



## Narrative Structure and Task Type in the Acquisition of the English Past Progressive

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### ABSTRACT

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This study investigates the acquisition of the past progressive aspect by Korean learners of English as a second language by examining discourse-level use of the past progressive. The study explores in which context the learners would use the past progressive compared to the simple past. Twenty-four learners were engaged in two elicitation tasks: a verb cloze passage task and a film retell task. The two different tasks yielded results which suggest strong influences of task types on their use of the English past progressive. Based on the results, the study suggests that in a language classroom, the progressive aspect should be practiced with different types of tasks for learners to expand on the restricted associations between lexical aspect and tense-aspect morphology. Furthermore, the study argues that the past progressive should be taught through exposure to and engagement with meaningful narrative discourse to help learners understand grammar more fully.

### I. INTRODUCTION

There has been a prevalent view, among learners and teachers, that grammar instruction is supposed to help learners construct accurate sentences by teaching grammar rules. However, grammar instruction needs to involve more than devotion to forms. As Larsen-Freeman (2014) argues, the goal of grammar instruction should be “to help students use the language accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately” (p. 258). In addition, full understanding of a linguistic form requires learners to understand how it functions at the discourse level, as well as at the sentence level (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). For ESL/EFL learners, therefore, much pedagogical attention should be paid to meaningful and appropriate use of language with correct form. This study specifically examines the past progressive as a case to explain how discourse

would help learners understand grammar more fully, emphasizing meaningful and appropriate use of the past progressive.

Tense and aspect are one of the most popular topics in second language (L2) acquisition research as well as in language classrooms. In the literature of the interlanguage tense and aspect, studies have examined the influence of lexical aspect and/or discourse structure on the distribution of the temporal and aspectual morphology (Andersen & Shirai, 1994; Bardovi-Harlig, 1995, 1998; Comajoan, 2005; Domínguez, 2019; McManus, 2013; Shirai & Andersen, 1995; Vraciu, 2013). Researchers have claimed that the reason certain grammatical morphemes are attached to specific verbs is dependent on the inherent semantic features of verbs, supporting the Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1994). It has also been found that the use of grammatical morphology is dependent on its

functions in discourse, supporting the Discourse Hypothesis (Bardovi-Harlig, 1995).

Many studies on tense and aspect acquisition have provided fruitful results in the development of interlanguage tense and aspect system in various L1-L2 combinations. However, few studies have focused only on Korean-speaking learners of English as a second language, especially under the frameworks of both the Aspect Hypothesis and the Discourse Hypothesis. It is also noticeable that, although studies on tense and aspect acquisition have used different types of tasks, little research has examined the effects of task type within the relevant literature (Dominguez, 2019). Since language learning happens through interaction between the learner and the characteristics of task (M.-H. Kim, 2014; Kumaravadivelu, 1991; Robinson, 2011; Tracy-Ventura & Myles, 2015), the second focus of the current study is on the effect of different tasks in the acquisition of the past progressive. This study analyzes the patterns in which Korean learners of English produce the past progressive aspect. Based on the results of production by different proficiency-level learners, the study further discusses pedagogical strategies of how the past progressive aspect should be taught.

## II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 1. The Past Progressive in English

The English progressive aspect is marked on the verb *be* with present participle of verbs (Verb + *-ing*). The form of the past progressive is *was/were* with Verb + *-ing* (e.g., *I was studying when you called*). With the progressive aspect, a situation is viewed from the inside as potentially ongoing or in progress at certain point (Comrie, 1976). Ongoing current situations are described in the present progressive. With the past progressive, action is viewed to be begun in past, implying possible continuation after second past event (Azar, 1981). The past progressive is often presented in contrast to the simple past which views action as completed in the past.

If the meaning of the progressive aspect is internally viewed situation in process, how exactly its meaning is encoded? Such meaning of the past progressive can be expressed in discourse. An important function of the past progressive in a story in the past can be illustrated with sentence pairs as in (1).

- (1) a. The doctor was operating on Jane.  
Jane opened her eyes.
- b. The doctor operated on Jane. Jane opened her eyes.

In (1a), the past progressive is used to signal a background event (the doctor operating on Jane) while two events were expressed as a sequence with two simple past forms in (1b).

