Input Enhancement in the EFL Learning of Present Perfect and the Lexical Aspect[1)]

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This paper investigates the classroom learning of English present perfect among 62 adult Korean learners. In particular, the study examined the effect of visual input enhancement and its relations to the lexical aspect of verbal predicates. The results showed that visual input enhancement had a positive role in that learners showed learning effect over the treatment period. In addition, learners' development of the target structure was dependent on the lexical aspect of verbs/verb predicates. Specifically, input enhancement effect was more prominently observed in telics than in activities and states. The findings are insightful in that not all structures are amenable to a similar amount of input enhancement and even those within a single grammatical category, effects of input enhancement may vary.

Keywords: [English present perfect /lexical aspect/visual input enhancement/ 영어현재완료/의미상/시각적 입력 강화]

1. Introduction

This paper investigates the extent to which visual input enhancement influences the acquisition of tense and aspect,

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particularly English present perfect. The role of developmental sequences in the acquisition of English temporal markings, in particular, has often been researched in the area of second language (L2) studies. As Schwartz (1993) states, this is because temporal markings, such as inflectional markings, are among the most difficult features of non-native languages for adult learners and exhibits "highest amount of variability and lowest degree of success (p. 160)."

However, among English temporal markings, present perfect, as has been pointed out by Bardovi-Harlig (2000), is a scarcely studied area in second language acquisition. This is because the acquisition of the present perfect is a very slow process, and often emerges fairly late in the acquisition process. The results are often mixed. Learning of present perfect often creates problems because learners may initially equate the meaning of the past and the present perfect. The use of the past in the context of the present perfect shows the learner's association of events or situations prior to the time of speaking with the present perfect environment. Previous studies show that the association of the present perfect with the simple past seems to be the strongest, accounting for 63.1% of the overgeneralization and 37.1% of the undergeneralization of the present perfect (Bardovi-Harlig, 1997). In Bardovi-Harlig (2000), learners do learn to distinguish the present perfect semantically from the simple past, as well as from other tense-aspect system. Petersen (1999), on the other hand, in her study of the acquisition of present perfect by intermediate and advanced L2 learners, has shown that the performance of the advanced-level learners was not better than that of the intermediate level learners.

In investigating L2 learning of English present perfect, this study takes the following two factors into account: visual input enhancement and lexical aspect of verbs/verbal predicates. In doing so, the study examines the effect of visual input enhancement on the English present perfect and its relations to

the lexical aspect of verbal predicates. In the following section, a literature review is provided regarding the two factors.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Visual input enhancement[2)]

Visual input enhancement, according to Doughty and Williams (1998), is an implicit and unobtrusive means to draw the learners′ attention to form contained in the written input. Basically, input is enhanced through increasing the perceptual salience of the target form using various techniques such as bolding, capitalizing, underlining, or color-coding. The enhancement, usually embedded in the reading texts is targeted to direct learners to attend to both form and meaning simultaneously. The main rationale behind using input enhancement method is that learners may fail to detect a number of linguistic features that are present, but not perceptually salient, in the input (White, 1998).

According to Williams and Evans (1998), studies that have examined the effect of the same kind of instruction on a variety of forms have often yielded disparate results, implying that learners will not respond equally to the same kind of input enhancement on all forms. Harley (1993) has suggested that learners are more likely to succeed by input enhancement in categories that differ in nonobvious ways from the learners′ first language, are not salient

2) Visual input enhancement technique has its basic premise on focus-on-form instruction. According to Long (1991), focus-on-form instruction is an "approach which overtly draws students′ attention to linguistic element as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication" (p.46). It is distinguished from traditional grammar teaching methods which are synthetic approaches to language teaching that seeks the accumulation of individual language elements.

because they are irregular or infrequent in the input, are not important for successful communication, and are likely to be misinterpreted or misanalyzed by learners.

