing. Despite explicitly presenting the particle *da* as a marker for a continuous event that started in the past, these participants appeared to have had L1 interference when they associated the reference in time in the past to indicate the need for the past tense (i.e., one hour or 10 years). Likewise, such ideas require the use of the past participle in English to form the present perfect which seems to influence the way English speakers perceive this type of event. Contrarily, these first two sentences utilized the *presente* (present tense) in Italian and gave no indication of a past action occurring, which speaks to Vygotsky's point about the importance of cultural historic influences (i.e., American society) and their impact on the tools and signs that mediate mental processes where it appears the participants reasoned the event in time in English rather than in Italian. Consequently, the diagrams that Davide, Carla, and Emily drew represented a past event with explicit boundaries and no continuation. Furthermore, the L1 interpretation of the sentence in the past also points to inner speech taking place in English which speaks to the potential value of explicitly teaching both tense and aspect systems to point out their differences.

### **Sentence Three**

The third sentence was an example of the *passato prossimo* (past tense), *Ha aspettato in aeroporto per cinque ore* (i.e., *he or she waited in the airport for five hours*). Seven of the nine participants drew a correct diagram of the past tense in Italian, which is not surprising given that there is direct transfer from the L1 to the L2 system in this case. Oddly, naming the tenses used in this case had mixed success, but this appears to be problematic in general. The participants had difficulty naming the tenses at the beginning of the study, which appeared to have persisted.

At least from a general linguistic standpoint, this draws attention to how instructors might define a proper ZPD in the second language classroom. This may convey that developing concepts in the second language could prove difficult if this is not properly addressed at the outset of the language course, assuming the students share a common L1. This is an illustration of what Veresov & Mok (2018, p. 135) referred to when seeking to understand the dialectical contradiction present for growth to occur that exists between English and Italian, which would establish a lower limit for a ZPD to construct knowledge. This also delves deeper into not only if the learners can properly use examples of their L1 tense and aspect system but highlights the importance of them understanding the conceptual representations of the tenses. If the learners are not denied access to their most fundamental psychological tool as stated by Van Compernelle (2015, p. 91), then verifying that the students can effectively use the L1 as a mediating tool is vitally important. Like any tool, while it must be accessible, the lack of knowledge of how to properly use the tool would render it useless.

#### **Sentence Four**

The fourth sentence, *Charlie gioca a basket (Charlie plays basketball)*, was included as an exploratory item in the assessment. The goal was to evaluate the creativity of the participants and assess if the participants had reached some level of transcendence, defined by Feuerstein (2010, p. 40) as the “ability to act over large distances of time, space, and levels of abstraction.” The purpose of this sentence was to measure the participants’ knowledge in general of the diagrams and their application to Italian language over time and space, and abstraction (i.e., forming a new diagram using acquired knowledge). The fourth sentence was in the *presente* (present tense), and the results seemed rather promising and suggested that the participants internalized the approach enough to utilize to think in new ways.



Eight of the nine participants correctly categorized the sentence as utilizing the present tense. The only issue among those that correctly identified the tense was most of the participants did not recall what the present tense is called in Italian (*presente*). The diagrams they invented were like the present perfect diagram created by Infante (2016, p. 338) in that they showed an event beginning at some point (i.e., vertical line) and indicated a portion of it as completed which was demarked by a solid line. For the portion that implies the action could happen again in the future, the participants placed a dotted line, which is also in line with what Infante (2016, p. 334) developed to show a continuing action. There was no known visual diagram of the present tense in English or the *presente* in Italian that was grounded in the theory and research conducted by Infante (2016) at the time of this study. Even though the diagrams the participants drew were incomplete and likely flawed, they demonstrated their ability to use the knowledge acquired in the study to represent tense and aspect visually by creating something completely independent of the examples used in the study that followed sound logic.

Surprisingly, Charlotte labeled categorized this sentence in the past. Charlotte declared herself a native Spanish speaker and that the similarities between Italian and Spanish would have helped her acquisition of Italian. However, her performance on the post-study assessment suggested otherwise even though research supports that languages that are more typographically like Italian are easier to learn (Vallerossa, 2021). The researcher did not assess Charlotte's level of Spanish at any point of the study, and Charlotte provided no information regarding her level of grammatic knowledge of Spanish. Charlotte possibly classified herself incorrectly and may be a heritage speaker of Spanish and not a native. Pritchard & Woollard (2010, p. 373) state that it is not realistic to expect a Spanish heritage speaker in the State of Florida, where Cuban Spanish is dominant, to have even basic knowledge of the Peninsular Spanish (i.e., Spanish spoken in

Spain), so it is also necessary to consider which kind of Spanish is the main influence; although, in this case it would not likely make much difference given the present tense in Italian, or Spanish, would not indicate a high level of abstract conceptual difficulty. Furthermore, Pritchard & Woollard (2010, p. 373) define a heritage speaker as those to whom the language is not exposed through formal schooling with their main exposure coming from their home, which seems to be the case with Charlotte. Hence, the result of Charlotte living in an English dominant context may influence her linguistic thinking more than she believes.

### **Sentence Five**

The last sentence aimed to illustrate the *trapassato prossimo* (past perfect) and the *passato prossimo* (simple past), *Giovanni aveva già visto il film quando sono arrivato a casa sua*, or *Giovanni had already seen the film when I arrived at his house*. Once again, the participants' responses varied when correctly labeling the tenses, which showed their ability to label language with linguistic terminology remained rudimentary and needed more attention. Six of the nine participants successfully drew the diagrams with some scaffolding. This would also make sense given the direct correlation between the *trapassato prossimo* and the past perfect, and the *passato prossimo* and the past tense. While English and Italian are not typographically similar, concepts transfer well at times, which Danesi (2015) refers to as an *isomorphism*. Danesi (2015) defines an isomorphism as “instances when the L1 and L2 reflect the same conceptual structures and thus produce the same type of syntax and semantics”, which require no adjustment by the learner. The findings match what the literature suggests in that sense and from the standpoint of the ZPD. The researcher required less cues to lead the participants to the correct answer. It suggests the participants are closer to conceptual understanding given they had a solid point of reference in English to depend on for mediating their thinking. As an outlier, Davide

incorrectly labeled this sentence as the future tense, but he also admitted to inconsistently studying Italian and not dedicating much time to it. In addition, Jayden and Mary made references to the progressive tenses in this sentence. Like the descriptions in Chapter 4 of the final study session, the participants had difficulty identifying bounded and unbounded events. Based on some of their responses, they struggled with categorizing finished events linguistically and separating them from the continuous nature of time, which technically has no end.

### **Conclusion of Results**

Explicitly teaching the English tense and aspect system appeared to have had a positive effect on the participants' conceptual understanding of the Italian tense and aspect system. The positive transfer of isomorphisms (Danesi, 2015) for the *trapassato prossimo* (past perfect), *passato prossimo* (past tense), and the *presente* (present) seemed to show learners could make more conceptual sense of the Italian tense and aspect system by not taking away their dominant psychological mediator (Van Compernelle, 2015). Moreover, the teaching of the concepts in a connected manner as suggested by Negueruela (2005, p. 81) appeared to have positively influenced the participants' ability to place events in time demonstrating how different tenses relate to one another visually (Infante, 2016, p. 333). The SCOPA of the Italian tense and aspect system, an adaptation of the English tense and aspect system developed by Infante (2016, p. 333), allowed a direct comparison to be made across English and Italian and was implemented through theory grounded in STI and MD. This allowed the participants to language (Swain, 2006, p. 96, as cited in Lantolf et al., 2014), a critical step in transferring information to their consciousness. This approach was different from what many of the participants experienced in the past which was typically a communicative approach that used general rules of thumb to teach the grammar – typical of university language classrooms (Negueruela, 2003) – which the

participants found refreshing and positively affected their motivation to learn Italian. This approach also avoided only specific instances of the use of tense, focused on learner development, and used the tense and aspect system as the overarching concept as the minimal unit of instruction (Negueruela, 2007, p. 82). In terms of problematic areas where the study could be further refined lie mostly in the tenses that have less definitive endings such as the present perfect, the progressive tenses, and the use of the gerund, where most participants appeared to struggle in terms of separating the constant progression of time from language that describes time in terms of finished events, or units, like the past tense.

### **Overarching Themes**

This study investigated the importance of how a review of the English tense and aspect system for native speakers of English might aid their understanding of the tense and aspect system in Italian. This study also underlined the importance of the role of English to American beginning-level learners of Italian when processing L2 concepts given their inability to reason abstractly in Italian. In addition, the study examined how negative transfer from an L1 could affect the production of L2 speech and writing. Grounded in Vygotskian theory in forming a ZPD, the study investigated the importance of assessing what level of understanding the participants had regarding the English tense and aspect system, their native language. If the role of inner speech plays such an integral role in cognition, then if the learners' strongest mediating tool were removed, it follows that they would not be able to effectively process new L2 concepts.

The initial assessment of the participants' understanding of the tense and aspect system in English also informed instruction by identifying gaps in knowledge and teachable moments. The use of the native language allowed for deep processing and understanding new concepts in Italian. Hence, the goal of the L1 tense and aspect assessment permitted the researcher to identify

and correct gaps in knowledge in participants' use of tense and aspect in English to avoid negative transfer in Italian and gain understanding on a conceptual level, something not possible in Italian at this stage. Furthermore, the researcher, through DA, was able to have a better understanding of the microgenetic development of the participants given their reasoning of the L2 concepts was revealed in English, making it more precise. In foreign language learning, much of the attention is focused on learning the L2. Assumptions are made that students understand linguistic terminology that is used in the second language classroom, which may not always be the case. This study illustrated that using linguistic terminology prior to assessing the students' ability to comprehend those concepts could impede learning the second language as they demonstrated an inadequate ability not only to deploy the linguistic terms in analyzing basic phrases but also did not know their meanings. The lack of assessment of the L1 tense and aspect system in L2 classrooms allows students to perpetuate misconceptions in their native tense and aspect system and unconsciously transfer those inaccuracies to the target language. Furthermore, the probability of error multiplies in the L2 given that their inconsistencies and inaccuracies in English further complicate their comprehension of the second language, given no two cultures conceptually view language in the same way in all aspects. Verifying, or refreshing, learners' understanding of their native tense and aspect system would provide the base knowledge to process the tense and aspect system in the target language, another set of concepts.

As stated by Infante (2016, p. 296), the idea of "fostering cognitive functions speaks to the view that language is not walled off from the rest of cognition, and that the same cognitive processes governing language use and learning, are essentially the same for those involved in all other types of knowledge processing". By utilizing the visual diagrams developed by Infante (2016, p. 330) to illustrate the underlying meaning of specific language, the participants of the

study showed deeper understanding of how that specific language relates to time and space in Italian and in English. Lastly, the diagrams positively influenced the comprehension and production of tense and aspect in Italian as indicated in the review of the findings in Chapter 4. In addition, teaching the tenses sequentially helped facilitate their comprehension by allowing the participants to directly and explicitly compare how the tenses can be used together to form cohesive sentences that correctly reflect the conceptualization of time through language.

### *Preliminary interview*

All the participants were American born native English speakers except for one participant. Charlotte, while a native English speaker, was born in Spain and lived the first five years of her life in Spain and in South America. Charlotte's first language was Spanish, however, that still did not correlate into language success at the conceptual level as she displayed a lack of conceptual understanding of the English tense and aspect system and did not consistently identify the tenses correctly in Italian. Ironically, this may further highlight the importance of explicitly teaching language concepts despite the similarities two languages might have in grammatical structure, phonetics, lexicon, and semantics (i.e., Italian, Spanish). The rest of the participants lived in the United States for their entire life. Many of the participants had some sort of second language acquisition experience. The languages that they studied included Chinese, Spanish, French, and some were currently studying Italian in their first or second semester at Florida State University in Florence, Italy. All the participants, except Charlotte, did not live in another country where another language other than English was spoken up until their study abroad experience in Italy.

