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Appendix: Reading Passage

After the hurricane had passed, there wasn't a sound. Susan raised her head slowly, and tried to pull herself together. In the midst of the confusion, Walt had left her side to try and bolt all the windows, but then there was this horrible crash, and she had passed out. Where was he now, she wondered, as she pulled off the blankets and groped her way towards the door. She'd been peeved because he hadn't told her about the dent in the car, and how much it would cost. But that was nothing compared to this.

She crept around for a moment and paused by the giant bookcase which he'd built for her last month. She was sure she'd heard something. Then she heard it again: a soft moan, coming from the back. She raced over to the kitchen, and, for a second, couldn't believe her eyes. The roof had caved in, and Walt was lying in a mound of debris with his eyes closed. She found her way closer to him, wondering all the time whether he'd been killed or not. She called his name repeatedly, and begged him to answer.

Walt awoke suddenly, looked at Susan, and asked what had happened. Fearing that he might be injured, she told him to lie still and explained that the roof had caved in during the storm. Inwardly, she thanked God that he was alive. She then told him that she had already sent for help. She was sure that the neighbors who he had helped after the blizzard last winter would come as soon as they learned of his plight.

Tense Marking in the English of Spanish-speaking Adolescents

H.D. Adamson, Bonnie Fonseca-Greber
Kuniyoshi Kataoka, Vincent Scardino
and Shoji Takano
University of Arizona

1. Introduction

During the 1980s, several studies found interesting patterns of tense marking in the interlanguage of non-native English speakers. Kumpf (1984) studied the speech of Tomiko, a native Japanese speaker who had learned English after coming to the United States as the bride of an American serviceman in 1952. Tomiko's English was fluent, but had non-nativelike features, including tense marking. Working within a discourse analysis framework, Kumpf examined how Tomiko marked past tense in contexts that described past events within narratives. She found that Tomiko tended to mark verbs that described past events within background clauses but not to mark verbs that described past events within foreground clauses. Foreground clauses correspond to what Schiffrin (1981) calls *narrative clauses*, clauses that describe an action or move the story line forward. Background clauses correspond to several of Schiffrin's classifications, including clauses that set the scene, make digressions, or give evaluative comments. To illustrate the foreground/background distinction, the foreground clauses in the following two narratives are italicized. Both narratives are from our subject Benny, who was describing times when he got in trouble.

1.
 - (1) That wasn't the worst time.
 - (2) The worst time was

- (3) when I hit some little boy through a win... through a window.
- (4) It was
- (5) because he was on the other side of the window
- (6) 'n' he kept on makin' faces at me
- (7) 'n' I just go with my fist
- (8) 'n' hit him
- (9) 'n' broke the window.
- (10) He had all kinds of cuts.
- (11) They took me to juvenile.

2.

- (1) Then I was with my friends...
- (2) They were from the South Side... 'n' Vista 'n' all
- (3) 'n' we came right down here
- (4) 'n' went to Hollywood
- (5) 'n' we start throwin' some bottles at... at the houses
- (6) 'n' we hit somebody's house
- (7) 'n' he came outside shooting a gun at us,
- (8) so that he shot the back and...
- (9) [Interviewer]: Really close, huh?
- (10) They took me home.
- (11) They took the little kid that stole the car to juvi
- (12) 'n' he gets me busted
- (13) 'n' then I got in trouble.

According to Kumpf (1984) the past tenses (which include simple past, past progressive, and past perfect) are mandatory in background clauses with past reference. However, in foreground clauses, the past tenses can alternate with the corresponding present tenses in what is traditionally called historical present (HP). Wolfson (1982) identifies two characteristics of the HP as used in narrative: (1) it alternates with the past in such a way that the two are always substitutable for each other without change in referential meaning; (2) it is never found in all verbs where it could have been used.