In L2 acquisition of the past tense and the progressive aspect, the effects of lexical aspect and discourse struc-

ture on the distribution of the temporal and aspectual morphology have robustly been examined. For decades, the leading hypotheses in the literature of the L2 acquisition of tense and aspect have been the Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1994) and the Discourse Hypothesis (Bardovi-Harlig, 1995).

### 2. The Past Progressive in L2 Tense-Aspect Acquisition Studies

The influence of lexical aspect on the distribution of the temporal and aspectual morphology has been well-established, based on the Aspect Hypothesis. According to the Aspect Hypothesis, the distribution of interlanguage verbal morphology is determined by the lexical aspectual class of verbs (Andersen & Shirai, 1994, 1996). Table 1 provides Vendler's (1967) four lexical aspectual classes that have been used under the framework of the Aspect Hypothesis.

**TABLE 1**  
Vendler's (1967) Four Lexical Categories

Aspectual class	Telicity	Examples
States (STA)	[-telic]	<i>know, seem</i>
Activity (ACT)	[-telic]	<i>play, run</i>
Accomplishment (ACC)	[+telic]	<i>eat a cake, run to the house</i>
Achievement (ACH)	[+telic]	<i>start, stop</i>

Four predictions of the Aspect Hypothesis can be summarized as follows: "in the earliest stage, learners will use perfective or past morphology with telic verb phrases (achievements and accomplishments), imperfective with states, progressive with activities, and no overextension of progressive marking to statives" (Anderson & Shirai, 1994, p. 559). That is, according to the first prediction, learners across different languages first use the past tense inflection with verbs which are punctual and telic (e.g., *started, stopped*). According to the third prediction, learners attach progressive morphology to verbs that express actions in progress over time or verbs that have no clear endpoint (e.g., *playing, running*). The Aspect Hypothesis has been supported by acquisition studies on both Indo-European and non-Indo-European languages (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig & Reynolds, 1995; Collins, 2004; E.-J. Lee, 2001; Robison, 1995; Vraciu, 2013).

In the literature of the L2 acquisition of tense and aspect, one of the most studied text types is narrative. In a narrative, "the speaker relates a series of real or fictive events in the order in which they took place" (Dahl, 1985, p. 116). Apart from the sentence-level analyses, discourse-level analyses have focused on how narrative structure influences L2 learners' use of tense and aspect morphology. Narrative discourse can be divided into two distinct parts: foreground and background. Foreground relates events that belong to the skeletal structure of the discourse and background contains the supportive material, description which amplify or comment on the events of the main narrative (Hopper, 1979). According to Hopper, cross-linguistic investigations have suggested that the

foreground and background distinction in narrative discourse is universal across languages.

Among those approaches used in analyzing narrative structure, of interest of this study is a form-function analysis (Berman & Slobin, 1994). This approach has been applied to L2 learners' narratives, particularly in analysis of deployment of tense and aspect (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 1995, 1998; H.-J. Kim, 2019 on L2 English; Comajoan, 2005 on L2 Catalan; Liskin-Gasparro, 2000 on L2 Spanish). The Discourse Hypothesis proposed by Bardovi-Harlig (1995) predicts that the structure of narrative affects the production of tense-aspect morphology in developing interlanguage. As Bardovi-Harlig (1995, 1998) observes, the past was mainly used in the foreground while the progressive was used in the background in L2 narratives produced by learners from various L1 backgrounds. That is, narrative background can serve as a proper environment for the use of the past progressive.

Thus far, the theoretical assumptions guiding the present investigation have been reviewed. In order to examine how L2 learners acquire and use the past progressive in discourse, it is necessary to analyze interlanguage narrative data. Considering the role of discourse, this study examines if and to what extent the association documented by the Aspect Hypothesis are influenced by narrative structure. In the Aspect Hypothesis, the production bias for using the progressive with activities (ACT) and past perfective with telic predicates is noticeable. In investigating the use of the past progressive, this study focuses on a contrast between activities (ACT) and accomplishments (ACC). These two lexical aspectual classes differ only in telicity. Since the difference in telicity is the main factor that determines association patterns with progressive, this study is interested in the contrast between ACT and ACC. Under the framework of the Aspect Hypothesis and Discourse Hypothesis, the first goal of this study is to provide further evidence regarding the acquisition of the progressive aspect by Korean learners of English. After observing learners' use of the progressive aspect, suggestions are to be offered for teaching the progressive in past-time context.