The principal reasons why the participants were interested in learning Italian were to communicate with the local population. The main scenarios in which they mentioned

communicating with local Italians were in restaurants, planning travel, using Italian while traveling, learning more about the culture, and showing respect for the country in which they were studying. Interestingly, none of the participants mentioned fulfilling their language requirement at Florida State University as a motivating factor to study Italian. Regarding grammar, the participants frequently referred to "real language" as language in the spoken form. There seemed to be a connection between being able to communicate an idea in another language and their definition of a successful language learner. None of the participants mentioned grammar or meaning making as a fundamental reason to study language. They also mentioned words and phrases that are applicable to everyday situations and used in basic communication outside the classroom. This seemed to suggest that the participants did not see formal language study as relevant to daily life activities and was more of an academic activity than a practical one. However, the participants mentioned consistent practice as a fundamental component of second language learning. This desire to practice could have been tied to the fact that seven of the nine participants believed they were not good at learning languages.

When the participants were questioned about what tense means in English, they generally were able to respond with the past, the present, and the future. The perfect tenses and the progressive tenses were not included in their answer, which correlates with their difficulties in using and identifying these during the materializing activities in the study sessions. Consequently, they did not successfully define what aspect means in English. In some cases, the participants were not able to name the tenses but instead provided examples. When examining specific pieces of language, the group had difficulty distinguishing language that represented a completed event versus a continuous event in the past and present. Nonetheless, the participants correctly described cohesion and how it functions in a narrative by showing that a sentence,

through examples, may not flow well if the events are not placed in the proper mental spaces (i.e., tense).

### ***Group Study Sessions***

The first group introduced the English tense and aspect system to the participants in the study. The linguistic terminology and the diagrams in the appendices were introduced to the group to illustrate how they could use them to interpret and visualize language. It should be noted that Italian was not discussed during the first meeting in any form. The focus of this first session was to begin to understand and develop a ZPD that initiates with the participants' understanding of tense and aspect, and linguistic concepts in their native language (i.e., English). The meeting remained largely a presentation up until the last 15 minutes when the researcher solicited questions from the participants about the information presented in the session.

After the diagrams were presented, the participants had some comments and questions. Gary asked a question about the verb *to remember* in English. Gary associated the words *I remember* with the past tense in English, clearly omitting the past participle. The researcher reminded Gary that the combination of the past participle *remembered* with the subject pronoun *I* would produce a sentence that is situated in a past mental space. This was the first indication of native speakers no longer being aware of the linguistic terminology and concepts in their native language to analyze language in English. The participants referred to being able to “speak English properly” but not knowing how English grammar functions. The simple present, the simple past, and the future did not appear to give the participants much difficulty in how they are perceived regarding time and space. During the study session, different examples of the tenses in English were written on the board for analysis. Virtually no member of the group had difficulty in identifying the present tense or the keywords that would indicate its use in a sentence. For



example, the sentence *he lives in Florence* was written on the board, and the group identified *lives* as the keyword that tells us which mental space the phrase is in. The only information lacking from the group's description of the present tense was to include that the present tense describes habitual actions and general truths. The study found that the group could only give a basic definition of the present tense which normally consisted of defining the sentence as something that is happening in the present. While partially true, it did not make a clear distinction between the present progressive and the present tense. The present progressive, which utilizes the ING form of verbs, clearly indicates an action that is underway, whereas the present tense does not give that sort of interpretation, which was explicitly pointed out during the first group session.

In general, difficulty arose when the use of the perfect tenses in English was explained. The participants did not seem to have difficulty in the use of the present perfect, but they consistently associated this tense with the past and not the present, and sometimes associated it with the present progressive. This was a potential conceptual error that the study hoped to expose during these sessions. The implications of this error would severely disrupt meaning in Italian, and it already does on some level in English. Following this logic, the concern would be a native English speaker associating the use of the past tense to convey this idea in Italian. Instead, this is a fundamental linguistic difference between English and Italian. Italian does not refer to a past event that is still relevant in the present by using a past mental space. Overall, the group demonstrated considerable difficulty when examining grammar in English. The difficulties extended, not only in labeling the tenses correctly, but to their use in cohesive sentences and their conceptual meaning. In addition, it was not clear if the difficulty resulted from the diagrams or not having study English grammar for a very long time. The interactions with the participants

suggested a combination of difficulty in learning the diagrams with no prior experience and legitimate problems with their understanding of how English grammar functions to create meaning to communicate ideas.

### ***Post-study Exit Interview***

The post-study exit interview revealed that motivation was a major common theme across the group. All the participants felt like they were more capable of choosing the correct tense when speaking. After the study, they also generally felt more motivated because the Italian tense and aspect system made more sense to them, which made them feel more in control of their learning and use of Italian. Hence, they felt encouraged to continue studying and that learning was possible.

A second major theme was cultural awareness. Even though most of the participants had experience learning a second language, this approach to grammar was never used in their previous classes or instruction. The participants became more aware that language is not always viewed through the same lens as their native language. This realization highlighted reasons why their encounters with ESL speakers sometimes resulted in speech that did not reflect that of a native. The group understood where these conceptual errors stem from. As a result, the group became more sensitive and tolerant of such differences when speaking with someone whose native language was not English. Reversely, the participants hoped that Italian native speakers would have the same kind of tolerance and patience with them when they tried to converse in Italian.

On that same note, the participants' thoughts on what a successful language learner was changed given that they added conceptual understanding of tense and aspect to their list of essential qualities of a successful language learner. Prior to the study, the participants believed

that literal translation would work most of the time, despite their previous experience studying other languages. In previous language classrooms, the participants noted that memorization of language and chunks of language were normally encouraged but the underlying meaning and reasoning for those linguistic choices were never explained. Therefore, their outlook on the types of studying techniques they implemented changed because they understood that failure to consider the cultural lens in which the language was conceptualized could cause potential miscommunications and misunderstandings in meaning.

Third, before their participation in the study, the participants viewed grammar as an academic activity that was independent from communicating in the language. The study brought into focus the importance of grammar and how meaning was constructed through language, including in their own native language. Grammar was also added to the list of characteristics of what the participants believed to be essential to second language learning. In addition, grammar was also viewed as essential to proper communication to convey specific ideas that normally were not previously considered before this study.

### **Limitations**

The proficiency level and exposure to visualizations of the Italian tense and aspect system appeared to positively affect the participants' ability to recognize the language associated with their respective tenses in Italian. However, the lack of vocabulary demonstrated by the participants who had not completed at least one semester of formal study in Italian prior to their participation in the study showed difficulty in remembering and identifying some of the language. By not having the proper exposure to enough vocabulary, it made writing and reading in Italian difficult if translations or translation were not provided in the form of word banks. Activities of that nature are usually associated with a rudimentary understanding of concepts and

likely would not allow learners to produce spontaneous language in Italian at this level.

Nonetheless, if participants could learn learned to recognize the forms associated with the tenses in Italian (i.e., mental spaces), then they might be able to inform their thinking from the start of their first course of formal study in the language which might teach them to think in Italian rather than just produce conjugations without understanding the reasons for those linguistic choices.

A second limitation was the timeframe of the study which was also relevant to Infante (2016, p 310). The participants universally stated that having more time to focus on the topics would have been beneficial. It seemed like the amount of time, while enough to cover the basics, did not allow for more detailed practice and more profound explanations of the concepts under examination. Furthermore, the frequency of the meetings was another suggestion that the participants made given they felt a week in between meetings was enough to allow them to begin to forget what was covered in the previous session. Most of the participants expressed their belief that with more time and frequency that this method of teaching could be very effective and motivating. The amount of time between the sessions in this study caused them to feel like they were forgetting key information that would allow them to progress in Italian. As a result, they felt they would have to relearn some things again in subsequent sessions, which they believed slowed their progress. With longer sessions and more meetings, the material can be taught at a slower pace with more activities to reinforce and ensure the concepts are understood and applied properly.

Another limitation was how dedicated the participants were in the study. A few students missed a session of the study and it set back their progress a bit. As suggested by the participants, perhaps there can be some sort of monetary reward for participating to encourage students to study and attend the sessions with a higher level of dedication. The other option may be only

allowing higher level Italian students who are trying to get a better grade in their class or even make the study part of a class to incentivize their participation. Many of the participants in this study cited hard work and dedication as key components to second language acquisition, and they thought they could have been more dedicated, but time did not permit. Therefore, a future study that is also tied to their academic success may be more motivating which would make the study a priority given it would be part of their academic responsibilities.

## **Theoretical Implications**

### ***Zone of Proximal Development***

As Kozulin (2018) argues, SCT does not only take place between objects but between concepts. Therefore, two different language systems such as English and Italian should help one mediate the other. Given higher level mental functions have been developed in the L1 (i.e., English in the case of this study), then English can be used as a mediating tool to understand the Italian tense and aspect system. Apart from establishing a baseline for a new ZPD, the results of this study seemed to support the idea that native speakers of English, who do not formally study it, likely understand English in a practical manner, which would be like the spontaneous concepts or natural phenomena that clash with academic concepts in a science classroom as stated by Kozulin (2018). Kozulin also states that Vygotsky concluded that studying a foreign language enhances a child's understanding of their L1. Hence, this conclusion would suggest that native speakers of English do not have an advanced understanding of their grammar system on a deep level and gaps of knowledge are present. The findings in the study seem to corroborate that statement.

The findings suggested that different approaches, depending on the makeup of the language classroom, could benefit language learning if a more tailored approach were taken. The

participants found that understanding English on a higher level helped them mediate concepts better in Italian because they could relate it to previous knowledge. Therefore, it might be beneficial for second language classrooms, when possible, to first establish a ZPD based on the level of understanding of tense and aspect of the language learners in their native language so they can mediate their thinking better and more effectively use inner speech when processing concepts in the target language. It appears to be an aspect of second language learning that typically gets overlooked. Communicative approaches to second language acquisition promote exclusive use of the target language in the language classroom. However, as the study shows, linguistic concepts would be a form of higher-level abstract thinking, which according to Vygotsky, would develop after lower-level concepts have been established. It appeared that bringing a language learner's practical knowledge of their native language under examination helped establish a baseline of a ZPD on which to build that promotes the acquisition of tense and aspect at the level required in a university classroom. Furthermore, such an approach would ensure that the underpinnings of the tense and aspect system of the target language are being explicitly addressed and verified with higher probability. A communicative approach to language acquisition does not guarantee conceptual understanding at such an explicit level but rather confirms through responses and examples that language learners have internalized the information more with likelihood than certainty. DA shows that students that provide identical answers can still be at different levels of development and therefore this suggests that it cannot be fully relied upon, something that Vygotsky addresses in his research (Wertsch, 1997, p. 68).

### ***SCOPA & Internalization***

The SCOPA used in this study were developed to teach the English tense and aspect system to ESL learners by Infante (2016, p. 333). The additional SCOPA to teach the Italian

tense and aspect system were created specifically for this study to provide a comparable document for the participants to internalize in Italian and compare it to English, which was an adaptation of Infante (2016, p. 333). As stated by Lantolf (2014, p. 65) in Chapter Two, the documents should have a minimal amount of verbal information and the diagram be as general as possible. In retrospect, the Italian tense and aspect diagram might have failed in this sense given it had a large amount of written language on it which may have made it difficult for the participants to process. However, this is something that could be addressed in a future study when the diagram might be refined further. While recognition of the tenses in Italian and the language associated with them appeared to have some success, it became evident that the participants' lack of Italian vocabulary would prove to be an obstacle, which is likely the main criticism of the Italian tense and aspect diagram in the study. Despite this limitation, the diagrams still appeared to be effective in assisting the participants to recognize what mental spaces were represented by certain language in Italian to place them correctly on the timeline. However, the large amount of information seemed to raise the difficulty level of remembering which language was associated with each tense in Italian.