As described, previous studies on the effects of visual input enhancement have produced mixed results of either failure or success to learn (e.g., Alanen, 1995; Doughty, 1991; 1995; Leow, 1997; Robinson, 1997; White, 1998; Williams, 1999). Among others, I will briefly introduce a small number of the experimental studies of the effect of instruction on the acquisition of tense-aspect. The studies compare instructed learners who received specialized instruction to other instructed learners who did not receive the experimental treatment. One of the early study was conducted by Harley (1989) where she studied the effect of instruction that targeted the French verb system of *pass*é *compos*é and *imparfait*. The experiment provided focused input designed to promote perception and comprehension of the form-meaning contrasts between the passé composé and imparfait and to provide opportunities for learners to express the functions through thematically related and personalized tasks. Sixth-grade early immersion students of French received instruction over the course of 8 weeks. On the posttest that was completed immediately after the treatment, the experimental group was significantly superior to the comparison group on the cloze test and the oral interviews. However, three months after the posttest, it was revealed that the immediate benefit that the experimental group had shown earlier was not maintained: that is, the comparison groups caught up to the experimental groups in the 3 months between the immediate posttest and delayed posttest.

Doughty and Varela (1998) investigated the role of input enhancement in a communicative setting. The participants were 34 learners between the ages of 11 and 14, and were enrolled in ESL content-based science class. The target forms were the simple past and the conditional past, both of which occurred naturally in the

context of the science class. The class was designed to elicit spontaneous and planned production of the simple and conditional pasts, in both oral and written production. The results of oral production revealed that 21 learners with input enhancement showed a significant increase and maintained their gains of the target structures in the long-term. In contrast, the 13 learners in the comparison group showed no change in any of the measures. The results of written production revealed that learners with input enhancement showed a significant increase but did not maintain the gain in the long-term.

As can be seen, we can see mixed results regarding the effect of enhanced input. Are these mixed results due to methodological issues such as not being able to provide learners with an identical quality/quantity of input in every research? Or is it because the forms or target structures differ in every research? Does it mean that every form is susceptible to be affected by one type of input in different ways?

Based on the studies mentioned above, the present study investigates the effects of visual input enhancement on the acquisition of English present perfect by adult L2 learner. Present perfect was chosen because it is likely to be misinterpreted by learners. Following Harley (1993) mentioned above, it is the likely candidate for effective input manipulation. A variable to be considered is lexical aspect of verbal morphology. The inclusion of this variable permits the investigation of how it may interact or contrast with input enhancement in promoting SLA. In addition, dividing verbs/verb predicates into four lexical aspects may allow us to more closely investigate the necessary learning conditions. We could, in fact, be able to see similar or differential learning effects even within a single grammatical category.

2.2 Lexical Aspect

Lexical aspect (Andersen, 1991; Andersen & Shirai, 1996) refers to what is inherent in the verbs or predicates or sometimes even the entire proposition, that describe the situation. Vendler (1967) classified inherent lexical aspect into four categories with respect to the temporal properties that they encode: statives, activities, accomplishments, and achievements. According to Vendler, statives encode situations that have no dynamics and continue over time without additional effort or energy being applied. Activities have inherent duration in that they involve a span of time. They have no specific endpoint. Accomplishments are durative like activities, but have a clear inherent endpoint. More recent version states that there is no difference between accomplishments and achievements (Andersen & Shirai, 1996).

According to Andersen (1991) and Andersen and Shirai (1996), the Aspect Hypothesis makes two important claims on distribution and development of interlanguage: inherent lexical aspect influences the distribution of emergent verbal morphology in both L1 and L2 learning and the direction of the subsequent development of the learners′ tense and aspect system. Andersen and Shirai summarize the claims as the following four predictions: The predicted direction of development is for perfective/past form to emerge with achievements (punctual telics), and then proceed to accomplishments (non-punctual telics) and states and activities (atelics) (Andersen, 1991; Andersen & Shirai, 1994, p. 143). In this paper, I followed Andersen and Shrai (1996)′s statement of dividing verbs/verb predicates into telics (i,.e., accomplishments and achievement), activities, and states. The following Table 1 summarizes lexical aspectual categories andtheir related semantic features.

TABLE 1
Summary of Lexical Aspectual Categories
(adapted from Andersen, 1991)

lexical aspects	verbs/verb predicates	semantic features
telic	find, finish, walk a mile	dynamic situations with an inherent endpoint
activity	dance, play, walk	dynamic situations with no inherent endpoint
state	know, feel, want	non-dynamic situations

3. Method

3.1 Research Questions

The study is a controlled experimental study with a pretest-posttest design, involving an experimental group of 28 learners who received a visually enhanced input and a control group of 26 learners. Both groups participated in pretest, treatment and posttest. The study sets out to examine the extent to which visually enhanced input influences the acquisition of English present perfect, and the role of lexical aspect in the process of acquisition. The aim of the study is further specified in the following research questions:

1) What are the overall developmental changes in the learners' accuracy in the present perfect as they receive visual input enhancement? That is, would learners who received visually enhanced input show better performance over learners who received no visual input enhancement? To answer this question, learners are divided into two groups: visual enhancement group and input-flood group.
2) What are the distributional characteristics of verbal morphology

of the present perfect related to inherent lexical aspect? In other words, would learners' developmental changes show difference according to the lexical aspect of the verbs or verb predicates? To this end, the input learners receive are divided into three verbal categories of telics, activity and state.