### III. THE STUDY

#### 1. Research Questions

The present study attempts to explore patterns of Korean ESL learners' use of the past progressive so that the results can inform appropriate strategies for the practice of teaching the English past progressive to Korean students. The study poses the following research questions:

- 1) How do Korean ESL learners use the past progressive to express the background contexts?
- 2) Are there any task effects (highly controlled task vs. less controlled task) in Korean ESL learners' use of the past progressive?

## 2. Participant Characteristics

### 1) General Background

The participants in this study were recruited from student population at an American university. Twenty-four participants whose native language was Korean were recruited from English Language courses. They were enrolled in an eight-week session of English courses for matriculated students whose first language is not English. Their mean age was 22.8 years old (age range: 19-27). Their academic majors varied. Eighteen native speakers of English from an undergraduate linguistics course participated as a control group (NS group).

### 2) L2 Proficiency Groups

A cloze test on English language proficiency was administered to divide the learners into two proficiency groups. Participants read a passage on "Man and His Progress" (from Brown, 1980). The passage included 50 blanks, with every 7th word removed. They had to guess the word for each blank and fill in as many blanks as possible within time limit. Based on the results of the cloze test, the learner participants whose first language was Korean were divided into two groups. The mean test score of the learners was 18.38 ( $SD = 6.18$ ). Based on this score, they were divided into a higher proficiency group and a lower proficiency group. A two-tailed paired samples t-test was performed and revealed that the two groups differed significantly from each other,  $t(11) = 7.04, p < .001$ . Hereafter, the labels "Low group" and "High group" will be used instead of "lower-level group" and "higher-level group," respectively. The cloze test results are provided in Table 2.

**TABLE 2**  
Descriptive Statistics on Cloze Test Scores

Proficiency group	<i>M</i>	Range
Low ( $n = 12$ )	3.58 (2.81)	8-17
High ( $n = 12$ )	23.17 (4.69)	19-36

Note. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

### 3) Materials and Procedures

In the main study, two tasks were used: a verb cloze passage task (VCP, for short) and a film retell task (FR, for short). The VCP was used to observe an individual learner's use of the simple past and the past progressive while recognizing the aspectual contrast in a controlled task. In the VCP, participants supply the correct or the best form of the verb. In a controlled task like the VCP, a story can be modified in a way that target predicates are distributed across foreground and background. The context of the story was established through a character's journey during a period of two days in the past. The VCP task contained 13 foreground predicates and 19 background predicates to be inflected. The target verbal predicates (VPs) used in

this task are presented in Table 3. Each VP was assigned to one of the Vendler's (1967) four aspectual categories according to the criteria in the tense-aspect literature (e.g., Dowty, 1979; Shirai & Andersen, 1995). Each verbal predicate was used only once unless the frequency is specified in the parenthesis in Table 3.

**TABLE 3**  
Verbal Predicates by Aspectual Categories and by Grounding

Aspectual category	Foreground	Background
Activities	run, cry, ride, walk	drive, follow, sob, work
Accomplishments	walk into, tell the story, buy a pair of shoes, borrow some money	cook dinner, eat his meal, take a shower, run to his village
States	n/a	seem, have, be (3), look (2), know (2)
Achievements	wake up, find, realize, decide, notice	leave, die

As shown in Table 3, there were four activities and four accomplishments in the foreground and four activities and four accomplishments in the background. In the VCP passage, participants were provided base forms of the verb predicates as in an excerpt in (2). They were instructed to fill in the blanks with best possible verbal inflections which would fit the context. They were given up to 7 minutes to complete the task.

(2) Excerpt from the VCP passage

...First, Rob started to walk home. Then, he \_\_\_\_\_ (run). As he \_\_\_\_\_ (run to his village), he \_\_\_\_\_ (realize) he didn't have any shoes on [...]. While he \_\_\_\_\_ (eat his meal), he \_\_\_\_\_ (tell the story) about what \_\_\_\_\_ (happen) to him 20 years ago. His daughter \_\_\_\_\_ (cry) after hearing the story [...]