A potential solution to the problem above could be to divide the study sessions according to the participants' proficiency level in Italian. For example, students enrolled in their first semester of Italian could be introduced to the English and Italian tense aspect systems but only to associate the language in English that would correspond to tense in Italian, if possible, and make comparisons between when events happen both languages on the timeline. Given that the vocabulary level in a second-semester Italian course increases considerably and different tenses are introduced as part of the natural curriculum, the vocabulary and the language forms that are necessary to render the diagrams more comprehensible would link internalizing the diagrams to

their academic success which theoretically would lessen the cognitive load on the participants and motivate the students to learn and use the diagrams.

Regarding the success of internalizing the SCOBA and the participants reasoning without the diagrams, the results showed it was successful when the participants reasoned in their L1 and did not only rely on the Italian tense and aspect SCOBA to mediate the L2 concepts as noted in Chapter Two by Negueruela (2005). The results also showed that gaps in time, typically more than a few days, forced the participants to rely on the diagrams in the subsequent sessions that followed. While the participants were able to verbalize the concepts on the SCOBA during the study sessions, there needed to be additional activities for internalization to occur, which was a suggestion and criticism of the study as the participants thought the study would have been more effective with more frequent meetings, longer sessions, and daily homework. However, even up to a month after the conclusion of the final study session, the participants could still reason and use the concepts from the sessions to mediate their thinking when they drew diagrams based on sentence analysis in Italian and English, which suggested some level of internalization. Overall, the participants felt the diagrams were very useful to their learning and got them to think about language differently regarding when events happen in time and how word choice affects meaning. As a result, it appears that visualizing tense and aspect of the target language and the native language of a homogeneous group of second language learners would be beneficial to second language acquisition.

### ***Mediated Learning Experience***

MLE promotes interaction between a researcher and learners. Second language learning classrooms promote speaking the language but do not seem to offer individual and immediate corrective feedback during classes. The participants seemed to have verified that their previous



experiences involved a communicative approach but was devoid of immediate feedback or was very basic. In some cases, the participants noted that in their previous language learning experiences no feedback was given during group conversation, group work exercises, and there was no opportunity to make timely adjustments to their thinking or concept development in the language. As stated in Chapter Two, Feuerstein (2010, p. 31) argues that repeated actions that are not accompanied by a thinking and understanding process do not necessarily produce learning. In fact, the participants stated during their exit interview that they enjoyed the immediate feedback and appreciated the deeper level of understanding they developed which made them feel more confident to speak Italian and choose the correct tenses. This form of teaching allows microgenesis to be constantly under surveillance, as immediate corrective feedback can also inform instruction in a group setting. The individualized attention allows learners to individually contribute to the ZPD and inform instruction on a precise level, which lesson planning cannot always account for given the group dynamics change and concepts under examination change as the course evolves.

Furthermore, all the participants reported feeling positive about the interactions and their ability to learn Italian, which authenticates MLE including emotional considerations as an important aspect of learning (Infante, 2016, p. 40). They all reported at least feeling the same regarding their motivation levels, if not better after the study. So, no participant felt that this approach damaged or lowered their motivation in any way. These results are also similar and related to what Infante (2016, p. 298) found when his study pointed to positive changes in his participants' "ability to take over tasks when they felt able to do so", employing the diagrams to guide tense and aspect choices, and leading discussions with their partners for revisions and explanations of concepts, which suggest feelings of competence that are connected to a more

profound understanding of the concepts. The participants in this study reported that previous language instruction did not encourage them to believe in their ability to learn a second language. In fact, seven out of the nine participants at the beginning of the study said they believed they were not good at learning languages. Given it is widely believed in academic research that motivation is an important factor in second language acquisition, MLE considers the affective factors in the language learning classroom that support a positive learning environment and motivate language learners to believe in their abilities in the target language.

Regarding the three fundamental ideas of MLE, the study touched upon intentionality and reciprocity, transcendence, and the mediation of meaning. As defined by Feuerstein, intentionality was accomplished in this study by bringing into specific focus the English and Italian tense and aspect systems, which the learners would not necessarily consider if they were to approach this on their own. Reciprocity was addressed with group activities in which pair checking and DA. Transcendence was addressed by the time between the interventions to show that participants could still effectively deploy the linguistic materials and access the information to solve language problems. Mediation of meaning was consistently addressed throughout the study sessions, which showed the specific reasons for which certain language was used to create meaning. Therefore, this approach might have implications across second language learning classrooms regardless of the native language that students may or may not share, as DA and MLE (i.e., MD) would inform instruction in any learning context. The results of Lantolf and Poehner (2010) signal the importance of considering teaching and assessment as an integrated activity which strengthens the case for this approach in language learning classrooms.

### ***Inner speech***

As noted in Chapter Two, De Guerrero (2018) inner speech, or private speech, is a means to control mental activity and self-regulate. The theoretical implications of this study point to inner speech being conducted in the learner's dominant language (i.e., English). Vygotsky also states that inner speech is the most powerful tool at our disposal for self-mediating. When the level of difficulty rises of the tasks learners are asked to perform, as stated by McCafferty (1992) in Chapter Two, they usually revert back to their L1 for support. Again, this study highlighted the importance of the use of the dominant language to make sense of the concepts taught in the target language. By removing the L1 as a mediating tool, the results indicated that this would severely impede the acquisition of concepts in the target language. The results of the study suggest that teaching language to homogeneous groups of students should include a conceptual review of the tense and aspect system of their dominant language (i.e., L1). Development of pedagogical tools such as the tense and aspect diagrams illustrated in this study and those of Infante (2016, p. 333) across major languages taught at the university level would enhance the second language learning experience, possibly in the ESL context as well. While ESL courses largely consist of students from various cultural backgrounds, the results of this study seem to indicate that even just the visual diagrams would offer a level of support previously non-existent. Of course, putting this into practice on a DA level would require an immense amount of effort in terms of teacher training across various languages to offer the same level of mediation to each learner. However, further research in this area may generate new ideas and ways for teaching language.

### **Practical Implications**

While reviewing the tense and aspect of the native language is not always possible due to all language learning classrooms not being homogeneous, the results of the study could suggest

that different approaches to language teaching can be considered depending on the demographics of the language learners. University language classrooms typically boast a communicative approach to language learning regardless of the profiles of the learners in those classes. As noted in the literature review, Macaro (2009) states that instructors typically expect novices to assimilate L2 concepts through repetition and exposure rather than explicitly teaching concepts. In addition, Negueruela (2003) indicates that using grammar rules rather than teaching concepts has been the general practice to teach second language grammar for decades. The results of this study suggest that the diagrams and explanations of how tense and aspect is conceptualized in the native language compared to the L2 in the classroom had a positive effect on the participants' motivation levels. This supports Feuerstein's (2010) work that learners must see the utility of acquiring knowledge. Prior to the study, the participants viewed grammar as more of an academic activity rather than a way to convey meaning in the L2. However, their perceptions of grammar and its purpose changed considerably at the conclusion of the study.

Furthermore, this teaching approach demonstrated promise as being a practical method to provide feedback and corrections to participants to ensure understanding in the target language. This resulted in the participants feeling supported and guided well as feedback was given promptly during the group activities. These findings coincide with Feuerstein's (2010) claim that learners need to be mediated but with interventions tailored to their needs, which helped change their perception of their ability to learn Italian.

Lastly, the findings of the study indicated that native speakers of English do not necessarily remember well regarding how to perform a linguistic analysis of their native language. Therefore, it stands to reason that it would not be fair to expect novice second language learners to have the capability of doing so in a language in which they have a low

proficiency level. Classes that take this approach do not account for establishing a ZPD that starts with the L1 before instruction begins in the L2.

### **Methodological Implications**

The methodological implications of this study are highly concentrated in the implementation of DA, using the L1 as a mediating tool in a homogeneous language classroom, and using tense and aspect SCOBA diagrams to teach those concepts in the L1 and L2. DA proved to be extremely influential in promoting a positive attitude towards language learning and encouraging participants to ask questions and feel confident about their progress. The participants indicated in their interviews that DA was not part of their previous language learning experience, and this approach was a welcomed change. In addition, DA is something that can be immediately implemented in university language classrooms, but it should be noted that DA requires an appropriate amount of time, as seen in this study, to give individual and group feedback during class sessions. Furthermore, DA likely will maximize its potential by not exceeding a certain number of students enrolled in the class, which is a limitation to DA that likely needs to be researched further to discover what those limits may be. The study sessions successfully got the participants to think from another cultural perspective and visualize how language can be placed on a timeline. Some of the participants mentioned that studying grammar rules never clearly illustrated to them how the meaning of the words would organize events in time. The SCOBA, along with having their L1 at their disposal to mediate concepts, allowed the participants to explicitly focus on the underpinnings of the Italian tense and aspect system. Once the concepts are solidified, then they can be reinforced with listening, written, spoken, and reading exercises exclusively in the target language.

These implications do not have to be limited to students that share a common L1 who are studying a foreign language. Further research can investigate the possibility of developing SCOBA, which would be provided to ESL learners in entry-level ESL courses, that would help students of various cultural backgrounds to reason with their native language when learning English. Finally, these methods and findings shed light on the dangers of a cookie cutter approach to language teaching. At the same time, such a project would be a huge undertaking that will likely require years of research.

### **Future Research**

Given the limitation in vocabulary indicated above, future research may investigate if students with no experience in Italian could be introduced the entire Italian tense aspect system through the diagrams in English with the aim of identifying only the names of the tenses in Italian and comparing them to English to understand how events are ordered on the timeline. The alternative option would be to only allow students who have completed one semester of formal study in Italian to participate in a future study, but an opportunity may be missed that would allow for the present tense (i.e., *presente*) to be taught within the context of the complete Italian tense and aspect system. In addition, given the *presente* in Italian is used to form the equivalent of the present perfect in English, by not introducing the entire tense and aspect system at the beginning of the coursework in Italian, the opportunity to use and demonstrate all the common uses of the *presente* would be lost. Lastly, if vocabulary becomes such a limitation at the beginner level, then future research might consider recruiting participants that are in their second semester of Italian as a prerequisite to participating in the study.

### **Review of findings**

Overall, the study had a positive effect on the participants' cultural awareness. They all became much more aware of how other cultures can view the world in different ways and how that manifests itself through language. Many of them did not realize the dangers of literal translation and how ideas could be interpreted differently in another culture without considering their viewpoint. By opening their mind to seeking to understanding others, the participants became much more tolerant of differences and seeking first to understand rather than be understood.

The study brought into focus the dangers of thinking we know our native language at a high level when we may not. The various activities showed how even English native speakers might not have the language awareness to utilize ESL SCOPA materials developed by Infante (2016) that were intended for learners who have no deep conceptual understanding of how the tense and aspect system works in English. The progression of activities showed that the participants, all native speakers of English, still needed multiple sessions to fully understand how they can visualize tense and aspect on a timeline, so the activities were not trivial and were challenging. In like manner, the study demonstrated the importance of reasoning in the dominant language at this level and how it positively affected the participants' morale (i.e., they felt the diagrams helped, more confident to speak Italian). At the minimum, no participant felt any worse about their ability to learn or speak Italian after participating in the study. Moreover, they were enlightened to the importance of grammar and how vital it is to meaning making in language. Previous thoughts that grammar was just something people did in school were replaced with the notion that grammar is more than a set of rules and is a powerful tool to convey thoughts and ideas. This study also corroborated the findings in Infante's dissertation study that interpsychological functioning plays an important role in mediating the connections between the

abstract scientific representations of the tense and aspect systems in English and Italian to the concrete details of exemplar sentences (Infante, 2016, p. 298).



