

Why aspect is retained in heritage Inuttitut, but affected in heritage Russian and Spanish

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Aspect across heritage languages

- Heritage Spanish - **affected in comprehension and production** (Montrul, 2002, 2009)
- Heritage Russian - **affected in comprehension and production** (Laleko, 2010; Polinsky, 2008)
- Heritage Inuttitut - **intact in comprehension (no production data), except in lowest proficiency HS** (Sherkina-Lieber, 2011)

Aspect comprehension across heritage languages

- Heritage Spanish - **affected**
- Heritage Russian - **affected**
- Heritage Inuttitut - **intact (except lowest proficiency receptive bilinguals)**

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- Same dominant language - English
 - Same semantic distinctions
 - **Different ways to express them**

Spanish

Spanish

- Aspect is bundled with tense
- Aspectual distinctions only in the past tense: perfective (preterite) vs. imperfective (imperfect)

Ana conocio/conocia a Roberto.

'Ana met(for the first time)/knew Roberto'

Los Gonzalez vendian/vendieron la casa.

'The Gonzalez were selling/sold the house'

(examples from Montrul (2002))

Heritage Spanish

Montrul (2002):

- Spanish HS - especially simultaneous bilinguals
 - differ from fluent speakers in interpretation of aspectual forms
- Especially difficult - clash between the lexical aspect and the aspectual properties of the past tense morpheme: stative verbs in the preterite and punctual verbs in the imperfect
- One of the conditions - habitual vs. single event.

Marcelo **robaba/robo** en el autobus.

'Marcelo would rob/robbed in the bus'

Russian

Russian

- Aspect is separate from tense, exists in all verbal forms
- Perfective vs. imperfective
- Most verbs without aspect-affecting affixes are imperfective; a handful of achievements are perfective (*kupit'* 'buy', *dat'* 'give', *sest'* 'sit down', etc.)
- Change to perfective is induced by any of a number of prefixes and one suffix (the semelfactive *-nu-*)
- Change to imperfective is induced by the imperfective suffix

Russian

IMPF: pisat' 'write'

PERF: za-pisat' 'write down'

pere-pisat' 're-write'

o-pisat' 'describe'

IMPF: za-pis-yva-t' '(be) write(ing) down'

pere-pis-yva-t' '(be) re-write(ing)'

o-pis-yva-t' '(be) describe(ing)'

Russian

- Prefixes are not true aspectual markers (Filip, 1999)
 - supply non-aspectual meaning
 - apply to verbs that are already perfective, e.g. dat' 'give' - ot-dat' 'give away', pere-dat' 'pass', raz-dat' 'distribute', s-dat' 'hand in'
- Even the imperfective suffix may attach to a verb that is already imperfective - the meaning is then pluractional/frequentative
e.g. *pisal* 'he wrote.IMPF' - *pis-yva-l*

Heritage Russian

- Low proficiency HS perform at chance when need to select a verb with an appropriate aspectual value (Polinsky, 2008)
- High proficiency HS reduce the range of meanings for imperfective - exclude meanings that can also be expressed by the perfective, such as general factual, and shifting from a privative opposition with perfective as marked to an equipollent opposition (Laleko, 2010)

Inuttitut

Inuttitut

- Dialect of Inuktitut, spoken in Labrador; Eskimo-Aleut
- Lexical aspect (Vendlerian): without any tense or aspect markers, achievements are interpreted as immediate past; states and activities, as a single eventuality taking place at the moment of speech. (there are probably no accomplishments)

achievement

Tiki-juk.

arrive-part.3s

'S/he (just)
arrived'

state

Kuviasu-juk

happy-part.3s

'S/he is happy'

activity

Nigi-juk

eat-part.3s

'S/he is eating'

Inuttitut

- Numerous aspectual meanings expressed by suffixes (separate from tense, agreement, etc); no umbrella perfective-imperfective distinction between the suffixes
- Two examples: pluractional/habitual -*Katta*- and ingressive -*liC*- (other suffixes include prospective, terminative, perfect, etc.)

Ingressive -*liC*-

- Meaning: “begin X and be X-ing”; introduces an initial boundary
- Termed ingressive by Swift (2004)
- Combines with all lexical aspectual classes;
with states - a recent change of state;
with activities - a recent onset of activity;
with achievements - progressive (“slow motion” or a punctual even about to happen)

Ingressive -/iC-

State

Kuviasu-juk

Kuviasu-lit-tuk

happy-part.3s

happy-ingr-part.3s

'S/he is happy'

'S/he is happy now'

(but was unhappy before)

Achievement

Ani-juk

Ani-lit-tuk

go.out-part.3s

go.out-ingr-part.3s

'He (just) went out'

'He is going out'

Pluractional -Katta-

- Meaning: the eventuality occurs many times.
- Combines with all aspectual classes.