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish background from foreground clauses. In narrative 1, the verb in line 7 clearly moves the event line forward (and in fact is in the HP). But what about the verbs in lines 5 and 6? Do these clauses supply a background and explanation for the hitting, or does the event line begin here? Lines 5 and 6 could be rendered in the HP ('It was because he's

on the other side of the window and he keeps making faces at me'). However, we have classified the clauses in these lines as background clauses because the HP rendering seems less natural than the original, perhaps because the first verb is stative and the second verb describes repetitive action. A similar question arises with the concluding clauses of each narrative. We have classified these clauses as background clauses because we think that they do not continue the event line, but rather function as an explanatory conclusion. The point is that it can be difficult to distinguish between foreground and background clauses, and that in our coding we have had to make many decisions based; to some extent, on intuitions, as in the examples above.

A second group of studies of tense marking was done by Wolfram and his associates (Wolfram 1985, Wolfram, Christian and Hatfield 1986a, 1986b), who examined the speech of Vietnamese-speaking subjects living in the Washington, D.C. suburbs of Northern Virginia. These studies will be referred to as the Vietnamese English (VE) studies. The subjects had lived in the United States from between 3 and 7 years. The researchers elicited natural speech by using a sociolinguistic interview format (Labov 1984, Wolfram and Fasold 1974). Unlike Kumpf, they looked mainly at lexical and phonological constraints on tense marking. They found that regular verbs were marked less frequently than irregular verbs, an order of frequency also found in second language speech by Dulay and Burt (1974). This order of frequency corresponds, as well, to the order of acquisition in first language speech found by Brown (1973).

Wolfram's (1985) subjects with 1-3 years length of residence (LOR) in the U.S. showed considerable individual variation in the marking of various classes of irregular verbs. However, the subjects with a longer LOR showed a more consistent pattern. The classes of irregular verbs that Wolfram (1985) looked at included: (a) suppletive forms such as *is/was* and *go/went*; (b) internal vowel changes such as *come/came* and *sit/sat*; (c) internal vowel changes plus a regular suffix, such as *do/did* and *keep/kept*; and (d) final consonant replacement (replacive verbs), such as *have/had* and *make/made*. Wolfram found that there was a hierarchy in the frequency of marking these verb classes, such that $a > b > c > d$. To explain this order, he proposed the principle of saliency, which states: 'the more distant phonetically the past tense irregular form is from the non-past, the more likely it will be marked for tense' (1985:247). In regard to the marking of regular verbs ending in -t/d (the 'short past'), Wolfram found a phonological constraint, whereby /t/ or /d/ can

be deleted from a consonant cluster, producing, for example, /mIs/ for *missed*. In another study, Wolfram et al. (1971) found that in Puerto Rican and black English consonant clusters across word boundaries can be reduced as well, so that *played for* is pronounced /pleyfɹ/.

Finally, two VE studies looked for the presence of discourse constraints on tense marking. Wolfram, Christian, and Hatfield (1986a) found no evidence of the influence of the foreground/background distinction in the speech of a 33-year-old subject in their advanced proficiency group. Wolfram (1985) found some evidence of tense unmarking at or near episode boundaries (a pattern in native-speaker speech observed by Wolfson (1982)). However, unmarking that was conditioned by the lexical and phonological factors mentioned above was far more frequent. The VE researchers concluded that while discourse-level constraints may well affect tense marking, they are outweighed by lexical and phonological constraints, and therefore that any study of discourse level constraints that ignores lexical and phonological constraints is flawed.

2. Research Design

2.1 Research Question

The present study is similar to the VE studies (especially Wolfram 1985), but we have attempted to improve upon their design in two ways. First, we analyze only verbs in narrative discourse rather than conflating all discourse types. Second, we analyze the entire database for both low-level and discourse level constraints. Specifically, we ask: How do the constraints in table 1 affect the marking of the past tense in the narratives of our Spanish-speaking subjects? We also consider the effect of the following phonological environment on the marking of short past verbs. This constraint will be analyzed separately since it affects only regular, short-form verbs. The VE studies do not use a VARBRUL analysis, and, because we wish to compare our findings to those studies and have a relatively small database, we will use percentages rather than VARBRUL constraint weightings.