## Appendix A

(Semi-structured interview will include the following questions)

- 1) What is your name?
- 2) How old are you?
- 3) What is your country of origin? What is your first language? What languages do you speak other than English?
- 4) How long have you lived in the United States?
- 5) In what semester of university study are you currently enrolled? (How many semesters have you been at FSU?)
- 6) What is your place of birth? How long did you live there?
- 7) Are there any other places that you have lived where another language was spoken? How long did you live in each of them?
- 8) What are your personal goals for taking Italian? In other words, what would you like to accomplish by learning it?
- 9) Please answer to the best of your ability, what does it mean to be a successful language learner?
- 10) Do you feel like you are good at learning languages? Why or Why not?
- 11) Up to now, how much Italian have you learned? Where did you learn it?
- 12) Can you describe the classroom techniques that were used in previous language classes you have taken in order to teach the language? What did you find helpful about those techniques? What did you find not helpful about those techniques?
- 13) If you have not taken a language before, what do you think are the characteristics of a good language course that will help you learn the language? Please describe.

Note: Pre-Study Interview. Reprinted [or adapted] from *Mediated Development: Promoting L2 Conceptual Development Through Interpsychological Activity* (p. 330), [https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final\\_submissions/13040](https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/13040), by P. Infante, 2016, The Pennsylvania State University Graduate School. Copyright 2016 by Paolo Infante.

## Appendix B

- a) What is a verb in English?
- b) What is tense in English?
- c) Please name as many verb tenses as you can.
- d) What is aspect in English?
- e) Look at the sentences below. Are there any differences in their meaning? If so, can you briefly explain those differences?
  - i. John lived in Florence for 5 years.
  - ii. John has lived in Florence for 5 years.
  - iii. John has lived in Florence since 2005.
- f) Look at the sentences below. Are there any differences in their meaning? If so, can you briefly explain those differences?
  - i. Peter read *The Great Gatsby*.
  - ii. Peter has been reading *The Great Gatsby*.
- g) Look at the sentences below. Are there any differences in their meaning? If so, can you briefly explain those differences?
  - i. Charlie practices his jump shot.
  - ii. Charlie is practicing his jump shot.
  - iii. Charlie has been practicing his jump shot.
- h) How do tense and aspect work together to either foreground events or background events in a narrative?
- i) What is an event frame?
- j) What is speech time?
- k) What are mental spaces when referring to language?
- l) What does the term cohesion mean? How do tense and aspect affect cohesion in a narrative?
- m) What is intended by the word bounded or unbounded when referring to events in time?

Note: Cohesion and Textual Analysis. Reprinted [or adapted] from *Mediated Development: Promoting L2 Conceptual Development Through Interpsychological Activity* (p. 331), [https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final\\_submissions/13040](https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/13040), by P. Infante, 2016, The Pennsylvania State University Graduate School. Copyright 2016 by Paolo Infante.

## Appendix C

(Semi-structured interview will include the following questions)

- 1) How do you feel about your ability to learn another language now?
- 2) How were the diagrams that were provided helpful to your learning? How were they not helpful? Please describe.
- 3) How much Italian did you use outside of class? How many hours did you study Italian on average? What techniques did you use?
- 4) What are the conceptual differences between the present indicative in English and the present indicative in Italian?
- 5) How does the present perfect get conceptualized in Italian? In addition to your explanation, please draw a diagram showing how it is perceived in Italian using the appropriate metalanguage introduced at the beginning of the study.
- 6) Do you feel more or less confident about your ability to speak Italian? Why or why not?
- 7) What did you find most beneficial about the sessions? Why?
- 8) What did you like or dislike about this method of teaching in comparison to how you were taught or learned language in the past?
- 9) What would you say you learned about your native language (i.e., US English)? That is, what are you aware of now that you were not aware of before?
- 10) How has your view of yourself as an US English speaker changed?
- 11) Have your thoughts evolved on what it takes to be a successful language learner?
- 12) How have your thoughts changed on learning grammar over the course of the study?
- 13) How did your level of motivation to learn Italian change due to the intervention (i.e., teaching techniques)?
- 14) What has been your biggest challenge in learning Italian? What challenges have you overcome and which ones remain?
- 15) How might you translate the following sentences into Italian?
  - a. He's been eating for an hour.
  - b. He's been living in Italy for ten years.
  - c. She's been waiting at the airport since 5 o'clock.
  - d. She's played sports since she was five years old.

Note: Cohesion and Textual Analysis. Reprinted [or adapted] from *Mediated Development: Promoting L2 Conceptual Development Through Interpsychological Activity* (p. 349), [https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final\\_submissions/13040](https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/13040), by P. Infante, 2016, The Pennsylvania State University Graduate School. Copyright 2016 by Paolo Infante.



## Appendix D

### Italian Tense & Aspect

| <b>INDICATIVO</b>   |  |  |  |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|---|--|--|
| <b>PASSATO</b>  |  |  |  | <b>PRESENTE</b>   | <b>FUTURO</b>  |  |
| <b>Trapassato Remoto</b>  | <b>Passato Remoto</b>  | <b>Trapassato Prossimo</b>   | <b>Passato Prossimo</b>  | <b>Indicativo Presente</b>  | <b>Futuro Anteriore</b>  | <b>Futuro Semplice</b>   |
|   | Parlai<br>Parlasti<br>Parlò<br>Parlammo<br>Parlaste<br>Parlarono<br><hr/> Dormii<br>Dormisti<br>Dormì<br>Dormimmo<br>Dormiste<br>Dormirono<br><hr/> Vendei<br>Vendesti<br>Vendè<br>Vendemmo<br>Vendeste<br>Venderono | Avevo parlato<br>Avevi parlato<br>Aveva parlato<br>Avevamo parlato<br>Avevate parlato<br>Avevano parlato<br><hr/> Avevo dormito<br>Avevi dormito<br>Aveva dormito<br>Avevamo dormito<br>Avevate dormito<br>Avevano dormito<br><hr/> Avevo venduto<br>Avevi venduto<br>Aveva venduto<br>Avevamo venduto<br>Avevate venduto<br>Avevano venduto | Ho parlato<br>Hai parlato<br>Ha parlato<br>Abbiamo parlato<br>Avete parlato<br>Hanno parlato<br><hr/> Ho dormito<br>Hai dormito<br>Ha dormito<br>Abbiamo dormito<br>Avete dormito<br>Hanno dormito<br><hr/> Ho venduto<br>Hai venduto<br>Ha venduto<br>Abbiamo venduto<br>Avete venduto<br>Hanno venduto | Parlo<br>Parli<br>Parla<br>Parliamo<br>Parlate<br>Parlano<br><hr/> Dormo<br>Dormi<br>Dorme<br>Dormiamo<br>Dormite<br>Dormono<br><hr/> Vendo<br>Vendi<br>Vende<br>Vendiamo<br>Vendete<br>Vendono | Avrò Parlato<br>Avrai Parlato<br>Avrà Parlato<br>Avremo Parlato<br>Avrete Parlato<br>Avranno Parlato<br><hr/> Avrò dormito<br>Avrai dormito<br>Avrà dormito<br>Avremo dormito<br>Avrete dormito<br>Avranno dormito<br><hr/> Avrò venduto<br>Avrai venduto<br>Avrà venduto<br>Avremo venduto<br>Avrete venduto<br>Avranno venduto | Parlerò<br>Parlerai<br>Parlerà<br>Parleremo<br>Parlerete<br>Parleranno<br><hr/> Dormirò<br>Dormirai<br>Dormirà<br>Dormiremo<br>Dormirete<br>Dormiranno<br><hr/> Venderò<br>Venderai<br>Venderà<br>Venderemo<br>Venderete<br>Venderanno |
| <div style="text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;"><b>Time Line</b></div> |  |  |  |   |  |  |

Note: Tense. Reprinted [or adapted] from *Mediated Development: Promoting L2 Conceptual Development Through Interpsychological Activity* (p. 333), [https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final\\_submissions/13040](https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/13040), by P. Infante, 2016, The Pennsylvania State University Graduate School. Copyright 2016 by Paolo Infante.

## Appendix E

| <b>CONCEPTUALIZATION CHANGES IN THE PREPOSITIONS <i>FOR</i>, <i>SINCE</i>, AND <i>FROM</i> IN ITALIAN</b>   |  |
|---|--|
| <b><i>PER</i></b>   | <b>Note:</b> Translated as <i>for</i> in English.                  |
|   |  |
| <p><b>Description</b></p> <p>The green line indicates the beginning point of the event frame. The blue portion, in line with the other diagrams, indicates the portion of the even that is completed. There is then another green line indicated the boundedness of the event frame and its completion.</p> <p>In Italian, the preposition <i>per</i> functions differently than the its translation in English (i.e., <i>for</i>). When expressing time, <i>per</i> will indicate the time for which it took to complete an action, or the time for which it will take for an action to be completed in the future. The important thing to remember is that these events are bounded in that they have a beginning and an ending.</p>  |  |
| <b><i>DA</i></b>  | <b>Note:</b> Translated as <i>from</i> or <i>since</i> in English. |
|   |  |
| <p><b>Description</b></p> <p>The green dot indicates the beginning point of the event frame. The blue portion, in line with the other diagrams, indicates the portion of the even that is completed. The speech time indicates the moment of the utterance, and then changes finally to the dashed red line indicating the events unboundedness at that point and possibility of continuing.</p> <p>In addition, as seen in diagram P1, the preposition <i>da</i> marks the beginning of a period of time with no boundary on when the event will be completed. This would be the equivalent of using the preposition <i>since</i> to mark the beginning of a time period in English that has no completion time leaving the possibility that it will continue into the future.</p> |  |

Note: Tense and aspect. Reprinted [or adapted] from *Mediated Development: Promoting L2 Conceptual Development Through Interpsychological Activity* (p. 334), [https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final\\_submissions/13040](https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/13040), by P. Infante, 2016, The Pennsylvania State University Graduate School. Copyright 2016 by Paolo Infante.

## Appendix F

- 1) What is an event frame?
- 2) What does a solid green vertical line mean in the diagrams?
- 3) What does a blue solid line represent on the diagrams?
- 4) What does a red dotted line represent on the diagrams?
- 5) What is speech time?
- 6) What is a mental space?

## Appendix G

| Sentence Example  | Visual Diagram |
|---|----------------|
| Sono andato a casa di Giovanni, ma lui aveva già parlato con sua sorella. |                |
| Giovanni ha vissuto a Firenze per cinque anni.                            |                |
| Giovanni vive a Firenze da cinque anni.                                   |                |
| Alessandro abita a Firenze.   |                |
| Charlie gioca a basket tutte le domeniche.                                |                |
| Alessia studia in biblioteca da tre ore.                                  |                |
| Giacomo aveva già mangiato quando sono arrivato in ufficio.               |                |
| Tommaso ha mangiato una bistecca enorme.                                  |                |

## Appendix H

|                                  |                                |                                  |                       |                          |                                     |   |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Sono andato = I went             | quando = when                  | per cinque anni = for five years | vive= he lives        | parlato = spoken         | Con =with                           | Abita= he lives                         |
| da cinque anni = for five years. | a Firenze= In Florence         | ma= but                          | ha vissuto = he lived | sua sorella = his sister | gioca a basket= he plays basketball | a casa di Giovanni= to Giovanni's house |
| tutte le domeniche =every Sunday | In biblioteca = In the library | da tre ore = for three hours     | ha mangiato= he ate   | studia = she studies     | una=a                               | mangiato= eaten                         |
| in ufficio = in the office       | enorme= enormous               | sono arrivato = I arrived        | bistecca = steak      | Già= already             | Lui= he                             | Aveva= had                              |

Using the word bank above, please create eight different sentences that use the present tense (2), the past tense (2), the Italian version of the present perfect (2), and a combination of the trapassato prossimo and the passato prossimo (2).



