First and Second Language Use of Case, Aspect, and Tense in Finnish and English

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First and Second Language Use of Case, Aspect, and Tense in Finnish and English

Torin Kelley

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

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Important to understanding bilingualism and second language (L2) learning are L2 morphological processing and acquisition of tense and aspect. This study used narrative elicitation to examine the expression of boundedness and definiteness in Finnish and English by first language (L1) Finnish speakers who speak English as an L2 and L1 English speakers who speak Finnish as an L2. In Finnish, boundedness and definiteness were largely portrayed by using partitive and accusative cases, though tense and aspect conjugation also played a role. In English, boundedness was largely conveyed through tense and aspect conjugation and definiteness through article usage. Both L1 speaker groups appeared to demonstrate first language transfer as well as form following meaning in acquisition, meaning that a given form will be acquired first in contexts where the meaning of the form is inherent. There was also evidence pointing to avoidance by L2 speakers. Notably, varying interpretations of what the images used portrayed also seemed to play a role in some of the differences in responses across groups. The narrative elicitation methodology was useful in producing meaningful and easily comparable results.

Keywords: boundedness, definiteness, Finnish, partitive
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Introduction

In just about any introduction to linguistics course, you learn that bilingualism is far from the exception and that speaking a second language (L2) is the norm for many around the world. This alone hints at the importance of understanding how individuals process two languages. In many places, individuals find it necessary or are encouraged to learn a more widely spoken or global language. Finland is one such country where learning English as a second language is prevalent and growing (Taavitsainen & Pahta, 2003). This presents strong motivation to understanding L2 acquisition of English by Finns. In the other direction, researchers are continually acknowledging the need for more language diversity in acquisition research (Evans & Levinston, 2009; Stoll & Bickle, 2013). Because of its differences from English (Kiparsky, 1998), exploration of learner Finnish has the potential to expand understanding of bilingual acquisition. A cross-comparison of L1 and L2 English and L1 and L2 Finnish would therefore provide insight into how speakers process and use features of both languages.

Important to understanding bilingualism and L2 learning are L2 morphological processing and acquisition of tense and aspect (Clahsen, 2010; Salaberry & Shirai, 2002). Because the partitive case is unique in Finnish (Kiparsky, 1998), and it addresses both of these subfields, studying the use of the partitive case can provide valuable insights to the field. Specifically, the partitive case is expressed through the addition of an inflectional case ending and addresses the aspectual question of boundedness and definiteness.

Therefore, the primary purpose of this thesis is to explore boundedness and definiteness in the English and Finnish of L1 and L2 speakers of Finnish and English. In particular, this study is concerned with how L1 and L2 speakers use the partitive case in Finnish, as well as what
constructions they use in the same situations in English. The primary research questions are the following:

(1) How do L1 English and Finnish speakers convey bounded versus unbounded action in Finnish and English? What types of syntactic constructions are used by L1 or L2 speakers of the language?

(2) How do L1 English and Finnish speakers convey boundedness in Finnish and English when describing inherently unbounded images? What types of syntactic constructions are used by L1 or L2 speakers of the language?

(3) How do L1 English and Finnish speakers convey definiteness in Finnish and English when describing an inherently bounded image? What types of syntactic constructions are used by L1 or L2 speakers of the language?

To explore these questions, L1 English and L1 Finnish speakers were asked to describe images meant to elicit responses that explore boundedness and definiteness in both English and Finnish in an open response narrative elicitation format.

**Literature Review**

In Finnish, boundedness and definiteness are largely expressed in the choice between the accusative and the partitive cases for the object of the sentence, though there are other ways to express this as well (Kiparsky, 1998). In both English and Finnish, the terms “boundedness” and “resultativity” have been used interchangeably (Declerck, 1979; Kiparsky 1998), though some have argued that there is a distinction between the two (Kiparsky, 1998). For the purposes of this paper, I favor the term boundedness over the term resultativity. Potts (1965), one of many who have attempted to define boundedness, said,
Actions which have a limit can be characterized . . . by not being ends or goals themselves but by being done for the sake of a goal not yet realized during the course of the action. Actions which lack limits, by contrast, are themselves ends, and "the end belongs in them” (p. 65).