3.2 Participants

The participants in the present study at the outset included 62 native Korean speakers who have been learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in a strict classroom-oriented setting. They all began formal English instruction in their native country of Korea, mostly starting around the age of 12 or 13. Their ages at the time of data collection were between 20 and 26. The participants were all enrolled in two different classes of an elective English reading and writing course at a certain university in Seoul, Korea. The course was being offered to intermediate level students, but no placement tests were given prior to the enrollment. Thus, the participants varied in terms of their English proficiency level. For this reason, the selection of the subjects was determined on the basis of a test of English present perfect administered to the classes. This screening test also served as the pretest for the participants. The present study chose participants who demonstrated emerging knowledge of English present perfect but who had yet to acquire it beyond the initial phase. An arbitrary cutoff score of 80% on the total pretest score was set to exclude participants from the former category. Out of 62 students who took the pretest, 54 satisfied the requirement and participated in the study and completed all the treatments and the posttest. One class, with 27 students, was randomly chosen to be an experimental group, and the other, also with 27, was chosen to be a control group.

3.3 Data Collection

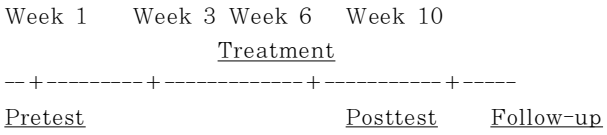
For this study, a controlled elicitation task (a series of cloze passages) was slightly modified from Lim (2004). As pointed out by Bardovi-Harlig (2000), the controlled elicitation type of task is useful in providing a context in which expressions with target temporal reference can be elicited. Thus, the participants were presented with a passage, and instructed to fill in the blanks with appropriate verb forms. The lexical aspect of each verb predicate was determined by means of operational tests developed by Shirai & Andersen (1995, p. 749).

The controlled elicitation task consisted of 42 passages which targeted the present perfect. Passage cloze tasks have been used by studies such as those conducted by Bardovi-Harlig (1992), Bergström (1995) and Salaberry (1999). They usually have their own topics and enable learners to engage in a discourse context. Passages were at least two sentences long and contained at least one blank and at most three. Target items were either in a variety of contexts including 1st person singular/plural, 2nd person singular/plural and 3rd person singular contexts. Overall, there were 14 verbs from each of the three aspectual categories. A list of the 14 verbs in this task appears in the Appendix. In addition, 20 distractor verbs were included. Among the distractor items, an attempt was made to provide more variety in the contexts for not only tense/aspect forms but also other unrelated grammatical components. These included present, future, past perfect items as well as agreements, prepositions, and so forth.

The task was completed in the following order: pretest, treatment, posttest, and follow-up test. First, the researcher administered the pretest to each class. The test was subsequently scored for initial screening. The interval length between the pretest and the beginning of the input enhancement treatment was two weeks. The schedule of the experiment is illustrated in the

following Figure 1.

FIGURE 1
Schedule of the Experiment



The treatment, conducted in the written mode, consisted of six sessions and continued over a 3-week period. Each session lasted for 50 minutes. Overall, the treatment sessions lasted for a total of 300 minutes. During this period, the experimental group was provided with the instruction which included input enhancement of the target structure (see Appendix). The participants in the experimental group were provided with reading texts with target structures color-coded. The purpose of color-coding was to visually enhance target structures. The participants were also provided with several comprehension questions. The topics of all texts varied. In the few cases in which participants could not come to any one of the treatment session on six different days, their data were excluded from the experiment. The control group received the same reading texts without any visual enhancement of target structures. The participants in the control group, like in the experimental group, were also provided with reading comprehension questions.