Anguti-nga aulla-mmat, Mary pingiga-juk.

man-abs.3s.poss leave-caus.3s.nr Mary worry-part.3s

'Because her husband is away, Mary is worrying'

Anguti-nga aulla-**Katta**-mmat, Mary pingiga-**Katta**-juk.

man-abs.3s.poss leave-pluract-caus.3s.nr Mary worry-pluract-part.3s

'Every time her husband goes away, Mary worries'

Sherkina-Lieber (2011)

- 20 heritage receptive bilinguals
 - 17 high comprehension proficiency RBs (HRBs); reported understanding of 70-90% of the input and minimal speaking abilities
 - 3 low comprehension proficiency RBs (LRBs); reported understanding of 25% of the input and no speaking abilities
- 8 fluent Inuttitut-English bilinguals

Task: forced choice between two interpretations

progressive vs. immediate past

Tommy kata-lit-tuk napâttu-ming

Tommy fall-ingr.-3s.part tree-from

'Tommy is falling from a tree'

**Is Tommy still falling from the
tree, or has he already fallen?**

pluractional vs. single eventuality

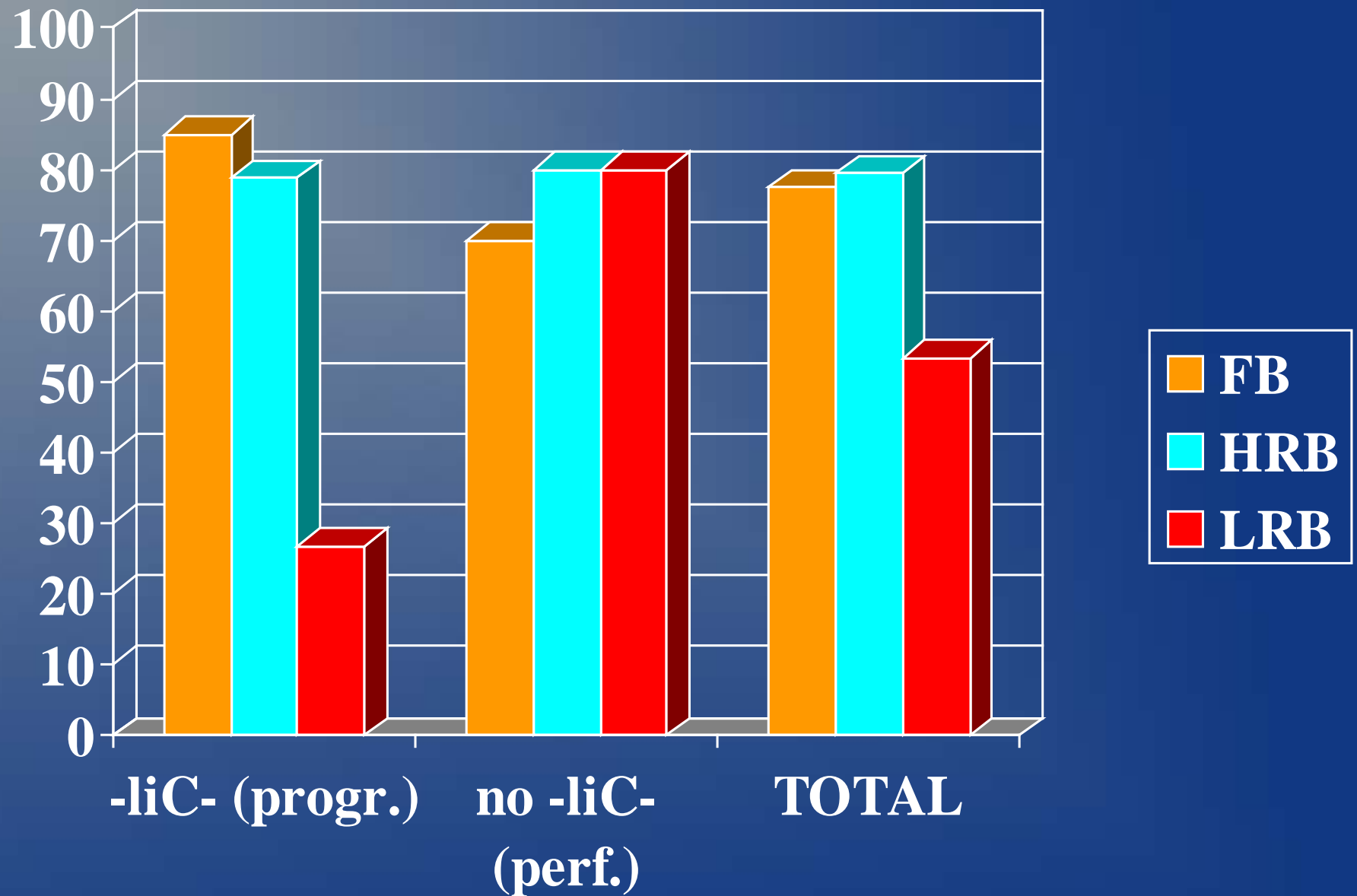
Mary iga-Katta-juk illaagusi-mik.