Dahl (1975) more succinctly summarized, “a process is bounded if it has a definite endstate” (p. 453). For example, “I searched for the bear” or “I am eating a sandwich” are unbounded because the endstate of the action is not specified. On the other hand, “I got the bear” or “I ate the sandwich” have a clearly defined endstate and are therefore bounded.

Definiteness refers to the defined or specific state of a noun or noun phrase. Chesterman (2005) explained this saying, “Definiteness can be analysed as a matrix of three binary features: locatability in a shared set (having to do with familiarity), inclusiveness (quantity) and extensivity (abstractness and generality)” (p. 2). For example, you could give me “the letter on the table,” a specific object known to both the giver and receiver, or you could give me “a letter” or “letters” of unspecified quality or quantity. Consistent with these definitions, boundedness and definiteness are expressed with similar (e.g., tense conjugation, passivity, perfectivity, inherent meaning) and different (e.g., case usage, article usage) strategies in Finnish and English (Chesterman, 2005; Kiparsky, 1998).

L2 Morphosyntactic Processing

As case inflection plays an essential role in the expression of Finnish boundedness and definiteness, it is important to understand how L2 learners acquire systems of morphosyntactic processing. Morphosyntax deals with inflectional morphemes and their functions (Clahsen, 2010). The term “processing” has been interchangeable with terms like strategies and behavior in past research (Latif, 2019). Therefore, L2 morphosyntactic processing investigates the strategies
and behaviors L2 speakers apply in their use of inflectional morphemes. Research on morphosyntactic processing focused on the partitive case in Finnish is very limited.

Research that addresses L2 morphosyntax production is growing but is still incomplete. Most of the research overwhelmingly relies on studies that involve L2 learners of English including much of the most recent research in the field (e.g., Guo & Ellis, 2021; Requena & Berry, 2021). As English case and subject verb agreement systems are impoverished, there is much to be explored. That is not to say all research is done on L2 English learners; however, even studies that don’t focus on English tend to focus on Germanic or Romance languages and are limited in diversity (Thomas, 2021). Research that involves non-Indo-European languages (such as Finnish) have a significant role to play in moving the field forward.

Since a claim by Clahsen et al. (2010) over a decade ago that the field of morphosyntactic processing was overly reliant on “purely production specific” research, much of what has been done recently in the field has turned toward comprehension processing. These studies rely on the advancement of methods and techniques such as priming (e.g. Ciaccio & Jacob, 2019), eye tracking (Latif, 2019), lexical decision tasks (e.g. Silva, 2009), and Event Related Potential (ERP) studies (e.g. Carrasco-Ortíz et al., 2017; Van Hell & Tokowicz, 2010). These methods have done a lot to advance the field. They are easily replicable and have high levels of explanatory power (Clahsen et al., 2010). They are also easy to relate to neurological functioning (Silva, 2009; Van Hell & Tokowicz, 2010). Some hypotheses that have sprung from this research include the idea that L2 learners might rely on the same processing system as their L1 (Clahsen et al., 2010), they might rely more on declarative memory than L1 speakers (Ullman, 2005), or they may have limited cognitive resources allotted to L2 processing and memory (e.g., McDonald, 2006). Despite the benefits of these comprehension-based research methods, it is still
important to focus on production to better understand how L2 speakers actually use L2 morphology.

Researchers believe that multiple factors can influence L2 morphosyntactic production. For example, Lafit (2019) demonstrated that the type and quality of input that a learner is exposed to influences their L2 learning. The current study included only surface measurements of input and therefore has little to say on the matter.

Avoidance also appears to play a role (Clahsen et al., 2010). Schachter (1974), was one of the first, and probably the most prominent, linguist to bring attention to the need to not only look at L2 forms, but the avoidance of forms by L2 speakers. Avoidance is different from negative transfer because avoidance implies that the speaker is aware and has knowledge of a form but chooses not to use it (Dagut & Laufer, 1985). Laufer and Eliasson (1993) later pointed to the following three factors that could lead to avoidance: cross-linguistic differences, cross-linguistic similarities, and the intrinsic complexity of the avoided L2 feature. More recent research has suggested that avoidance is facilitated by the increased optionality of the avoided form (Clahsen et al., 2010). Though optionality is mentioned, no research was found detailing the role it played. Because the current study is open response and compares L1 and L2 speakers’ English and Finnish directly, evidence pointing to such avoidance should be easily recognizable if in indeed plays a role because we can see how a speaker approaches the image in both languages. This gives us the opportunity to observe what they avoid in one language, but not in another.