Participants first engaged in a practice treatment session, the purpose of which was to familiarize them with the pretest and posttest tasks. Participants were not told this first session was a practice session. As for the treatment, subjects participated in a 50 minute class twice a week. This treatment was continued for three weeks for a total of 300 minutes. Participants were

instructed to focus on the content of the reading texts. They were informed that they will be tested on content-based questions afterwards.

After the treatment period, the posttest was administered on the next class. The interval length between the last day of the treatment and the posttest administration was four days. In an attempt to control for an unnecessary exposure to the target form, the researcher did not answer any questions about the English present perfect from the participants during the experimental period.

3.4 Data Analysis

The controlled elicitation task was administered to 54 native speakers of Korean. Thus, an analysis of the task yielded 2268 responses (42 target forms × 54 participants) overall. The first analysis consisted of assigning a score to each participant based on his or her appropriate use of present perfect for all 42 items (14 verbs each for three aspectual categories). At this stage of the analysis, lexical aspect was ignored, as the purpose of the analysis was to determine the students′ overall productive knowledge of English present perfect. In the second step of data analysis, distribution of the present perfect according to each of the lexical aspect was analyzed. Thus, 3570 responses were classified into three different aspectual categories (1190 responses per each lexical aspect).

Appropriate attempts at present perfect included both target-like (*have finished, have told, have known*) and non-target like uses. Appropriateness of non-target like uses was determined according to the criteria established in Bardovi-Harlig (1997). These included the following: regularized irregulars (*have knowed, have writed*); orthographic or phonetic misspellings (*have studyed, have woked* for *have worked*); and using 3rd person *has* for *have* or

vice versa (I *has studied* or she *have studied*). Examples of inappropriate items included other tense and aspect forms such as past perfect or past perfect progressives (*had told, had been telling*).

4. Results and Discussion

The results are presented in two parts: First, the effects of visual input enhancement are presented. Second, the effects of lexical aspect are presented.

4.1 The Effects of Visual Input Enhancement

Table 2 below displays statistical results for the overall accuracy scores of both pre-, post- and follow-up tests. The table displays the mean scores and standard deviations (SD). An examination of the patterns of differences between the pre- and posttests revealed that learners who received enhanced input showed an increase from the pre- to posttests.

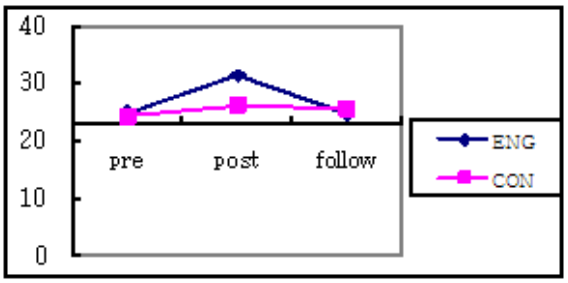
TABLE 2
Descriptive Statistics for Overall Accuracy Scores: Pre-, Post-, and Follow-up tests

Test	Group	N	Mean	SD
Pre	ENG	27	24.78	4.5
	CON	27	24.19	4.72
Post	ENG	27	31.26	4.63
	CON	27	26.06	5.68
Follow	ENG	27	24.69	5.1
	CON	27	25.55	4.91

Note. ENG = Enhancement Group, CON = Control Group

The difference between the two groups is well displayed in the following Figure 2 below. As can be seen from the means in the pretest, there was no significant difference between the two groups; Enhanced and control groups showed similar accuracy and they were thought to belong to a homogenous group. An examination of the patterns of differences between the pre- and posttests revealed that learners who received enhanced input showed an increase from the pre- to posttests, but not from the posttest to the follow-up test.

FIGURE 2
A Pattern of Increase in Accuracy Scores: Pre- , Post- and Follow-up Tests



4.2 The Effects of Lexical Aspect

In this section, the effects of lexical aspect are examined in both Enhancement and Control groups. As displayed in Table 3, the results show that learners exhibit different patterns according to different categories of verbal predicated provided in their input.

A two-way (lexical aspect X tests) repeated measures of ANOVA was performed on the means of the accuracy scores of pretests, posttests, and follow-up tests on present perfects to see whether there were true differences between lexical aspects, and also between each test. The results are displayed in Table 4. As can be seen in the Table 4, the

results revealed that there was a significant difference between the lexical aspect and the tests. An interaction between lexical aspect and the tests was also significant.