## Appendix I

| Sentence Example   | Visual Diagram |
|--|----------------|
| John and Richard fixed the car last week.                    |                |
| Mary understood the movie because she had read the book.     |                |
| John was falling asleep when Mary entered the room.          |                |
| Our son has learned how to read.                             |                |
| Alex and Sally have been waiting in the hotel for two hours. |                |

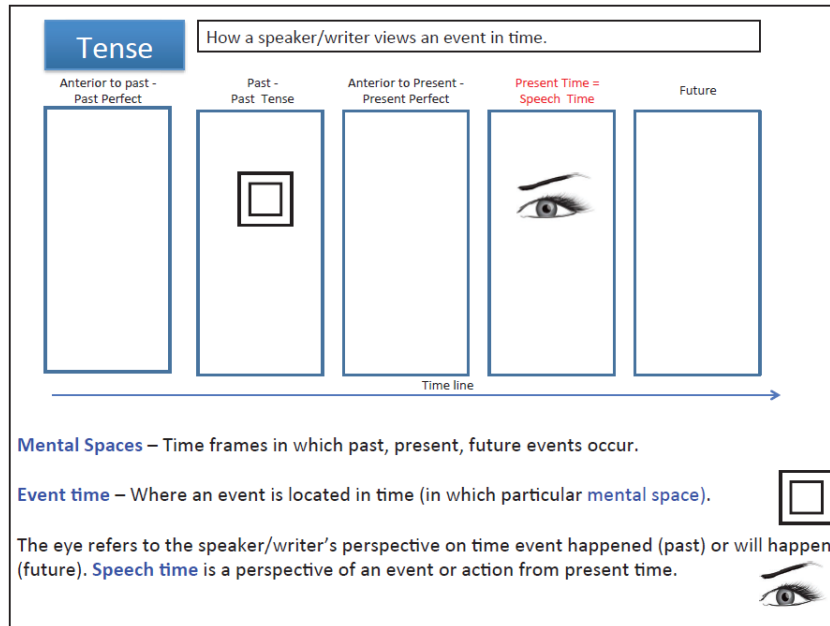
Note: Appendix K, Materializing Activity #3. Reprinted [or adapted] from *Mediated Development: Promoting L2 Conceptual Development Through Interpsychological Activity* (p. 347), [https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final\\_submissions/13040](https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/13040), by P. Infante, 2016, The Pennsylvania State University Graduate School. Copyright 2016 by Paolo Infante.

## Appendix J

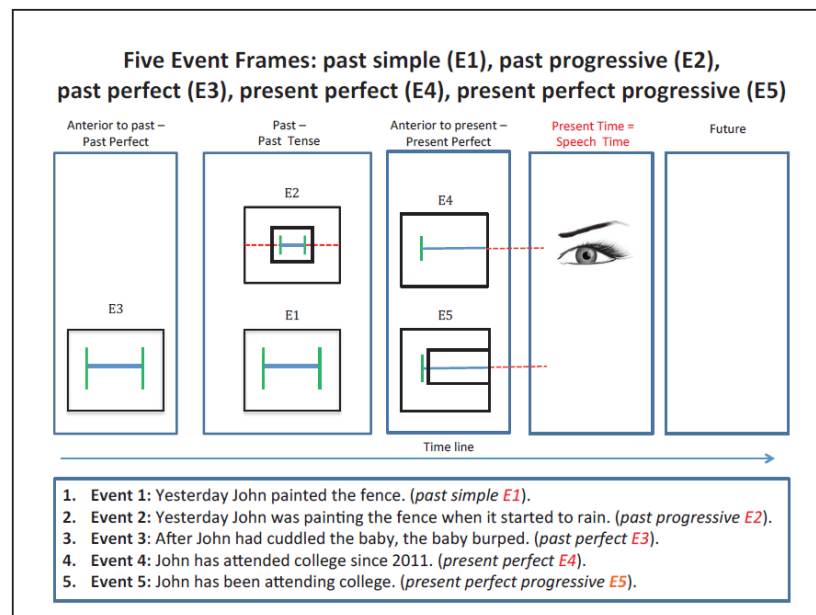
| Sentence Example   | Visual Diagram |
|--|----------------|
| Alex has been studying law at Harvard.                           |                |
| Alex has studied law at Harvard.                                 |                |
| Peter was reaching the finish line when he slipped.              |                |
| In 2010, I attended an English study abroad program in New York. |                |
| John went home after he had done his grocery shopping.           |                |

Note: Appendix, Materializing Activity #2. Reprinted [or adapted] from *Mediated Development: Promoting L2 Conceptual Development Through Interpsychological Activity* (p. 344), [https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final\\_submissions/13040](https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/13040), by P. Infante, 2016, The Pennsylvania State University Graduate School. Copyright 2016 by Paolo Infante.

## Appendix K

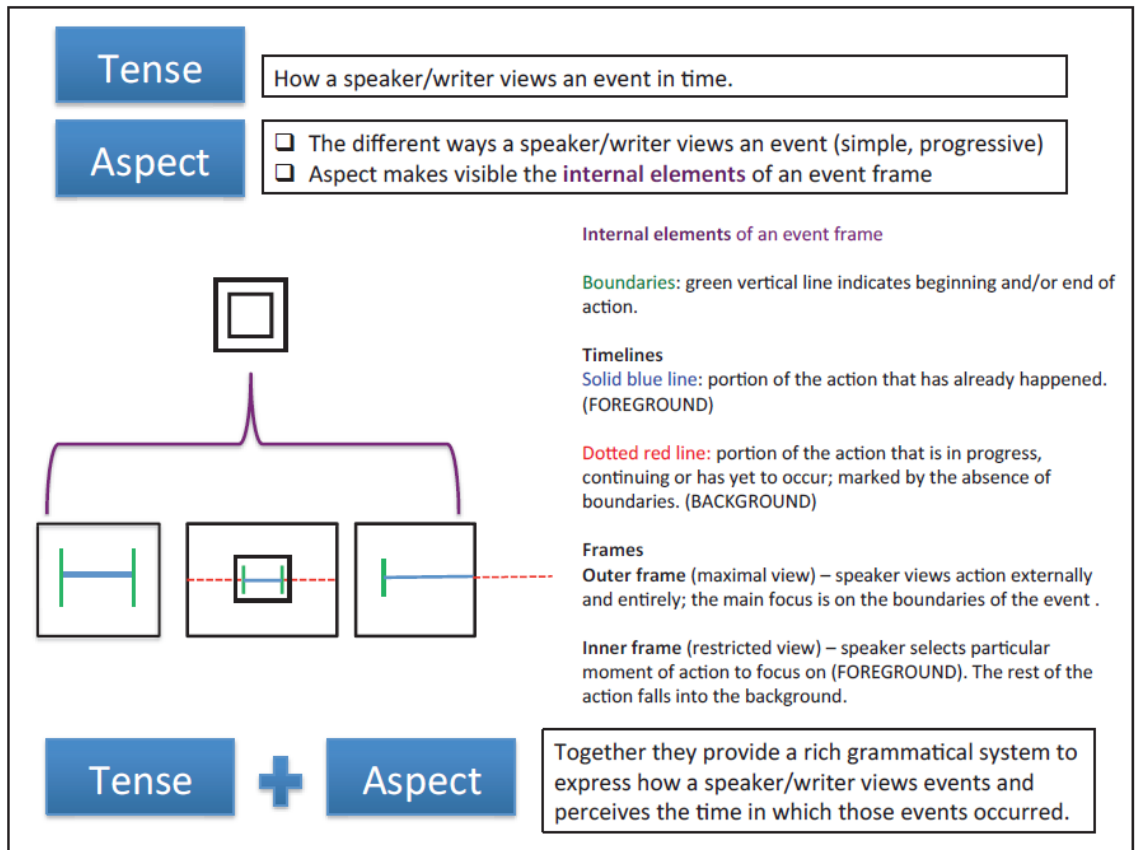


Note: Tense. Reprinted [or adapted] from *Mediated Development: Promoting L2 Conceptual Development Through Interpsychological Activity* (p. 333), [https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final\\_submissions/13040](https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/13040), by P. Infante, 2016, The Pennsylvania State University Graduate School. Copyright 2016 by Paolo Infante.



Note: Five Event Frames. Reprinted [or adapted] from *Mediated Development: Promoting L2 Conceptual Development Through Interpsychological Activity* (p. 334), [https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final\\_submissions/13040](https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/13040), by P. Infante, 2016, The Pennsylvania State University Graduate School. Copyright 2016 by Paolo Infante.

## Appendix L

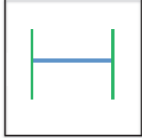


Note: Tense and Aspect. Reprinted [or adapted] from *Mediated Development: Promoting L2 Conceptual Development Through Interpsychological Activity* (p. 334), [https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final\\_submissions/13040](https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/13040), by P. Infante, 2016, The Pennsylvania State University Graduate School. Copyright 2016 by Paolo Infante.

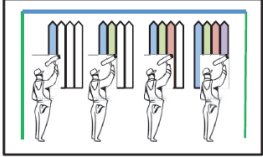
## Appendix M

E1

Past Simple



time



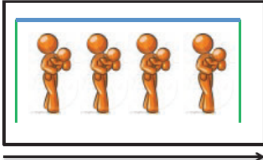
time

John **built** a castle.  
Mary **finished** her homework.  
Bill **wrote** a letter.  
Ann **changed** the diaper.

**Description**

By using the past simple, the speaker takes an external view of the event and so he/she sees a completed action (indicated by the blue solid line) with definite boundaries (indicated by the green vertical lines).


Past Simple events are part of the main storyline (foreground) and typically push the story forward.



time

Yesterday John **ainted** the fence.

John **talked** to his friends.  
The boy **played** with his frog.  
Bill **studied** hard for his exam.  
Ann **worked** on her essay.



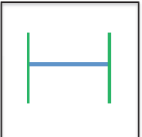
time

John **cuddled** the baby.


Note: Past Simple. Reprinted [or adapted] from *Mediated Development: Promoting L2 Conceptual Development Through Interpsychological Activity* (p. 335), [https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final\\_submissions/13040](https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/13040), by P. Infante, 2016, The Pennsylvania State University Graduate School. Copyright 2016 by Paolo Infante.

E1

Past Simple



time



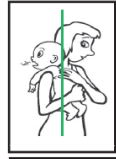
time

The runner **crossed** the finish line.  
Mary and John **got married**.  
The sun **set** at 7PM.  
The boy **caught** a fish.

**Description**

By using the past simple, the speaker takes an external view of the event and so he/she sees a completed action (indicated by the blue solid line) with definite boundaries (indicated by the green vertical lines).

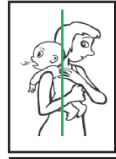
Past Simple events are part of the main storyline (foreground) and typically push the story forward.



time

John **fell asleep** last night.

The frog **jumped** into the salad bowl.  
John **kicked** the ball.

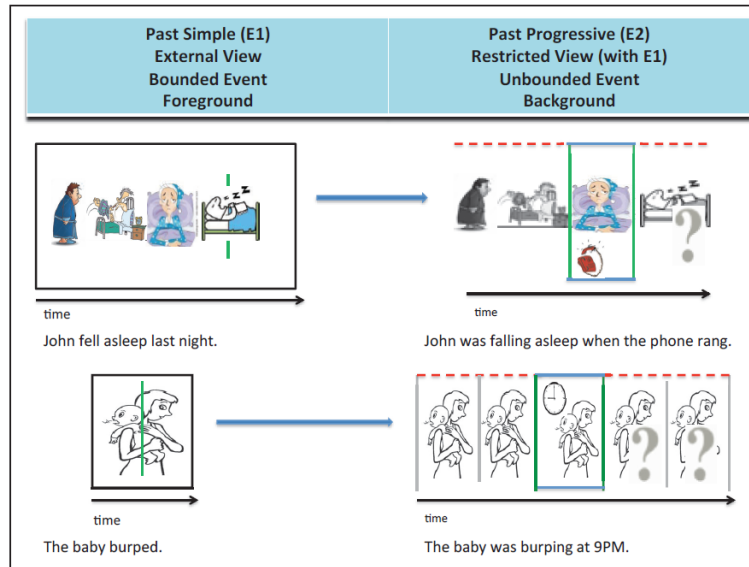


time

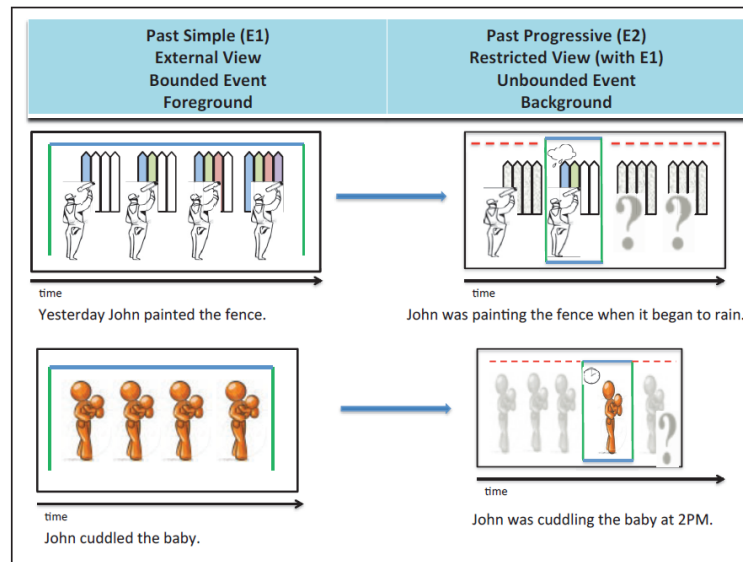
The baby **burped**.