The other task is a film retell task. To examine how learners would use the past progressive in discourse, a narrative task, which is much less controlled than the VCP, was used. For this task, an excerpt from a film *Modern Times* (Chaplin, 1936) was used in order to elicit narratives. This film was used as stimulus in other L2 narrative studies in the literature (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 1995, 1998; Dietrich, Klein, & Noyau, 1995; H.-J. Kim, 2019). After watching the film excerpt, the learner participants started writing their retell and could take up to 30 minutes. The native speaker group data in this task were not analyzed because their sentence structures were quite different from those of learners. One of the most noticeable difference was native speakers would prefer to use complex sentences with present participles in non-finite clauses where learners would use the past progressive. Thus, it was not reasonable to compare native speakers' data with learners' data using the same analysis method because it could yield misleading interpretation of learner's developmental patterns.

#### 4) Data Analysis

Among approaches used in analyzing narrative structure, form-function analysis (Berman & Slobin, 1994) was mainly used. The data coding procedures for the VCP and FR tasks were as follows. For the VCP, the written answers provided by the participants were coded for morphology (e.g., simple past, progressive, pluperfect, present, base, etc.). The distribution of tense-aspect morphology in foreground and background was analyzed separately.

For the FR, the first step was to identify grounding. The learner narratives were coded for foreground and background. Clauses which move the time forward were identified as foreground (Dowty, 1986). The contexts were also identified by verbs and the corresponding scenes in the film. Next, all predicates were coded for tense-aspect morphology: simple past, progressive, past perfect, present, base, etc. The predicates were identified using Vendler's (1967) four aspectual categories (statives, activities, accomplishments, and achievements). An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests.

## IV. RESULTS

### 1. VCP Results

The interest of this study is when or in which context learners use the progressive (coded as *-ing*) compared to the simple past (coded as *-ed*). The study is mainly interested in activity predicates (ACT) and accomplishment predicates (ACC) among Vendler's four lexical categories because the lexical semantics of ACT and ACC differ only in telicity, thus, narrowing down to these two predicate types makes the investigation of progressive more focused. In this section, the results are reported focusing on these two categories and their association with the past simple and progressive, with the distinction between the foreground and background maintained. Therefore, the four experimental conditions are ACT-foreground, ACC-foreground, ACT-background, and ACC-background.

#### 1) Foreground

For foreground clauses, the simple past was used the most to fill the blanks and reached above 80% of use regardless of verb class (ACT, ACC) and proficiency levels (Figure 1). The NS group predominantly used the simple past for the foregrounded activities (99%) and accomplishments (100%). As illustrated in Figure 1, there was no difference between the Low and High group in the distribution of the simple past. No progressive form was used in the foreground.



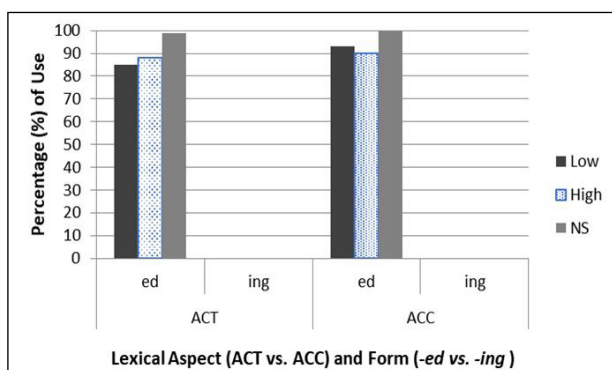


FIGURE 1 The Distribution of Morphology in VCP Foreground

## 2) Background

In VCP, the rates of the progressive use for activities and accomplishments in backgrounded clauses showed a similar distribution between proficiency groups. As demonstrated in Figure 2, the Low group produced much more progressives in the ACC-background condition than in the ACT-background condition (50% and 21%, respectively). The High group also used the progressives more frequently in the ACC-background than in the ACT-background condition (58% and 44%, respectively). In the ACT-background condition, increased use of progressives was observed from the Low group to the High group (from 21% to 44%).