TABLE 3
Descriptive Statistics for Accuracy Scores: Pre- Post, and Follow-up tests

Test	Group	Aspect	Mean	STD
Pre	ENG	Telic	8.2	1.6
		Activity	8.8	2.38
		State	7.53	1.94
Post	ENG	Telic	12.07	1.08
		Activity	10.06	2.24
		State	8.8	3.01
Follow	ENG	Telic	8.4	2.3
		Activity	8.71	2.1
		State	7.62	3.2

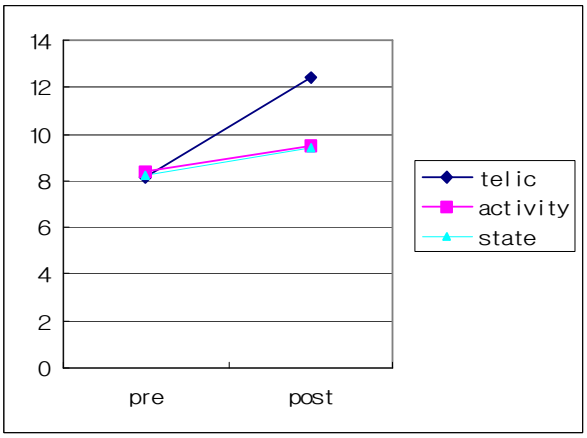
TABLE 4
ANOVA Table

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
test	98.178	1	98.178	32.098	0.000
error(test)	42.822	14	3.059		
aspect	42.956	2	21.478	9.439	0.001
error(aspect type)	63.711	28	2.275		
test*aspect	40.956	2	20.478	14.685	0.000
error(test*type)	39.044	28	1.394		

To identify the sources of the two-way interaction involving lexical aspect and tests, an interaction plot was examined for the number of accurate responses of three lexical aspects provided by learners in both tests (see Figure 3 below). A visual inspection of the figure revealed that telics experienced more increase from the

pre- to post-test than activities or states.

FIGURE 3
A Pattern of Increase in Accuracy Scores of Enhanced Group: Pre- and Post-tests



Additionally, paired t-tests were made to see where the differences actually occurred between the pre- and post-tests. Again, it was revealed the greatest difference was found between telics in two tests. Although differences within both activities and states were significant, a relatively greater increase observed between telics in the pre- and post-tests (see Table 5 below) may have contributed to the significant interaction.

To summarize the results, the visual input enhancement seemed to have some positive impact on the English present perfect, at least in the short-term. Specifically, when the verbs/verb predicates of the target structure were divided according to lexical aspect, the impact was more notable on telics than on states and activities. Learners did not show the

highest accuracy on telics in the pretest; the highest accuracy was observed on activities. However, in the posttest, learners manifested the highest accuracy on telics.

TABLE 5
Pairwise Comparisons

pre-post	Paired Differences							
	Mean	STD	Std.Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper	t	df	sig
telic	.-3.86667	1.30201	.33618	-4.58770	-3.14564	-11.502	14	.000
activity	-1.80000	2.336051	.60317	-3.09366	-.50634	-2.984	14	.010
state	-1.26667	2.05171	.52975	-2.40287	-1.3047	-2.391	14	.031

Major findings from the study need to be discussed. First, learners showed their performance on the pretest in the following order of accuracy: activity 〉 telics 〉 states. The findings are contradictory to the claim of the lexical aspect hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1996; Shirai & Andersen, 1995). According to the lexical aspect hypothesis, learners first mark their verbs/verb predicates with telics when presented with either perfective/past, and extend the marking to states and then finally to activities. Considering that most of the English data testing the lexical hypothesis are limited to the simple past, and not many include perfects, the results from the present study suggest that the present perfect and the simple past might not follow the similar path in second language acquisition (at least with classroom learners).

Second, a significant advantage of learning was observed with telics when learners were provided with visual input enhancement. In what ways are telics more learnable than activities and states? Telics, if we recall from the first section of the study, denote either achievements or accomplishments. With visual input enhancement alone, learners seem to have realized that there is at least one

semantic feature common to the present perfect and simple past-that is, both are used to encode anterior events or situations and shares the truth-value. The claim is in general agreement to the results of the Bardovi-Harlig (1997), where she found a strong association of the present perfect with the simple past and found that 63% of the overgeneralization of the simple past was found in the environment of the present perfect. However, such strong association was not found in the posttest which was conducted after treatment. A question that still remains is whether learners might have displayed different results if they were given choices between present perfect and simple past? Were the learners "conditioned" to provide present perfect just because it was the visually enhanced structure during the treatment period?