The first group of constraints in table 1 contains the two proficiency groups, higher and lower. Wolfram (1985) divided his 16 subjects into two levels of proficiency as suggested by their LOR in the U.S. The lower

proficiency group consisted of subjects who had lived in the U.S. for 1-3 years. The higher proficiency group consisted of subjects who had lived in the U.S. for 4-7 years. We divided our subjects using the LOR criterion and by using an accuracy index, which was the percentage of past tense marking in obligatory contexts. We counted as an obligatory context a verb in a background clause that referred to a past event (as in line 2 of narrative 1), where the HP is not possible. As table 2 shows, Juana and Marcos, the two subjects who had lived in the U.S. for the shortest time, had the lowest scores on the accuracy index. Ariel's score was also low (the same as Marcos's), but Ariel had lived in the U.S. on and off for 11 years. Therefore, we decided to group Juana and Marcos in the lower proficiency group and the other subjects in the higher proficiency group. Constraint group 2 in table 1 contains the individual

Table 1. Percentages of past tense marking by seven Spanish-speaking adolescents

Constraints	Percent marked
Const. group 1	(Proficiency)
	higher 94
	lower 83
Const. group 2	(Verbs and Verb classes)
	<i>be</i> 97
	<i>have</i> 96
	<i>go</i> 93
	a
	int. V + suff. 91
	b
	int. V change 91
	<i>come</i> 88
	/Id/ 88
	-t/d 81
	c
	other irr. 67
	d
	final C replacement 57
Const. group 3	(Clause type)
	background 96
	foreground 88
Const. group 4	(Speaker's sex)
	female 92
	male 91

a. e.g., *kept, said, left*; b. e.g., *got, sat, saw*; c. e.g., *ate*; d. e.g., *made*

Table 2. Demographic information about the subjects and accuracy index (percentage of past tense marking in obligatory contexts)

Subject	Country of birth	Sex	Grade	Years in U.S.	Accuracy Index
Blanca	Mexico	Female	7	9	.98
Benny	U.S.	Male	8	14	.98
Sylvia	Mexico	Female	7	5	.97
Oscar	Mexico	Male	8	5	.96
Ariel	Mexico	Male	6	11	.94
Marcos	Mexico	Male	6	2	.94
Juana	U.S.	Female	7	4	.92

irregular verbs and verb classes. Constraint group 3 contains the two types of clauses found in narratives: foreground and background. Constraint group 4 contains the two possibilities for speaker's sex.

2.2 The Sample

Our subjects were native Spanish-speaking adolescents who were students at Ruiz Middle School, a science and technology magnet school that was set up in response to a court order to end the segregation of hispanic and anglo students in the Tucson Unified School District. The school enrolls science-oriented students from all over the city as well as students from the surrounding neighborhood, which is predominantly hispanic. The school has an ESL program, but no bilingual program. However, many of the teachers use Spanish and English in both ESL and content courses. Additional demographic information about the subjects can be found in table 2.

The subjects were interviewed at school or in their homes by native English-speaking graduate students using a sociolinguistic interview format. A total of 694 tokens of verbs that referred to past events within narratives were coded by two teams of two graduate students. After a training period, the agreement levels among the coders was close to 100%.

3. Results

Overall, our subjects marked 91 percent of verbs that referred to past events within narratives. Wolfram's high proficiency subjects marked 73 percent of

past reference verbs in all discourse types. This indicates that our subjects are more proficient in their use of the past tense than Wolfram's high proficiency subjects.

We next consider the data shown in table 1. The constraints in the table constitute a hypothesis of how our subjects marked past tense. First, note that in constraint group 4 males and females marked past tense at almost exactly the same rate (91 versus 92 percent). Since this is the case, the speakers' sex does not appear to constrain case marking and will not be discussed further.

Constraint Group 1 contrasts the lower proficiency group with the higher proficiency group. As we would expect, the higher proficiency group marks past tense more frequently, 94 percent versus 83 percent.

Next consider constraint Group 2, verb type. Table 3 shows the percentages at which the two groups of subjects marked the various verb types and the percentage for both groups combined. As we would expect, the higher proficiency group marked all the verbs (except *come*) more frequently than the lower proficiency group.