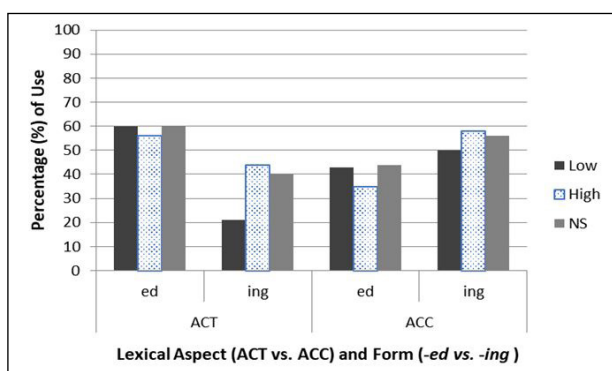


FIGURE 2 The Distribution of Morphology in VCP Background

In all groups, the rate of use of progressive was higher for accomplishments than activities in the background. As shown in Figure 2, for the ACC-background condition, the High group and NS group used higher rates of progressive forms than simple past forms, compared to the Low group in ACC-Background condition. In other words, the Low group used more simple past forms than progressive forms with backgrounded accomplishments than the High group. According to a paired samples *t*-test, the High group selected significantly more progressive forms over simple past forms in the ACC-background condition,  $t(11) = 4.327, p < .001$ . A paired samples *t*-test was conducted and found that native speaker group significantly favored progressive forms in the ACC-background condition,

compared to simple past forms in the ACC-background condition;  $t(17) = 3.005, p = .008$ . This pattern is similar to that of the High group. The Low group also seemed to favor the progressive compared to the simple past in the ACC-background condition, but it didn't reach the significance level;  $t(11) = 1.959, p > .05$ .

To summarize, both learner groups used the progressive more frequently in the ACC-background than in the ACT-background condition. That is, the learners used the progressive less frequently with activities than with accomplishments in background. In the ACT-background condition, increased use of progressives from the Low group to the High group was observed. In foregrounded clauses, the different proficiency groups showed a very similar distribution of the simple past for both activities and accomplishments.

## 2. FR Results

### 1) Foreground

In foreground clauses, verbal predicates were marked mostly in the simple past, regardless of verb class (ACT, ACC). The rates of the simple past use ranged from 73% to 91%. Compared to the VCP, slightly less frequent use of the simple past was observed in the FR. This means that the learners sometimes used base forms of predicates without any inflection. This result is consistent with Bardovi-Harlig (1998). As illustrated in Figure 3, the distribution of simple past morphology across activities and accomplishments did not differ by proficiency level. No progressive form was used in the foreground.

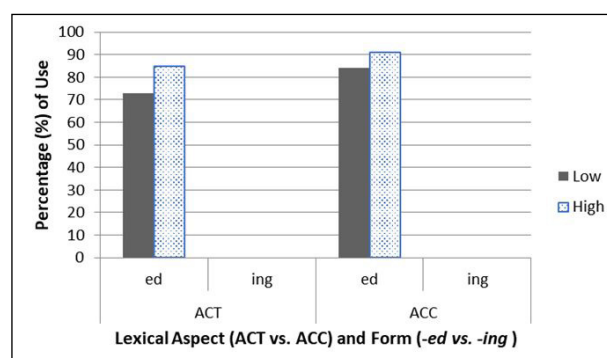


FIGURE 3 The Distribution of Morphology in Narrative Foreground

### 2) Background

The past progressive forms occurred when the learners tried to set scenes or to describe detailed actions occurred in background. Otherwise, they dominantly used the simple past. For example, the past progressive forms were found robustly in the opening of narratives as in (3). In this excerpt, the writer of this narrative used the past progressive twice to open the scene and to describe a background event.

(3) An excerpt from a learner narrative

The girl was walking alone and she was hungry. She found out bakery and she wished she could buy some bread to eat. She saw that the guy at bakery was carrying bread from truck to store. She stole a loaf of bread.

The progressive occurred frequently in the background while no progressive marking was found in the foreground. Thus, it is clear that the discourse structure had a strong influence on the production pattern of the progressive morphology in narratives. This supports the Discourse Hypothesis. Figure 4 displays the comparison between the simple past and progressive uses in association with ACT and ACC in the background by the Low and High groups.