Note: Past Simple. Reprinted [or adapted] from *Mediated Development: Promoting L2 Conceptual Development Through Interpsychological Activity* (p. 335), [https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final\\_submissions/13040](https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/13040), by P. Infante, 2016, The Pennsylvania State University Graduate School. Copyright 2016 by Paolo Infante.

## Appendix N

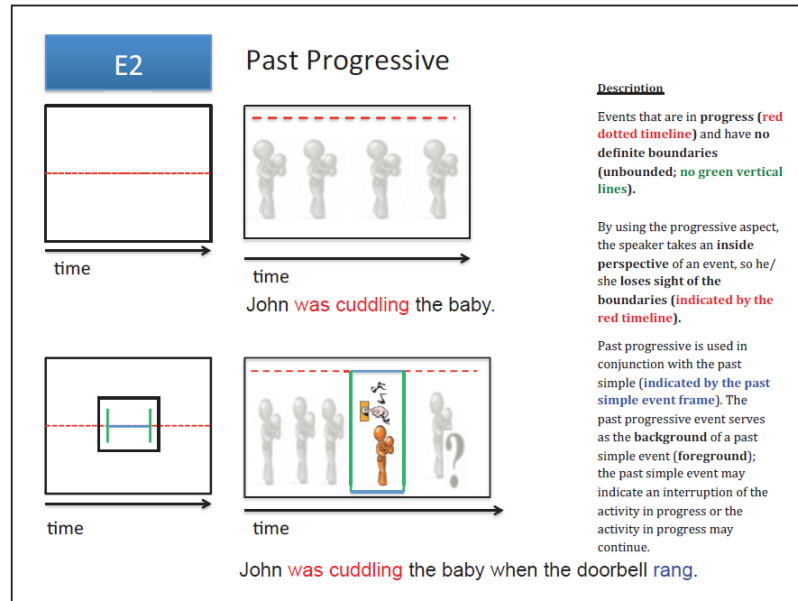


Note: Past Simple vs. Past Progressive. Reprinted [or adapted] from *Mediated Development: Promoting L2 Conceptual Development Through Interpsychological Activity* (p. 335), [https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final\\_submissions/13040](https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/13040), by P. Infante, 2016, The Pennsylvania State University Graduate School. Copyright 2016 by Paolo Infante.



Note: Past Simple vs. Past Progressive. Reprinted [or adapted] from *Mediated Development: Promoting L2 Conceptual Development Through Interpsychological Activity* (p. 335), [https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final\\_submissions/13040](https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/13040), by P. Infante, 2016, The Pennsylvania State University Graduate School. Copyright 2016 by Paolo Infante.

## Appendix O

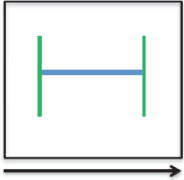


Note: Past Progressive. Reprinted [or adapted] from *Mediated Development: Promoting L2 Conceptual Development Through Interpsychological Activity* (p. 336), [https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final\\_submissions/13040](https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/13040), by P. Infante, 2016, The Pennsylvania State University Graduate School. Copyright 2016 by Paolo Infante.

## Appendix P

E3

### Past Perfect



time

**Description**

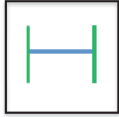
The past perfect refers to an 'earlier past' and is used in conjunction with the past simple to show a sequence of events in a narrative.

The speaker takes an external view of the event and so he/she sees a completed action (indicated by the blue solid line) with definite boundaries (indicated by the green vertical lines).

The past perfect is used to **background** events, while the past simple is used to **foreground** events in a narrative.

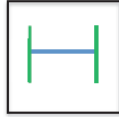
Anterior to past –  
Past Perfect

E3



Past – Past Tense

E1



time

The train had left the station before I arrived.

E3
E1

After I had eaten breakfast, I went to school.

E3
E1

When I arrived at the station, the train had left.

E1
E3

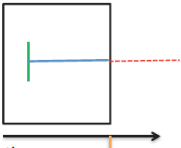
Note: Past Perfect. Reprinted [or adapted] from *Mediated Development: Promoting L2 Conceptual Development Through Interpsychological Activity* (p. 337), [https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final\\_submissions/13040](https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/13040), by P. Infante, 2016, The Pennsylvania State University Graduate School. Copyright 2016 by Paolo Infante.



## Appendix Q

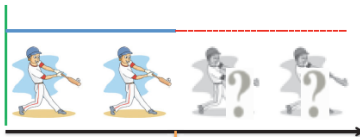
E4

Present Perfect



time

Speech time



time

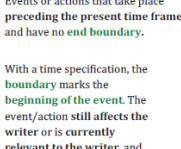
Speech time

John **has played** baseball everyday this week.

Description


Events or actions that take place preceding the present time frame and have no end boundary.

With a time specification, the boundary marks the beginning of the event. The event/action still affects the writer or is currently relevant to the writer, and may continue beyond speech time.



time

Speech time



time


Speech time

John **has attended** college since 2011.

Note: Present Perfect. Reprinted [or adapted] from *Mediated Development: Promoting L2 Conceptual Development Through Interpsychological Activity* (p. 338), [https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final\\_submissions/13040](https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/13040), by P. Infante, 2016, The Pennsylvania State University Graduate School. Copyright 2016 by Paolo Infante.

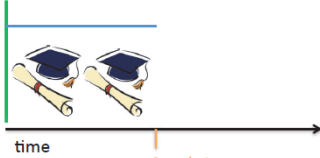
E4

Present Perfect



time

Speech time



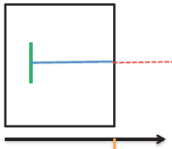
time

Speech time

John **has attended** college.


Description

Without a time specification, the boundary marks the end of an event or action at an indefinite time. Conclusions can be made to how the sentence currently affects the speaker (indicated by the blue solid timeline).



time

Speech time



time

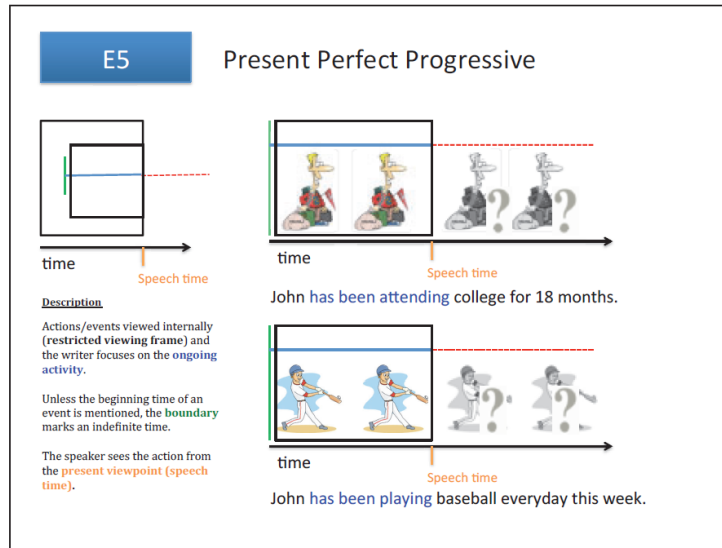
Speech time

John **has attended** college since 2011.

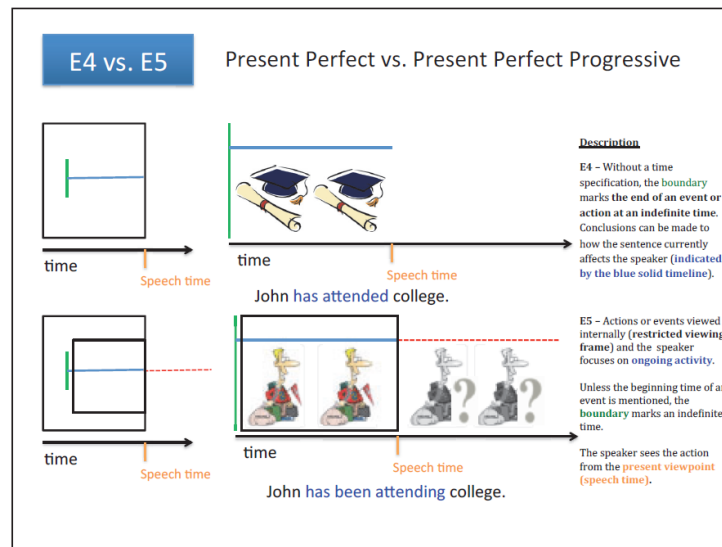
With a time specification, the boundary marks the beginning of the event. The event/action still affects the speaker or is currently relevant to the speaker, and may continue beyond speech time.

Note: Present Perfect. Reprinted [or adapted] from *Mediated Development: Promoting L2 Conceptual Development Through Interpsychological Activity* (p. 338), [https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final\\_submissions/13040](https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/13040), by P. Infante, 2016, The Pennsylvania State University Graduate School. Copyright 2016 by Paolo Infante.

## Appendix R

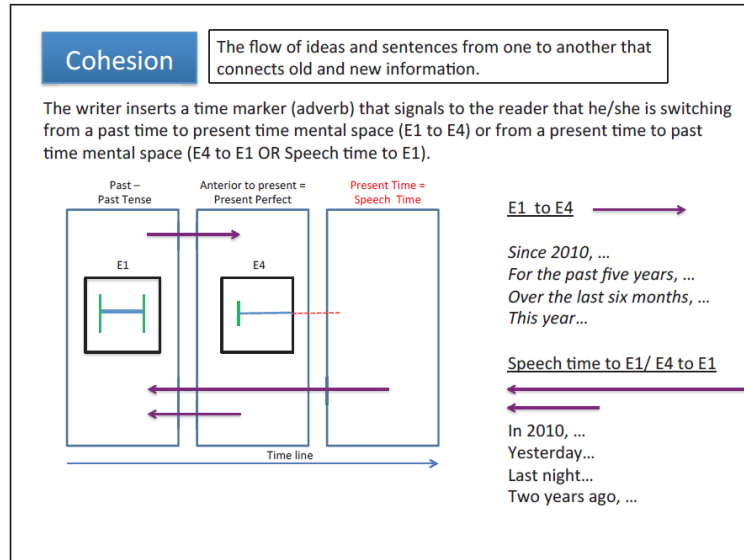


Note: Present Perfect Progressive. Reprinted [or adapted] from *Mediated Development: Promoting L2 Conceptual Development Through Interpsychological Activity* (p. 338), [https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final\\_submissions/13040](https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/13040), by P. Infante, 2016, The Pennsylvania State University Graduate School. Copyright 2016 by Paolo Infante.