It is interesting to compare the percentages at which our subjects marked irregular verbs with the percentages at which Wolfram's (1985) high proficiency group marked these verbs. We will compare three groups of verbs: (1) individual irregular verbs, (2) irregular verb classes, and (3) regular verbs. The rank order of percentages for the irregular verbs, shown in table 3, does not match Wolfram's order of frequencies when groups (1) and (2) are lumped together. However, when category (1) and category (2) are consid-

Table 3. Percentages of individual verbs and verb types marked

Verb	Percentage of past tense marked		
	Higher prof.	Lower prof.	Total
<i>be</i>	98	92	97
<i>have</i>	97	86	96
<i>go</i>	93	92	93
int. V + suffix	95	80	91
int. V change	96	72	90
<i>come</i>	85	100	88
/ld/	90	75	88
-t/d	85	50	81
other irr.	100	0	60
final C replacement	57	—	57

ered separately, some similarities emerge. As table 3 shows, our rank order for the frequency of marking individual verbs is *be* > *have* > *go* > *come*. Wolfram's order is *be* > *come* > *go* > *have*. Thus, in both studies *be* is marked most frequently. Turning to the irregular verb classes, our rank order is: int.V+ suffix > int. V change > replative, which is the same as Wolfram's order, though the difference between our first two categories is only one percent. Thus, in both studies, replative verbs are marked least frequently.

For regular verbs, we find an order that is different from Wolfram's. Wolfram's high proficiency subjects marked the short past (-t/d) and the long past (/Id/) at about the same rate — 38 percent and 39 percent respectively. Our subjects, on the other hand, marked the long past more frequently than the short past — 88 percent versus 81 percent. Wolfram's order may not conform to the principle of saliency, since /Id/, constituting a separate syllable, may be more perceptually salient than -t/d.¹ Wolfram explains the relatively low marking of the long past as reflecting the natural order of acquisition found by Berko (1958) for first language acquisition and by Natalicio and Natalicio (1971) for first and second language acquisition. In other words, his subjects did not produce the long past as often as the short past because they had not yet fully acquired it. Since our subjects appear to be more proficient than Wolfram's, our order may be the result of the principle of saliency operating without interference from principles of acquisition.

The effect of the following phonological environment on -t/d deletion in short past forms is shown in table 4. The table shows that both a following consonant and a following pause disfavor marking more strongly than a following vowel, as was the case for Fasold's (1972) black English speakers.

Finally, we consider the effect of foreground versus background clause. A crosstabulation of clause type with proficiency group appears in table 5, which shows that the higher proficiency subjects marked past tense at 97 percent in background clauses versus 91 percent in foreground clauses. There

Table 5. Crosstabulation of clause type and proficiency group

Proficiency group	Percent verbs marked		
	Background clause	Foreground clause	Total
Higher	97 (220/227)	91 (267/295)	93 (487/522)
Lower	93 (41/44)	79 (77/97)	84 (118/141)
Total	96 (261/271)	88 (334/392)	91 (605/663)

is a much greater contrast in the lower proficiency group. This group marked past tense at 93 percent in background clauses but only 79 percent in foreground clauses. The difference in the patterns shown by the two groups (as displayed in table 5) is significant at the .01 level ($\chi^2 = 6.928$; $df = 1$).

4. Discussion

The results of our analysis are similar to those of Wolfram's analysis of tense marking by native Vietnamese speakers in several ways. In general, irregular past tenses are marked more frequently than regular past tenses. The two exceptions to this rule are the categories 'other irregulars' and 'replative verbs.' It is difficult to speculate as to why these verbs do not behave the way they did for Wolfram since we have so few tokens, only 6 and 7 respectively. We note, however, that, in our opinion, the principle of saliency predicts that replative verbs should be marked less frequently than regular -t/d verbs. With regular -t/d verbs, the past form differs from the non-past form by the addition of a final consonant. However, with replative verbs, the past form differs from the non-past form only by a change in the final consonant. With only one exception, then, our subjects more frequently marked verbs that are phonetically distant from their non-past forms, thus supporting Wolfram's principle of saliency.

Turning to the deletion of -t/d from the short past, we first consider some previous research on this much-studied phenomenon. Important research in this area includes Fasold's (1972) study of black English in Detroit, Wolfram et al.'s (1971) study of Puerto Rican and black English in New York City, Labov and Cohen's (1967) and Labov et al.'s (1968) studies of black and mainland Puerto Rican varieties, and Guy's (1980) study of white speakers in New York City and Philadelphia. With the exception of Wolfram et al.