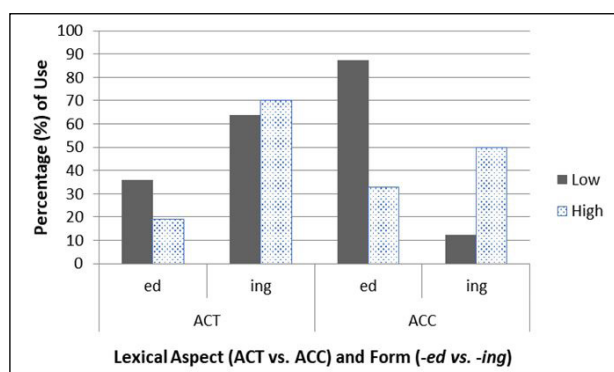


FIGURE 4 The Distribution of Morphology in Narrative Background

In the Low group, the progressive associated with activity predicates (64%) occurred more frequently than with accomplishment predicates (13%) in the background. In the High group, progressive forms were associated significantly more frequently with activity predicates (70%) than with accomplishment predicates (50%):  $\chi^2(1, N = 131) = 4.466, p = .015$ . The use of progressive forms with ACT and ACC across proficiency levels showed that the High group produced significantly more rates of progressives with ACC than the Low group:  $\chi^2(1, N = 90) = 16.044, p < .001$ .

Concerning the use of the simple past with activities across the proficiency levels, the Low group used the simple past at a significantly higher rate (36%) than the High group (19%):  $\chi^2(1, N = 125) = 4.423, p = .035$ . The comparison between the simple past use in association with ACT and ACC in the background demonstrated that, in both groups, the simple past was associated more often with ACC than with ACT. The Low Group produced much more simple past forms with ACC (88%) than with ACT (36%) in the background. Likewise, the High Group produced more simple past forms with ACC (33%) than with ACT (19%) in the background:  $\chi^2(1, N = 131) = 6.237, p = .013$ . This seems to be due to the strong effect of the aspectual meaning of VPs on the distribution of tense and aspect markers, as was predicted by the Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1994).

To summarize results from the FR task, in foreground

clauses, verbal predicates were marked predominantly in the simple past, regardless of proficiency level. The distribution of the simple past across activities and accomplishments did not differ by level, as well. In the background, however, both learner groups associated progressive forms more frequently with activity predicates than with accomplishment predicates, but the High group produced higher rate of progressive forms with accomplishments than the Low group. Overall, the High group used the progressive more frequently than the Low group.

## V. DISCUSSION

### 1. Learners' Use of the Past Progressive

In both tasks, the Low group and the High group described situations in the past context by including aspectual viewpoint on the events, suggesting that they were sensitive to the discourse structure. The past progressive forms were used mainly in background, especially when they tried to set scenes and to describe background actions in detail. Overall, the High group produced much more progressive forms than the Low group.

In the Low group, the progressive forms were more robustly associated with accomplishments than with activities in the VCP. The Low group used more simple past forms than progressive forms with backgrounded accomplishments than the High group, which is consistent with the prediction of the Aspect Hypothesis. In the ACT-background condition, increased use of progressives from the Low group to the High group was noticeable. In narratives, the progressive was more frequently associated with activities than with accomplishments, which is also consistent with the prediction of the Aspect Hypothesis. In narratives, the production bias for using the progressive with activity predicates was found to be quite strong in the Low group. In the High group, the progressive was more frequently associated with both activities and accomplishments than the simple past in both tasks. These results are in line with Bardovi-Harlig (1998) which claims that pressure to build two different discourse structures forces advanced learners to expand on the prototypical associations between lexical aspect and tense-aspect morphology.

To summarize results from both the verb cloze passage and the film retell tasks, the learners used the past progressive when an in-progress viewpoint was called for in the background and the simple past when a perfective viewpoint was required in the foreground, supporting the Discourse Hypothesis. The distribution of the progressive and the simple past seemed to be also affected by lexical aspect, supporting the Aspect Hypothesis. Different association patterns between progressive and activities or between progressive and accomplishments that were observed across two proficiency groups would need a close attention to discuss how to help lower-level learners expand the prototypical association.

## 2. Comparison of the Results from the Two Tasks

The second research question was related to task effects between a highly controlled task and a less controlled task in Korean ESL learners' use of the past progressive. Overall, the simple past was selected in the VCP task at higher rates than in the FR task. This may be due to the more controlled nature of the VCP task. Because the attention to verb forms were mainly required to perform the VCP task, some learners might have provided simple past form of each verb without considering the contexts thoroughly. For both proficiency groups, the progressive was strongly associated with accomplishments in the VCP. This means that the format of the VCP task was beneficial in eliciting the progressive with accomplishments. In contrast, for both Low and High proficiency groups, the progressive was robustly associated with activities in narratives, which suggests that the format of the FR task was beneficial in eliciting the progressive with activities.