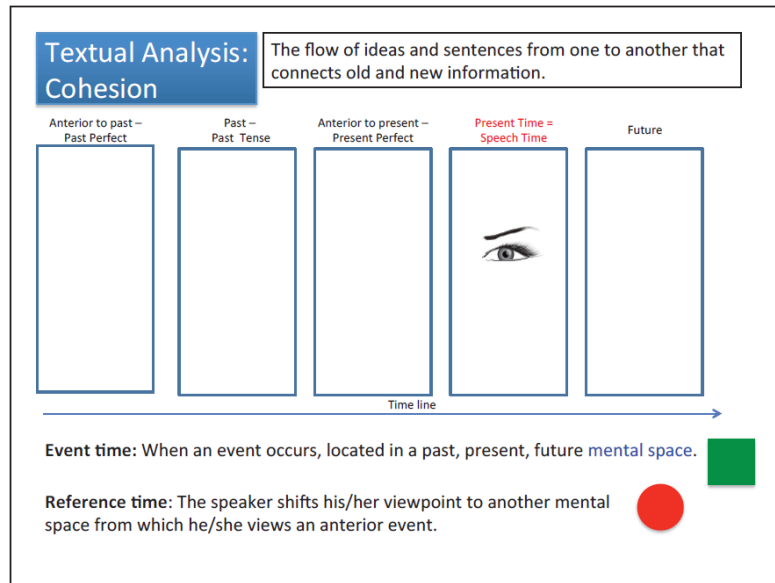


Note: Present Perfect vs. Present Perfect Progressive. Reprinted [or adapted] from *Mediated Development: Promoting L2 Conceptual Development Through Interpsychological Activity* (p. 338), [https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final\\_submissions/13040](https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/13040), by P. Infante, 2016, The Pennsylvania State University Graduate School. Copyright 2016 by Paolo Infante.

## Appendix S



Note: Cohesion. Reprinted [or adapted] from *Mediated Development: Promoting L2 Conceptual Development Through Interpsychological Activity* (p. 340), [https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final\\_submissions/13040](https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/13040), by P. Infante, 2016, The Pennsylvania State University Graduate School. Copyright 2016 by Paolo Infante.



Note: Textual Analysis. Reprinted [or adapted] from *Mediated Development: Promoting L2 Conceptual Development Through Interpsychological Activity* (p. 340), [https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final\\_submissions/13040](https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/13040), by P. Infante, 2016, The Pennsylvania State University Graduate School. Copyright 2016 by Paolo Infante.

## References

- ALJAAFREH, A. L. I., & LANTOLF, J. A. M. E. S. P. (1994). Negative feedback as regulation and Second language learning in the zone of proximal development. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78(4), 465–483. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1994.tb02064.x>
- Arievitch, I. M., & Haenen, J. P. (2005). Connecting sociocultural theory and educational practice: Galperin's approach. *Educational Psychologist*, 40(3), 155–165. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep4003\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep4003_2)
- Baddeley, A. D., Eysenck, M. W., & Anderson, M. C. (2020). *Memory*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Boers, F. (2003). Applied linguistics perspectives on cross-cultural variation in conceptual metaphor. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 18(4), 231–238. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327868ms1804\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327868ms1804_1)
- Boers, F. (2011). Cognitive linguistic approaches to teaching vocabulary: Assessment and integration. *Language Teaching*, 46(2), 208–224. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0261444811000450>
- Braisby, N., & Gellatly, A. (2012). *Cognitive psychology*. Oxford University Press.
- Brooks, L., Swain, M., Lapkin, S., & Knouzi, I. (2010). Mediating between scientific and spontaneous concepts through languaging. *Language Awareness*, 19(2), 89–110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658410903440755>
- Bruning, R. H. (2011). *Cognitive psychology and instruction*. Pearson.
- Centeno-Cortes, B., & Jimenez Jimenez, A. F. (2004). Problem-solving tasks in a foreign language: The importance of the L1 in private verbal thinking. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 14(1), 7–35. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1473-4192.2004.00052.x>
- Dancygier, B. (2017). Figurativeness, conceptual metaphor, and blending. In *The Routledge Handbook of Metaphor and language* (pp. 13–27). essay, Routledge.
- Danesi, M. (2015). Conceptual fluency in Second language teaching: An overview of problems, issues, research findings, and pedagogy. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 5(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.5n.1p.145>
- Darhower, M. A. (2014). Synchronous computer-mediated dynamic assessment: A case study of L2 Spanish past narration. *CALICO Journal*, 31(2), 221–243. <https://doi.org/10.11139/cj.31.2.221-243>

- De Guerrero, M. (2018). Private and Inner Speech in L2 Learning. In J. Lantolf, M. E. Poehner, & M. Swain (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sociocultural Theory and Second language development* (pp. 152–594). essay, ROUTLEDGE.
- Dweck, C. (2017). *Mindset*. Robinson, an imprint of Constable & Robinson Ltd.
- Ellis, R. (2008). *The study of Second language acquisition*. Oxford University Press.
- Feuerstein, R., Falik, L. H., & Feuerstein, R. (n.d.). *Beyond smarter: Mediated learning and the brain's capacity for change*.
- Frankish, K., & Ramsey, W. M. (2012). *The Cambridge Handbook of Cognitive Science*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gal'perin, P. Y. (1967). On the notion of internalization. *Soviet Psychology*, 5(3), 28–33. <https://doi.org/10.2753/rpo1061-0405050328>
- Garcia, P. N. (2018). Concept Based Instruction: Investigating the Role of Conscious Conceptual Manipulation in L2 Development. In J. Lantolf, M. Swain, & M. E. Poehner (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sociocultural Theory and Second language development* (pp. 181–196). essay, ROUTLEDGE.
- Gibbs, R. W. (2011). Evaluating conceptual metaphor theory. *Discourse Processes*, 48(8), 529–562. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163853x.2011.606103>
- Holbrook, M. (2018). Essential Aspects of Vygotsky's Theoretical Framework and Methodological Approach Revealed in His Analysis of Unit(ie)s . In J. Lantolf, M. Poehner, & M. Swain (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sociocultural Theory and Second language development* (pp. 56–74). essay, ROUTLEDGE.
- Holzman, L. (2018). Zones of Proximal Development. In J. Lantolf, M. E. Poehner, & M. Swain (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sociocultural Theory and Second language development* (pp. 42–55). essay, ROUTLEDGE.
- Infante, P. (2016). *Mediated Development: Promoting L2 Conceptual Development Through Interpsychological Activity* (dissertation). Retrieved from [https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final\\_submissions/13040](https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/13040).
- Infante, P. (2018). Mediated Development: Promoting Learner Internalization of L2 Concepts Through Cognitive-Process Focused Activities. In J. Lantolf, M. Poehner, & M. Swain (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sociocultural Theory and Second language development* (pp. 229–246). essay, ROUTLEDGE.
- Infante, P., & Poehner, M. (2019). Realizing the ZPD in Second language education. *Language and Sociocultural Theory*, 6(1), 63–91. <https://doi.org/10.1558/lst.38916>

- Infante, P., & Poehner, M. (2019). Realizing the ZPD in Second language education. *Language and Sociocultural Theory*, 6(1), 63–91. <https://doi.org/10.1558/lst.38916>
- Infante, P., & Poehner, M. E. (2021). Alex, the toolmaker: Tool-and-result activity in the L2 learning context. *Linguistics and Education*, 63, 100862. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2020.100862>
- J.Salkind, N. (2008, April 21). *Encyclopedia of educational psychology*. Sage Knowledge. Retrieved April 7, 2023, from <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963848.n153>
- Karpov, Y. (2018). Acquisition of Scientific Concepts as the Content of School Instruction. In J. Lantolf, M. E. Poehner, & M. Swain (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sociocultural Theory and Second language development* (pp. 102–116). essay, ROUTLEDGE.
- Kathpalia, S. S., & Carmel, H. L. (2011). Metaphorical competence in ESL student writing. *RELC Journal*, 42(3), 273–290. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688211419379>
- Kovecses K. (2020). Conceptual metaphor theory. In E. Semino & Z. Demjén (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Metaphor and language* (pp. 13–27). essay, ROUTLEDGE.
- Kozulin, A., & Swain, M. (2018). Mediation and Internalization Conceptual Analysis and Practical Applications. In J. Lantolf & M. Poehner (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sociocultural Theory and Second language development* (pp. 23–41). essay, ROUTLEDGE.
- Kövecses, Z. (2010). Metaphor, language, and culture. *DELTA: Documentação De Estudos Em Lingüística Teórica e Aplicada*, 26(spe), 739–757. <https://doi.org/10.1590/s0102-44502010000300017>
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). Conceptual metaphor in everyday language. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 77(8), 453. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2025464>
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago press.
- Lantolf, J. P. (2000). Introducing Sociocultural Theory. In *Sociocultural theory and Second language learning* (pp. 1–26). essay, Oxford University Press.
- Lantolf, J. P., & Aljaafreh, A. (1995). Second language learning in the zone of proximal development: A revolutionary experience. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 23(7), 619–632. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0883-0355\(96\)80441-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/0883-0355(96)80441-1)
- Lantolf, J. P., & Poehner, M. E. (2010). Dynamic assessment in the classroom: Vygotskian Praxis for second language development. *Language Teaching Research*, 15(1), 11–33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168810383328>

- Lantolf, J. P., & Poehner, M. E. (2010). Dynamic assessment in the classroom: Vygotskian Praxis for second language development. *Language Teaching Research*, 15(1), 11–33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168810383328>
- Lantolf, J. P., & Poehner, M. E. (2014). *Sociocultural theory and the pedagogical imperative in L2 education: Vygotskian Praxis to eliminate the research practice divide*. Routledge.
- Lantolf, J., Poehner, M., & Swain, M. (Eds.). (2018). *Routledge Handbook of Sociocultural Theory and Second language development*. ROUTLEDGE.
- Li, X. (2010). Conceptual metaphor theory and teaching of English and Chinese idioms. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 1(3). <https://doi.org/10.4304/jltr.1.3.206-210>
- Lo, Y. Y., & Murphy, V. A. (2010). Vocabulary knowledge and growth in immersion and regular language-learning programmes in Hong Kong. *Language and Education*, 24(3), 215–238. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500780903576125>
- Macaro, E. (2009). Chapter 2. teacher use of codeswitching in the Second Language Classroom: Exploring ‘optimal’ use. *First Language Use in Second and Foreign Language Learning*, 35–49. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847691972-005>
- McCafferty, S. (2018). Vygotsky on Consciousness and the Application to Second Language Development. In J. Lantolf, M. Poehner, & M. Swain (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sociocultural Theory and Second language development* (pp. 75–88). essay, ROUTLEDGE.
- MCCAFFERTY, S. T. E. V. E. N. G. (1992). The use of private speech by Adult Second Language Learners: A cross-cultural study. *The Modern Language Journal*, 76(2), 179–189. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1992.tb01098.x>
- MCCAFFERTY, S. T. E. V. E. N. G. (1994). Adult second language learners' use of private speech: A review of studies. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78(4), 421–436. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1994.tb02060.x>
- Merriam, S. B., & Bierema, L. L. (2018). *Adult learning: Linking theory and practice*. Langara College.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Langara College.
- Miller, R. (2011). *Vygotsky in perspective*. Cambridge University Press.
- Nacey, S. (2016). Metaphor comprehension and production in a second language. In E. Semino & Z. Demjén (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Metaphor and language* (pp. 13–27). essay, ROUTLEDGE.