Table 4. Percentages of past tense -t/d marking in three following phonological environments

Following segment	Percent -t/d-marked
Vowel	79 (15/19)
Non-vowel (not including pause)	70 (19/27)
Pause	69 (9/13)

ment, and we considered deletion from both final consonant clusters and nonclusters. We looked at the effects of three possible following environments: vowels (including semi-vowels), consonants, and pause. As noted, our results (displayed in table 4) are suggestive, though not statistically significant. We found that *-t/d* deletion was more frequent before pauses and consonants than before vowels. This phenomenon may be motivated, in part, by the influence of Spanish phonotactics. Normally, Spanish does not permit word final stops. There are no native Spanish words ending in */t/*. Word final */d/*, as in *sed* (thirst), is pronounced as an interdental or postalveolar fricative, which is often devoiced (Clarey, Dixon and Andujar 1967). Perhaps as a result of this tendency, Spanish speakers often devoiced final stops in English, so that *played* is pronounced [pleɪt̪]. Stockwell and Bowen (1965:45) observe that in some dialects of Spanish, final */d/* is so weakened that it disappears altogether, so that *usted* becomes [uste]. Poplack (1979) notes that this weakening process allows the language more closely to approximate its ideal CV syllable type. While we have not studied the variety of Spanish spoken by our subjects, Smead (personal communication) states that the weakening of fricative [d̪] in syllable final position is a near universal phenomenon.

The fact that following pause patterned like following consonant may be motivated by the phenomenon of resyllabification, as Guy (1980) observes. Resyllabification causes the */t/* or */d/* to become attached to the beginning of the next word. In the case of final clusters, this produces, for example, /pɪlk tæp/ for *picked up*, changing the sequence CVCC VC to CVC CVC. In the case of *-t/d* following a vowel, resyllabification produces, for example, /weɪ den/ for *weighed any*, changing the sequence CVC VCV to CV CVCV. Both changes result in sequences that more closely match the canonical CV Spanish syllable structure. Resyllabification can only occur, of course, when the following segment is a vowel, not a consonant or a pause.

Discourse constraints appeared to affect our subjects' tense marking, though not as drastically as with Kumpf's subject. Recall that Tomiko unmarked tense in all foreground clauses. For our subjects, discourse constraints appear to operate in conjunction with lexical and phonological constraints. Both proficiency groups unmarked past tense more frequently in foreground clauses than in background clauses. In this regard, our subjects approximated the behavior of native speakers. However, we also found that the lower proficiency speakers unmarked verbs in foreground clauses at a significantly higher rate than did the higher proficiency speakers.

(1971), these studies considered only *-t/d* within final consonant clusters. In such clusters, *-t/d* can represent the past morpheme, as in *missed*, or the cluster can be monomorphemic, as in *mist*. Note that in white speech, deletion can occur only from clusters with the same voicing: both segments must be either voiced or voiceless. Thus, in these varieties deletion is not possible in words like *jump*, but such deletion is permitted in black and Puerto Rican varieties.

All of the studies agree as to what are the most important constraints on *-t/d* deletion. One constraint is morphemic status. When */t,d/* functions as a past tense marker, deletion is disfavored. A second constraint is the preceding phonological environment. An obstruent (stop or fricative) favors deletion, whereas a sonorant (vowel, semi-vowel, lateral or nasal) disfavors deletion. The most powerful constraint is the following phonological environment. Guy (1980) found that consonantal segments favored deletion and vocalic segments disfavored deletion. More specifically, the ranking of following phonological environments (from favoring to disfavoring) was: consonants > liquids > semi-vowels > vowels.

Guy (1980) also examined the effect of a following pause (that is, silence) on *-t/d* deletion. Some previous investigators had not considered following pause separately. The studies in which Labov was involved grouped pause with consonants, whereas the studies in which Wolfram was involved grouped pause with vowels. Fasold (1972) considered pauses separately from consonants and vowels and found that in black English a pause had an effect similar to that of an obstruent. Guy (1980) found that the effect of pause was not the same in white varieties in New York City and Philadelphia. Rather, a following pause served to distinguish these two geographical dialects. In New York City, a following pause strongly favored deletion, whereas in Philadelphia it strongly disfavored deletion.