Mary cook-pluract-3s porcupine-MIK

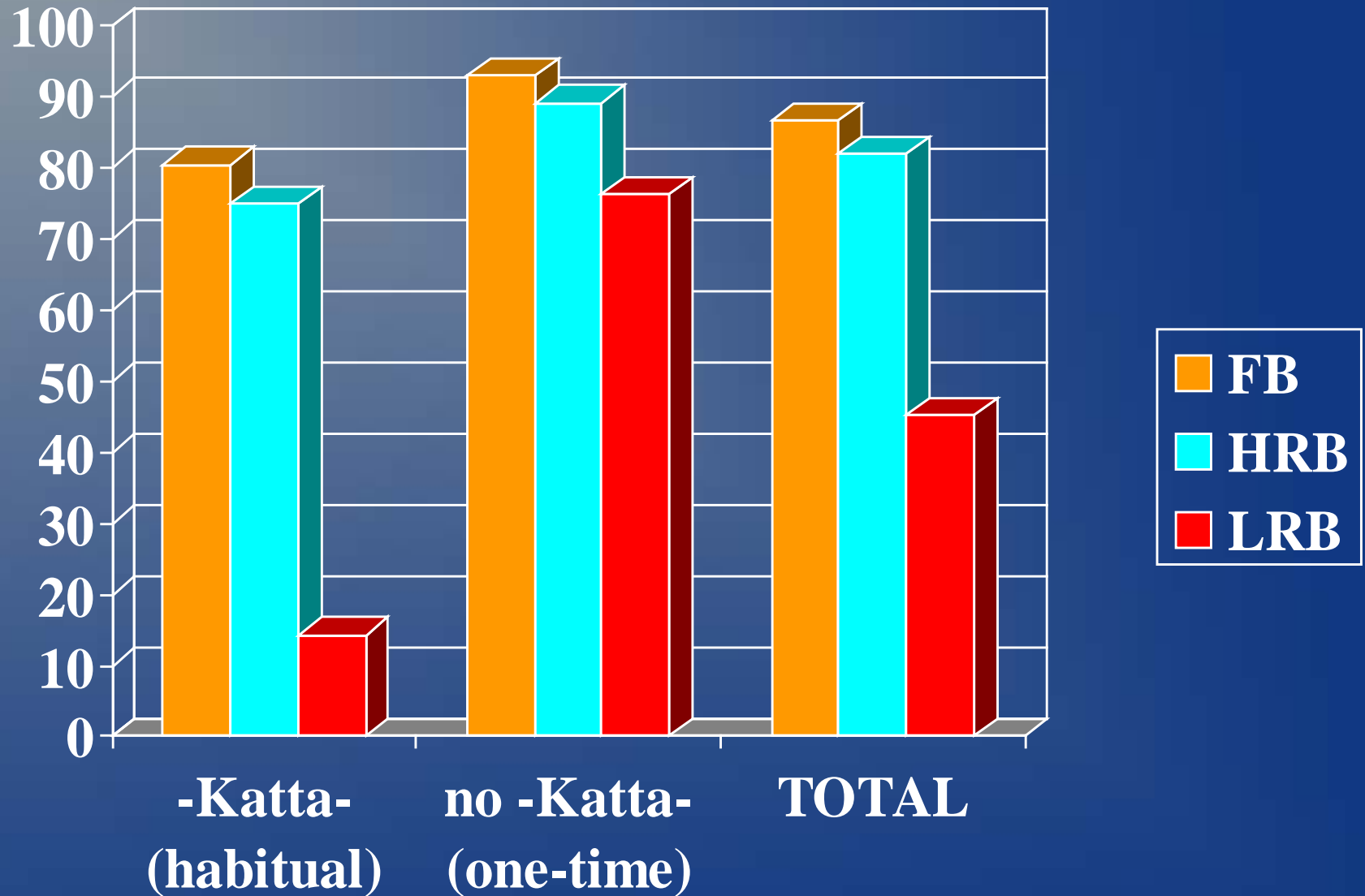
'Mary cooks porcupine'

