



Effect of Instruction on Acquisition of Present Perfect

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Aim of Study

- Investigated the impact on acquisition of the differences between English and Saudi-Arabic in relation to tense and aspect by tracking the development of the English simple past *-ed* and present perfect *have-en*.
- To explore whether form-meaning mappings which are different in L1 grammar are acquirable by Saudi-Arabic learners of English.
- Looked at different levels of proficiency & at verb types (lexical aspect).
- Used Focus on Form instead of traditional teaching approach.
- Tested learners' working memory

Tense & Aspect in English Snape et al. (2019)

Past –ed

Last year, Jill wanted to get married.

Present Perfect have-en

For months now, Jill has wanted to get married.

In English, the past –ed locates the time reference in the past to refer to completed actions, while the present perfect locates the time reference to past to refer to ongoing actions.

Tense & Aspect in Arabic Alruwaili (2014)

(Past –ed OR Present Perfect -en)

- a. Kitab Ahmad Darsa-h
Write.prf Ahmad lesson.his
'Ahmad wrote/has written his lesson

Past –ed

- b. Kitab Ahmad Darsa-h ams
Write.prf Ahmad lesson.his yesterday
'Ahamd wrote his lesson yesterday

Present Perfect -en

- c. Ahmad tuuh kitab Darsa-h
Ahmad just write.prf lesson.his
'Ahmad has just written his lesson

Some SLA Accounts

- Table 1 below is adopted from Snape et al. (2019), to investigate Saudi-Arabic learners' feature reassembly process in the acquisition of English past *-ed* and present perfect *have-en*.
- Table1 shows that similar to Thai, Saudi-Arabic uses temporal adverbs, such as *last week*, *yesterday*, etc. but they also use the same affix to refer to either past –ed or the present perfect *have-en*, which is close to the Japanese language.
- Saudi-Arabic learners might encounter different problems, which will hinder their acquisition process.
- L2 Saudi-Arabic learners might rely on finding temporal adverbials in L2 at the discourse level to differentiate between the past –ed and present perfect *have-en*.

Table.1 Summary of tense-aspect morphology (Snape et al. 2019)

		English	Japanese	Thai	Saudi-Arabic
Tense	Non-past	–Ø / –s	–(r)u	–Ø	ya–
	Past	–ed		–Ø	
Grammatical Aspect	Perfective	have + en	–ta*	lěɛw	/i/ ə /, or /a/ + adverbs
	Imperfective	be + ing	–te-i-ru	yùu	ya– / ga'ad (adverb) + ya–

*Due to the transitional nature of Japanese –ta, there are disagreements on whether –ta is an aspect marker or a tense marker (e.g., Takahashi, 1976; Ando, 1986).

- Similar to L2 Japanese learners, L2 Saudi-Arabic learners will face more acquisition difficulties because they need to reassemble features then select the correct feature on each of the two grammatical forms (see Table 2 below)

Table.2 Tense & aspect mappings in English and Saudi-Arabic

	English		Saudi-Arabic	
	Morpheme	Features	Morpheme	Features
Non-past	–Ø / –s	[pres]	ya–	[pres]
Past	–ed	[past]	/i/ ə /, or /a/	[past]+[perf]
Perfective	have + en	[pres] + [perf]	/i/ ə /, or /a/	[pres]+[perf]
Imperfective	be + ing	[pres] +[prog]	ya– / ga'ad +	[pres] + [ga'aad]
		[past] +[prog]	ya–	[past, ka'an] + [ga'aad]

Research Questions

RQ Will L1 Saudi-Arabic learners of English show short and long-term improvement in the (*comprehension*) and (*production*) of the English past tense and present perfect after receiving classroom intervention using focus on form FoF?

- (a) Will there be an effect of language proficiency on the comprehension of production?
- (b) Will there be an effect of working memory on the comprehension of production?
- (c) Will there be an effect of verb type (accomplishment, achievement, activity, & stative) on the comprehension of production?

Methodology

- 3 classes were used to collect data for the main study as a quasi-experimental approach based on teaching approach.
- 2 classes were introduced to the English past –ed and present perfect *have-en* using FoF, for a planned total of 10 hours over 14 weeks of the usual teaching term.
- The 3rd class was the control group and was taught in the traditional way, by following the rules and examples found in their course book.
- All 3 classes were given a pre-test and a proficiency test before the start of the intervention, then a post-test, and a delayed post-test (after 3 more weeks). Results of all groups were compared and analysed.
- Two offline tasks were used. Both tasks focused on how temporal adverbs, such as *yesterday*, *last night*, *since*, *for*, and etc. in a context determine the needed grammatical form. Also this study used a working memory task (WM).

- a) Gap-Filling Task adopted form Alruwaili (2014). This task contained 30 tokens, which were divided into 4 lexical types. Example with fronted temporal adverb:

Yesterday, I (play) with my sister.

- b) Acceptability Judgment Task, which was adopted from Snape et al (2019). Examples of Tense/Aspect with fronted temporal adverb:

Three days ago, Tom missed the bus to the main station.

Strongly-disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly-agree

Three days ago, Tom has missed the bus to the main station.

Strongly-disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly-agree

- c) The 3rd instrument is Digits Back (Wechsler 1997) and used to test the working memory of both control and experimental groups.

Results

- Explicit instruction that was presented to learners after attention to meaning of authentic texts that were reinforced with the target structures was beneficial.
- Explicit instruction with controlled contexts using FoF method in a communicative environment was more effective than following the assigned textbook.
- Results indicate that learners realized- to a certain degree- after the explicit instruction: a) how to re-assemble the target features b) L1 syntactic restriction was not required in the L2.
- The mixed results of the past *-ed* and perfect *have-en* may signal that the amount of instruction should increase for learners to develop the concepts.
- The context that was most affected by the instruction was the perfect *have-en*.
- The instruction did not affect the past *-ed* as expected and this could be either related to previous knowledge that the learners have about it. Another reason could be a task-effect reason.

Summary

This study attempted to contribute to the field of GenSLA by proving that linguistic theories could inform classroom instruction. This was done by shedding light on: Theories on the acquisition process, the role of L1, and form-meaning mappings provided the detailed analysis of the difficulties facing L2 Saudi-Arabic learners of English (Schwartz & Sprouse, 1996; Slabakova, 2008; Lardiere, 2008; 2009). Accordingly, three problematic properties of the English past *-ed* and perfect *have-en* facing L1 Arabic speakers were targeted in this study defined as feature re-assembly difficulties.

Selected References

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