- Neguera, E. (2006). Concept-Based Instruction and the Acquisition of L2 Spanish. In R. Salaberry & B. A. Lafford (Eds.), *The art of teaching Spanish: Second language acquisition from research to praxis* (pp. 79–102). essay, Georgetown University Press.
- Norton, B., & Toohey, K. (2011). Identity, language learning, and Social Change. *Language Teaching*, 44(4), 412–446. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0261444811000309>
- O'Donohue, W. T., & Kitchener, R. F. (1999). *Handbook of behaviorism*. Academic Press.
- Ohta, A. S. (2005). Interlanguage pragmatics in the zone of proximal development. *System*, 33(3), 503–517. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2005.06.001>
- Poehner, M. E. (2008). *Dynamic assessment: A Vygotskian approach to understanding and promoting L2 development*. Springer.
- Poehner, M. E., & Infante, P. (2016). Mediated development: A Vygotskian approach to transforming Second language learner abilities. *TESOL Quarterly*, 51(2), 332–357. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.308>
- Poehner, M. E., & Infante, P. (2019). Mediated development and the internalization of psychological tools in Second language (L2) education. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 22, 100322. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2019.100322>
- Poehner, M. E., & Lantolf, J. P. (2013). Bringing the ZPD into the equation: Capturing L2 development during Computerized Dynamic Assessment (C-DA). *Language Teaching Research*, 17(3), 323–342. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168813482935>
- Poehner, M. E., Zhang, J., & Lu, X. (2014). Computerized dynamic assessment (C-DA): Diagnosing L2 development according to learner responsiveness to Mediation. *Language Testing*, 32(3), 337–357. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532214560390>
- Polinsky, M., & Kagan, O. (2007). Heritage languages: In the ‘wild’ and in the classroom. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 1(5), 368–395. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-818x.2007.00022.x>
- Polinsky, M., & Scontras, G. (2020). Understanding heritage languages. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 23(1), 4–20. doi:10.1017/S1366728919000245
- Pritchard, A., & Woollard, J. (2010). *Psychology for the classroom constructivism and Social Learning*. Taylor and Francis.
- Radden Günter, & Dirven René. (2007). *Cognitive English grammar*. Benjamins.
- Römer, U., O'Donnell, M. B., & Ellis, N. C. (2014). Second language learner knowledge of verb-argument constructions: Effects of language transfer and typology. *The Modern Language Journal*, 98(4), 952–975. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12149>



- Saldaña Johnny. (2011). *Fundamentals of Qualitative Research*. Oxford University Press.
- Schunk, D. H., & Greene, J. A. (2018). *Handbook of self-regulation of learning and performance*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Semino, E., & Demjén, Z. (2016). *Routledge Handbook of Metaphor and language*. ROUTLEDGE.
- Sonnert, G., Barnett, M. D., & Sadler, P. M. (2020). Short-term and long-term consequences of a focus on standardized testing in AP calculus classes. *The High School Journal*, 103(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hsj.2020.0000>
- Storch, N. (2017). Sociocultural Theory in the L2 Classroom . In S. Loewen & M. Sato (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Instructed Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 69–83). essay, Routledge.
- Tomasello, M., & Herron, C. (1989). Feedback for language transfer errors. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 11(4), 385–395. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0272263100008408>
- Tyler, A. (2012). *Cognitive linguistics and Second language learning: Theoretical basics and experimental evidence*. Taylor and Francis.
- Tyler, A., Mueller, C., & Ho, V. (2010). Applied Cognitive Linguistics in Second language learning and teaching. *AILA Review*, 23. <https://doi.org/10.1075/aila.23>
- Vallerossa, F. (2021). The Role of Linguistic Typology, Target Language Proficiency and Prototypes in Learning Aspectual Contrasts in Italian as Additional Language. *Languages*, 6(4), 184. <https://doi.org/10.3390/languages6040184>
- Van Compernelle, R. (2018). Concept-Based Pragmatics Instruction Principles and Applications. In J. Lantolf, M. E. Poehner, & M. Swain (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sociocultural Theory and Second language development* (pp. 211–228). essay, ROUTLEDGE.
- Van Compernelle, R. A. (2015). Interaction and second language development. *Language Learning & Language Teaching*. <https://doi.org/10.1075/llt.44>
- VAN COMPERNOLLE, R. É. M. I. A., & WILLIAMS, L. A. W. R. E. N. C. E. (2012). Reconceptualizing sociolinguistic competence as mediated action: Identity, meaning-making, agency. *The Modern Language Journal*, 96(2), 234–250. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2012.01334.x>
- Veresov, N., & Mok, N. (2018). Understanding Development Through the Perezhivanie of Learning . In J. Lantolf, M. E. Poehner, & M. Swain (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sociocultural Theory and Second language development* (pp. 89–100). essay, ROUTLEDGE.

- Vygotskiĭ L. S., Cole, M., Stein, S., & Sekula, A. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Werani, A. (2018). Inner Speech and Its Impact on Teaching and Learning. In J. Lantolf, M. Poehner, & M. Swain (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sociocultural Theory and Second language development* (pp. 136–151). essay, ROUTLEDGE.
- Wertsch, J. V. (2009). *Vygotsky and the Social Formation of Mind*. Harvard University Press.
- Williams, L., Abraham, L. B., & Negueruela-Azarola, E. (2013). Using concept-based instruction in the L2 classroom: Perspectives from current and future language teachers. *Language Teaching Research*, 17(3), 363–381. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168813482950>
- Winne, P., & Fraser, S. (2001). Self-Regulated Learning Viewed from Models of Information Processing. In B. J. Zimmerman & D. Schunk (Eds.), *Self-regulated learning and academic achievement: Theoretical perspectives* (pp. 153–189). essay, Routledge.
- Yasuda, S. (2010). Learning phrasal verbs through conceptual metaphors: A case of Japanese EFL learners. *TESOL Quarterly*, 44(2), 250–273. <https://doi.org/10.5054/tq.2010.219945>
- Zimmerman, B. J., & Schunk, D. H. (2011). *Handbook of self-regulation of learning and performance*. Taylor & Francis.

## Curriculum Vitae

# CHARLES JOSEPH PANARELLA, JR.

charles.panarella@gmail.com

### SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

---

Thirteen years of university teaching, advising, and administrative experience with a strong commitment to learning and the development of critical skills. I have dual Italian/American citizenship, and near native fluency in written and spoken Italian.

### EDUCATION & AFFILIATIONS

---

**University of Nevada, Las Vegas** **01/15-05/23**

Ph.D. Educational Psychology

Dissertation Title: “Systemic Theoretical Instruction: Using Tense and Aspect in Italian”

**Middlebury College** **06/10-08/11**

Master of Arts in Italian Language and Culture

**University of San Diego** **09/95-05/99**

Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration

Minor in Computer Science

**Certificazione di Italiano come Lingua Straniera (CILS) – C2 Proficiency** **09/21/2021**  
**Certificate ID: 974038**

**Teaching House New York** **08/13-09/13**

CELTA (University of Cambridge ESOL Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults)

**Certificate ID: ccpf559694**

### **Chartered Institute of Linguist (CIOL) – Member**

Chartered Linguist - <https://www.ciol.org.uk/member-check/profile/68044/22657>

Chartered Translator - <https://www.ciol.org.uk/member-check/profile/68044/22658>

The National Italian Association of Translators and Interpreters (ANITI) – Associate Member

### EXPERIENCE

---

#### **Director / Faculty Director LLC / Italian Instructor**

*Florida State University International Programs Florence, Italy* January 2023 – Present

- Hire staff and faculty and manage employee contracts (supervise 25-30 faculty & 10 staff)
- Serve as the legal representative of the Director of International Programs in Italy.
- Made submissions for successfully awarded grants totaling more than \$35,000.
- Teach Italian/leadership courses & oversee the FSU Florence Living & Learning Community.
- Work with Program Management to determine & manage course offerings.
- Manage FSU Florence Program budget.
- Oversee excursions with groups of 50-150 students in various locations in Italy.
- Oversee disciplinary and judicial meetings for over 800 students during the academic year.

- Consistently appointed to travel to Tallahassee for student recruitment activities and making interdepartmental connections to support study abroad course offerings.
- Oversee and manage IT operations, reports, maintenance, and troubleshooting in conjunction with the Florida State University main campus and third-party service provider.

**Assistant Director / Faculty Director LLC / Italian Instructor**

*Florida State University International Programs Florence, Italy* May 2022 – Present

- Oversee the FSU Florence Living and Learning Community.
- Supervise 19-25 faculty members and three staff members (i.e., syllabus checks, communicating university policy, administrative procedures, contracts)
- Teach Italian and leadership courses
- Manage the development of the course schedule in conjunction with FSU main campus.
- Oversee excursions with groups of 50-150 students in various locations in Italy.
- Oversee disciplinary and judicial meetings for over 500 students during the academic year.
- Consistently appointed to travel to Tallahassee for student recruitment activities and making interdepartmental connections to support study abroad course offerings.
- Oversee and manage IT operations, reports, maintenance, and troubleshooting in conjunction with the Florida State University main campus and third party service provider.

**Academic Coordinator / Faculty Director LLC / Italian Instructor**

*Florida State University International Programs Florence, Italy* June 2018 – Present

- Appointed Living and Learning Community for freshmen language acquisition and community leadership.
- Created IT reports for annual/monthly budgets, projections, inventories, network, and computer maintenance for FSU Florence’s new 37,000 square foot study center.
- Made submissions for successfully awarded grants totaling more than \$21,000.
- Interfaced with third party companies to coordinate all IT related activities.
- Supervised 19-25 faculty members (i.e., syllabus checks, communicating university policy, administrative procedures)
- Taught first and second-semester Italian online and in-person.
- Developed course schedule and coordinated textbook selection for semester courses.
- Student academic advising
- Led and organized excursions with groups of 50-150 students in various locations in Italy.
- Helped a diverse group of American students assimilate to Italy and Italian culture.
- Provided Canvas, Zoom, and basic desktop support to all faculty and staff.
- Managed and helped initiate the creation of the FSU Florence website using Drupal 8.
- Managed disciplinary and judicial meetings for over 500 students during the academic year.
- Consistently appointed to travel to Tallahassee for student recruitment activities and making interdepartmental connections to support study abroad course offerings.
- Nominated for Outstanding Teaching for the 2020 fall semester.

**ESL Instructor**

*International House Accademia Britannica* October 2017 – June 2018

- Prepared students for Cambridge University exam certifications from A1 to B2 levels of English according to the Common European Framework.
- Assessed student progress to determine readiness for certification exams.

- Applied the latest cognitive linguistic techniques in the classroom.
- Stayed current on cognitive linguistic research implementing a variety of lesson plans and structures based on student needs and analysis of errors.

**Administrative Assistant II/Italian Instructor/ESL Instructor**

*College of Southern Nevada*

April 2014 – September 2017

- Taught in-person and online courses emphasizing written and spoken proficiency in Italian and English with a communicative approach to diverse groups of students.
- Provided tutoring on an individual basis to ESL/Italian students of all levels.
- Piloted the CSN online tutoring program and provided instruction online.
- Assisted ESL Testing Coordinator with placement of students.
- Advised students regarding degree plans at CSN.
- Helped manage full-time faculty workloads and produced faculty contracts.
- Helped develop semester class scheduling and room assignments for the World Language Department that included more than 300 classes using Microsoft Office.
- Assisted in managing departmental budgets.
- Managed and directed lab assistants in the World Language Lab.
- Assisted World Language Department Chair and Assistant Chairs in managing the day-to-day operations of the World Language Department.

**Italian Lecturer**

September 2011 – February 2014

*Mercy College and Borough of Manhattan Community College*

- Successfully taught courses emphasizing written and spoken proficiency in Italian with a communicative approach to a diverse group of students.
- Maintained student interest through creative and engaging classroom instruction
- Provided tutoring on an individual basis.

**Senior Sales Agent**

May 2005 – January 2009

*American West Homes*

- Negotiated successful business transactions in an extremely competitive market.
- Generated over \$16 million in sales in the most challenging market in Las Vegas history.
- Built relationships with clients as a trusted advisor and friend.
- Ranked consistently as one of the top five salespeople in the greater Las Vegas area.
- Awarded top selling agent status 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarters 2007 as well as 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2006.

**Computer Proficiencies:** Microsoft Office Products: Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Outlook, Windows 2003, Windows 7, Windows XP, Windows 10, SharePoint, HTML, JavaScript

*Professional and Personal References Available Immediately Upon Request*