**Is Mary cooking porcupine meat
now, or does she usually cook
porcupine meat?**

Results: *-liC-*



Results: *-Katta-*



Proficiency is not the reason

- Heritage Inuttitut speakers had lower proficiency than heritage speakers in the other studies cited
- The difference is between the languages, not the participants

Complexity

Complexity

- A category with the lowest complexity - one-to-one correspondence between the form and the meaning
- **Semantic complexity:** how many features does a morpheme encode?
- **Formal complexity:** how is a given meaning expressed?

Complexity in L1 acquisition

Higher semantic and/or formal complexity of a category is associated with later acquisition
(Brown, 1973; Johnston & Slobin, 1973; Slobin, 1973, a.o.)

Pluractional: semantic complexity

- Meaning: “happens many times”
expressed by:
- Spanish - imperfect tense suffix
- Russian - no affixes or imperfective suffix (-yva-/-iva-/-va-/-a-)
- Inuttitut - pluractional suffix -*Katta*-

Pluractional: semantic complexity

...that encode, besides aspect:

- Spanish - imperfect tense suffix - **past tense**
- Russian - no affixes or imperfective suffix (-yva-/-iva-/-va-/-a-) - **n/a**
- Inuttitut - pluractional suffix -*Katta*- - **n/a**

Pluractional: semantic complexity

...that can also be interpreted as:

- Spanish - imperfect tense suffix - **habitual, progressive, etc.**
- Russian - no affixes or imperfective suffix (-yva-/-iva-/-va-/-a-) - **habitual; progressive; annulled result; even a single event, etc.**
- Inuttitut - pluractional suffix -*Katta*- - **habitual**

Pluractional: formal complexity

- Spanish - imperfect tense suffix - **has allomorphs, depends on verb types**
- Russian - no affixes or imperfective suffix (-yva-/-iva-/-va-/-a-) - **simple imperfectives have no aspect-affecting affixes; the suffix for secondary imperfectives has several allomorphs, idiosyncratic, except that the choice between -yva-/-iva- is phonologically conditioned**
- Inuttitut - pluractional suffix -*Katta*- - **no allomorphy**

Progressive with achievement verbs

Meaning: “punctual event in progress” or
“punctual event about to happen”

- Spanish - imperfect tense suffix
- Russian - imperfective suffix (-yva-/-iva-/-va-/-a-)
- Inuttitut - suffix -liC-

Progressive with achievement verbs

...that encodes, besides aspect

- Spanish - imperfect - **past tense**
- Russian - imperfective suffix (-yva-/-iva-/-va-/-a-) - **n/a**
- Inuttitut - suffix -liC- - **n/a**

Progressive with achievement verbs

...that can also be interpreted as

- Spanish - imperfect - pluractional, habitual, etc.
- Russian - imperfective suffix (-yva-/-iva-/-va-/-a-) - pluractional; habitual; annulled result; even a single event, etc.
- Inuttitut - suffix -liC- - only with different verb types, namely atelic: activity or state that started recently

Progressive with achievement verbs: formal complexity

- Spanish - imperfect - **has allomorphs, depends on verb types**
- Russian - no affixes or imperfective suffix (-yva-/-iva-/-va-/-a-) - **several allomorphs, idiosyncratic, except that the choice between -yva-/-iva- is phonologically conditioned**
- Inuttitut - suffix -liC- - **allomorphy is phonologically conditioned: the last consonant undergoes total assimilation to the first consonant of the next morpheme**

- Morphemes that express aspectual meaning (pluractional and progressive) have lower semantic and formal complexity in Inuttitut than in Russian and Spanish

Inuttitut - almost one form-one meaning

Russian and Spanish - many forms-many meanings

Experimental results suggest:

- In heritage languages, categories with higher semantic and formal complexity are more likely to diverge from the baseline
- On the other hand, categories with lower complexity are more likely to be fully acquired and retained

Complexity, acquisition and attrition

- Better chances for acquisition of morphemes can be explained by earlier acquisition of low-complexity morphemes
- However, at least in sequential bilinguals for whom the HL was the L1, aspectual distinctions in Russian and Spanish are acquired early, before the school age (which is when L2 typically starts to take over in HS)
- **Therefore, higher-complexity morphemes are also more vulnerable to attrition**
- **Higher-complexity morphemes are also vulnerable in a weaker language in 2L1**

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