Third, another finding of the study is the long-term effect of instruction. An attempt was made in this study to determine the effect of different types of instruction on the particular grammatical point in question. An assumption was made in the study that highlighted visual input would facilitate learning in the long-term as well as in the short-term. The short-term increase, however, was not maintained over the course of time. Lack of lasting effect was especially clear in the telic, where a most promising increase was seen in the short-term.

Lastly, do the results from the present study lead to the claim that input enhancement alone is an effective mean for present perfect learning? Yes and no. Although learners did display learning advantage by being provided with enhanced input, would they still show similar rate of learning if provided with different types of input of the same target structure? The precise answer cannot be provided with the data from this current study, since it did not include another experimental group with different types of input. With this caveat in mind, some of the issues remaining to be studied in the future are suggested below.

First, control groups who receive either unenhanced input and

other types of manipulation on the input need to be examined. With the data from other groups of learners who underwent different types of treatment, we can make a precise claim regarding the role of enhanced input in the target structure. Second, long-term effects of the treatment need to be examined. As has been reviewed in the paper, learners might have shown learning effect in the immediate posttesting and quite often, they do not retain the gain. Learners may act differently if they continued to receive treatment in the long-term. Third, learners of different levels need to be studied for generalizability of the research. Since only a small number of participants and all in the intermediate level were investigated in the present study, we need more participants from a variety of levels to further generalize the results. Finally, we need to think about how learners process the language when they encounter the input. For example, when learners acquire the target structure, is it better to provide enhanced input (or any type of manipulated input) at the word level or at the sentential level?

5. Conclusion

This study was conducted to investigate whether visual input enhancement can promote the learning of English present perfect. In particular, the study set out to investigate whether lexical aspect of verbs/verb predicates influences learning through visual input enhancement. The results found that visual input enhancement does promote English present perfect learning by adult ESL learners. Specifically, its effect was more significant wih telics than with states and activities. Despite the limitation of the study in that it did not include a control group with different types of treatment, the study provided empirical evidence for a role of enhanced input in L2 development in that it looked at

subdivisions of a grammatical category. The study provided at least a partial answer to the question in the recent L2 studies in that the role of enhanced input might vary even within a single grammatical category. This variability may, in fact, explain the prevalence of mixed results found in many studies that attempted to demonstrate the superiority of inductive methods over deductive, deductive over inductive, explicit treatment over implicit, and vice versa (cf. Doughty & Varela, 1998; Izumi, 2002; White, 1998 among many others). It is expected that further research on the roles of various forms of enhanced input will be pursued with the above-mentioned limitations in mind and will be applied to L2 learning, both in and out of classrooms.

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Appendix A
List of Verbs Used for the Task

Telics	Activity	States
send a letter	cook	own
win	play	like
start	tell	want
find	change	be
learn	dream	enjoy
write	work	belong
grow up	see	feel
move to	attend	taste
break	walk	smell
decide	stay	love
begin	study	seem
notice	appear	think
call someone	eat	look
move to	visit	need

Appendix B
Input Enhancement Treatment (Sample)

Dear Paul,

I'm sorry I did not write for a long time. I got your last letter in October. A lot of things **have happened** since then. In December, we went on holiday to Japan. It was great! I **have** never **had** such a good time. I **have** even **learned** a few words of Japanese. Only two bad things happened there. I had lost my new purse, and my sister had fallen off a horseback and fell on a ground. In March, I started my new school. I **have** already **made** a lot of new friends. One more bit of news: I **have painted** my room dark brown! Mom and Dad aren't too happy, but my friends think it's great. Please write soon.

Appendix C
Experimental Task (Sample)

1. Martina Hingis is a tennis star. Many people _____ (criticize) the lifestyles of very young tennis stars like Martina. She _____ (not attend) school since 1994, the year she turned professional. Since then, she _____ (play) tennis all over the world. So far, she _____ (earn) millions of dollars. Martina considers her lifestyle to be normal. That is because she _____ (enjoy) playing tennis since she was a child.
2. A: Did you know Josh when you lived in the dorm?
   B: Not really. He usually _____ (stay) in his room and _____ (study) a lot.
3. Annie was a runner-up in a beauty pageant last summer. She didn't win but _____ (seem) happy at the end of the contest.

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