The only study to examine *-t/d* deletion in non-consonant clusters, that is, where the preceding phonological environment is a vowel or semi-vowel (as in *played*), is Wolfram et al. (1971). As mentioned, such deletion is not allowed in white varieties, but is allowed in black and Puerto Rican varieties. Wolfram et al. found that in these varieties, a following consonant favored deletion and a following vowel (with which pause was grouped) disfavored deletion.

Since our data are limited, we looked only at the strongest constraint identified in all of the studies, namely the following phonological environ-

We may speculate that this pattern of unmarking may represent a communication strategy available to less proficient speakers. Wolfson (1982) found that her native English speaking subjects avoided HP during the sociolinguistic interview and were much more likely to use it in pre- and post-interview contexts. She believes that this was so because the interview represented a formal context for which the informal HP is not appropriate. In our case, as well, the sociolinguistic interview was probably a relatively formal context. Most of the interviews took place in a school setting and all of the interviewers were tutors who had been helping the subjects with their classes throughout the course of the semester. The interviewers were inevitably identified with schoolwork, a context that has been found to elicit a more formal style. If this was the case, our subjects, like Wolfson's, may have desired to avoid the HP in order to sound appropriately formal. However, there was a conflicting influence on the lower proficiency speakers, namely the desire to avoid errors in past tense forms that they had not mastered. In these circumstances, using the HP provided a way to avoid errors by making the small sacrifice of sounding less formal.

This possibility suggests a pedagogical implication for our study. Narratives may be a good place for ESL students to practice the past tense since they contain a safe environment: namely the foreground clause, where either the past or present form is acceptable. Students like those in our low proficiency group, who still have some difficulty with the past tense, appear to take advantage of this context. They produce a lower percentage of past forms than the more proficient speakers when it is grammatically correct to do so. If teachers desire to lower their students' affective filters (Krashen 1981) in order to encourage language production, they might, as we did, ask questions that elicit stories. 'Did you ever see a fight?' 'Were you ever in danger of death?' 'What's the funniest thing you ever saw?' Narratives not only provide a safe environment for using past tense forms, they also evoke a great deal of interest, enthusiasm, and enjoyment.

In conclusion, Wolfram (1985) notes, 'The concern with surface-level constraints ... should not be taken as a rejection of ... higher level organization in interlanguage tense marking,' and he calls for studies that look at both types of constraints. The present research is one such study, and it suggests that lexical, phonological, and discourse constraints all play a role in tense marking in interlanguage.

Note

1. Bayley (personal communication) argues that the long past is less salient than the short past because the extra syllable of the long past is unstressed, whereas in many short past verbs the past tense morpheme occurs in a stressed syllable. Since we lack a formal definition of perceptual saliency, we must rely on linguists' intuitions as to which past form differs more from the present form, and in this case our intuitions do not agree.

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Form-Function Relations in Articles in English Interlanguage

Richard Young
University of Wisconsin-Madison

1. Introduction: Acquiring the English Article System

The problem that second language learners are faced with in acquiring the system of articles in English is a tough one. In the pedagogical literature, ESL teachers report that articles are often their number one difficulty (Covitt 1976, cited in Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman 1983). Given that articles are the most frequent forms that are available to learners in input, the difficulty that learners experience in using them correctly appears, at first sight, surprising. However, despite the abundance of these forms in input, English articles are a remarkably complex system to acquire. This closed system of a handful of generally unstressed morphemes encodes semantic notions of existence, reference, and attribution; discourse notions of anaphora and context; as well as syntactic notions of countability and number. Added to the complexity of the target system are difficulties inherent in the second language learning process, including the influence of the first language and learners' changing hypotheses about article usage at different stages in interlanguage development.

Part of the problem for learners lies in the complex ways in which meaning is mapped onto form in the English article system. The definite article, *the*, and the singular indefinite article, *a(n)*, in English function in a variety of ways that overlap with each other and with other linguistic forms. For instance, in (1), *the* is used three times with three distinct meanings: uniqueness in the critical-period hypothesis, generic reference in the brain, and anaphoric reference in the idea.¹