Although the VCP was quite successful in eliciting the target tense-aspect morphology, namely the simple past and the progressives, one learner in the Low group did not produce any progressive forms in the VCP task. However, as shown in (4), this learner used the past progressive in the background in the FR task.

### (4) An excerpt from a learner narrative

The police van arrived. He was taking that car to the police station. Also the woman took that car, and they met again.

This excerpt is a good example that illustrates the importance of including a less controlled tasks like narrative to investigate the past progressive. The FR task is generally more beneficial than the VCP task, given that the High group learners used higher rates of progressives in the background than they did in the VCP task.

Taken together, the two different tasks yielded results which suggest strong influences of task types on their use of the English past progressive. The teaching implications can be drawn from learners' production patterns in different tasks. Since each task has its own benefits in eliciting tense-aspect morphology, we need to consider potentially beneficial application of both tasks to language teaching needs to be considered. The following section offers some suggestions for teaching how to use the past progressive in context.

## VI. TEACHING IMPLICATIONS

Based on the results, the study suggests that in a language classroom, the progressive aspect should be practiced with different types of tasks. The VCP task, although it has some drawbacks, elicited more progressives with accomplishments than with activities. Thus, a highly controlled task like the VCP can be beneficial in helping learners expand on the prototypical associations between

lexical aspect and tense-aspect morphology. Importantly, even in such controlled activities, the past progressive should be taught in context in comparison with the simple past. In the FR task which elicited less controlled narratives, the High group learners used higher rates of progressives in the background than they did in the VCP task. This implies that activities like the FR task can be successfully employed in the language classroom with some modification. Also, the learner who used no progressive forms in the VCP produced the past progressive in narrative background.

To make the classroom language practice more student-centered, a student-initiated form-focused instruction can be applied (Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2001). Also, there are benefits when students made opportunities for themselves to discuss grammar explicitly (Swain & Lapkin, 1998). Thus, students can be encouraged to talk together about tense-aspect morphology they are using and discuss which form they should produce to describe events in certain context more appropriately. The activity could be done in pairs or groups, with students of different levels working together. Given that higher level learners' association of the progressive with activities and accomplishments was relatively consistent in both tasks, group work with higher and lower-level students together might be beneficial.

Language activities in the classroom should be carefully designed in a way that the progressive aspect is presented and practiced in more meaningful and natural contexts (H. -J. Kim, 2019). For this activity, the students would view a silent film together in class. After watching a selected clip, students write a film retell individually. Then, the teacher gives them opportunities to reflect on and talk about the sentences they have produced. In this case, the topic of discussion should focus on the simple past and the past progressive. Students in pairs or in groups identify the tense and aspect morphology that they used, then discuss the reasons why they chose to use the progressive, not other tenses. Meanwhile, the teacher should monitor the student-student interaction and provide a necessary support. The pair or group discussion session should be followed by a whole class discussion where the best examples can be shared so that students inductively learn aspectual meanings and functions of the progressive in discourse.

The classroom activity mentioned in this section is to help students notice linguistic structures by drawing their special attention (Schmidt, 1990). With the focus of attention on the past progressive, this form-focused instruction can be successfully integrated into meaningful language use. This type of activity might not be suitable for beginning-level students, but for intermediate to advanced level students, it could be used for student-centered discovery learning.

## VII. CONCLUSION

This study investigated Korean ESL learners' produc-



tion patterns of the past progressive in relation to their use of the simple past and found that task types can affect the different production patterns of the English past progressive by the learners. In this study, the past progressive was used as a case to demonstrate how discourse helps learners acquire L2 grammar more fully, emphasizing meaningful use of a grammatical item. This study yielded findings applicable to pedagogy, which emphasize the importance of teaching the past progressive in discourse, which could further contribute to the ways to teach other tense-aspect morphology to English learners in Korea. As suggested in this paper, the progressive aspect needs to be practiced with different types of tasks and students-initiated focus on form in discourse can be included in a lesson to teach the past progressive.

In the future study, data from more participants at a wider range of proficiency would need to be included to observe a complete picture of the acquisition patterns from low-level to highly advanced learners. In addition, as Domínguez (2019) argues, investigation of small-scale learner corpora would be useful to examine the target morphology in a wider range of contexts. Other task types could be used to elicit data, along with the two task types examined here. Future research should pay careful attention to the limitations of this study as well as its findings and claims to obtain further evidence in L2 tense-aspect acquisition.

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