Factors that Affect L2 Tense and Aspect Use

How L2 speakers acquire tense and aspect has become an important and focal question in linguistics (Salaberry & Shirai, 2002). Fuchs and Werner (2018) said,
The acquisition of tense and aspect [TA] has been identified as one of the biggest obstacles for language learners striving for the emulation of target-like patterns. TA systems likely pose such a challenge to learners because they differ typologically between languages and because learners not only have to master the target-like use of forms, but also adequate function-form mappings introducing yet another layer of complexity (p. 145).

Several theories have been proposed to explain how and why L2 speakers use certain morphological constructions. Three of these will be examined in this study.

**L1 Transfer**

One of the most ubiquitous findings in the field of L2 acquisition is that L1 transfer affects L2 morphological production. Transfer happens when an aspect of one language appears to influence how the second language is processed or produced. That transfer exists and has a role in language acquisition and processing is widely agreed upon (e.g., Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008; Odlin, 1989; Ringbom, 1987). Evidence of language transfer has been found in phonology (Pallier, 2001), verb recognition (Basnight-Brown, 2007), and most importantly for this study, noun inflection (Portin, 2008) and tense and aspect marking (Izquierdo, 2008). However, there is a debate as to the extent of the role it plays, and many have argued that it does not provide a complete explanation (Clahsen et al., 2010). It is also unclear what exactly is happening and what the psychological and neurological phenomena behind transfer actually is. For the purposes of the current study, transfer is seen as a correlation between a phenomena that appears in one language and also appears in another that seems to differentiate a speaker from the L1 speakers of a language. The current research study will also explore the extent to which transfer plays a role in both English and Finnish L2 morphological production. Unlike many previous studies,
however, this study examines what kind of constructions the same speakers use in both their L1 and L2—and thus provides a greater understanding of how transfer applies to a specific individual.

**Aspect Hypothesis**

Another important theory of how L2 morphosyntax is acquired may be how form and meaning relate to how and how quickly particular aspects of tense and aspect are acquired. Though a complex and expansive field, at the center of the discussion is the disputed aspect hypothesis, proposed by Andersen (1989) which relies on Vendler’s (1957) classification of verbal predicates into four semantic types: states (*be, have*), activities (*walk, run*), accomplishments (*run a mile, build a bridge*), and achievements (*reach the peak, notice something*). The aspect hypothesis suggests a correlation between order of acquisition and these semantic types (e.g., perfective/past marking is initially restricted to marking achievements and accomplishments). In other words, form follows meaning.

**Prototype Hypothesis**

Though there has much research supporting the aspect hypothesis, there has also been research questioning its universality (e.g., Fuchs & Werner, 2018) which led Salaberry & Shirai (2002) to state,

A simple form-meaning correlation is only part of the larger picture conditioned by various factors — L1 transfer, input data and its processing, formation of prototypes, discourse functions, instructional variables, cognitive/universal constraints, and perhaps many more (p. 4).

From there, different theories have been proposed. Notably, among these theories is the prototype hypothesis of tense and aspect acquisition (Shirai, 2002). Like other prototype
theories, it suggests that the most prototypical type of tense and aspect are the first produced by language learners. For example, achievements are the most prototypical past and action-in-progress is most prototypical progressive and therefore learners are most likely to first use past tense and progressive actions for these semantic types respectively (Shirai, 2002). Based on these hypotheses, one would expect that the partitive would be first acquired in contexts of inherent unbounded meaning. This idea will be explored later in the discussion.

**The Partitive Case**

The current study examines these three hypotheses by examining how tense and aspect are used to define boundedness and definiteness in English and Finnish. At the heart of these constructions in Finnish is the partitive case. The partitive case is one of the most frequently used cases in Finnish today. The partitive has two main uses. First, it is used to show boundedness in a verb phrase. Take the following from Kiparsky (1998) as an example:

(1)  
\[ \text{Ammu-} i-n \quad \text{karhu-a} \]
\[ \text{shoot- Pst-1S} \quad \text{bear- Part} \]
\[ \text{‘I shot at the bear’} \]

And

(2)  
\[ \text{Ammu-} i-n \quad \text{karhu-n} \]
\[ \text{Shoot- Pst-1S} \quad \text{Bear- Acc} \]
\[ \text{‘I shot the bear’} \]

In the first part of this example, the partitive in Finnish and the preposition in English are used to show that the result is unbounded, that the result of the action is either unknown or unimportant or that it is incomplete. The second part of this example utilizes the Finnish accusative case and shows that the action has been completed and the result is known.
The second primary use of the partitive case is to signal an indefinite quality of the noun (Huumo, 2013; Kiparsky 1998). This happens when the verb is inherently bounded. For example, take the following examples with the verb ‘saada,’ to give.

(3) Saa-n karhu-j-a
    get-1S bear-Pl-Part
    ‘I will get bears’

And

(4) Saa-n karhu-t
    Get-1S bear-PlAcc
    ‘I will get the bears’

In this example, the verb ‘saada’ is inherently bounded, and thus would generally be paired with the accusative case. Because the boundedness of the sentence is already understood, when the plural partitive is used, it is describing the indefiniteness of the object (i.e., ‘I will get bears’, not ‘I will get the bears’).

The partitive goes beyond these two purposes in its use. It is also used after number or quantity expressions, negative sentences (with some exceptions), and in combination with a handful of verbs that force the use of the partitive case. This includes unbounded continuous actions like kissing (suudella) or swinging back and forth (heiluttaa) (Kiparsky 1998; Spoelman, 2011).

Determining the use of the partitive can be thought of as a hierarchy (Huumo, 2013). At the top of the hierarchy is negation. Negation almost always requires the partitive case because it is inherently unbounded. Next in the hierarchy is aspectual boundedness followed by definiteness. Because aspectual boundedness precedes definiteness in the hierarchy, the sentence must be bounded before the use of the partitive can imply indefiniteness (Huumo, 2013). Examining this hierarchy and how it is acquired in Finnish will help in understanding how
universal the Aspect Hypothesis or the Prototype Theory of aspect are. This study did not examine how learners acquired negation and the partitive because of the impracticality and difficulty of depicting negation in an image. It was also deemed appropriate to not use negation since images were included that showed inherently unbounded actions which are also at the top of the hierarchy.

**L2 Production and Processing of the Finnish Partitive Case**

Many of the Finnish studies that focus on the partitive case and morphological processing examine the effects of transfer. These studies have seen evidence of transfer in both production (Ivaska & Siitonen, 2017; Jantunen, 2013; Spoelman, 2013) and in processing (Vainio et al., 2014). Studies that consider production have typically pulled from language learner corpora while studies focusing on processing have typically utilized a lexical decision task. Based on this lexical decision task, it was suggested that Finnish learners whose L1 is a language that uses little inflection process inflection (including the partitive) differently than do L1 speakers and other Finnish learners whose L1 uses a significant amount of inflection. More specifically, their findings suggest that learners with a non-inflectional L1 processed inflected words as a single unit where those with an inflectional L1 processed inflected words by breaking them down into the root and the affix (Vainio et al., 2014). No known studies have examined how L1 English speakers learn the partitive case in Finnish.

As English is a language that does not rely heavily on inflection, it may be the case that L1 English speakers would process the partitive case as a single unit. Relatedly, multiple corpus studies have shown that the partitive case, among other features of Finnish, is an area where L2 Finnish learners struggle. These same corpus studies have suggested that some of these “misuses” of the partitive can be explained by the learners’ L1 (Ivaska & Siitonen, 2017;
Spoelman, 2011). All studies agreed that transfer had a significant role to play. However, all these articles depended on a right/wrong or overuse/underuse dynamic. While this is a useful strategy, those dynamics do not fully convey all of the choices that are made by the language speaker. A more qualitative description of the data might lead to more complete understanding of what kinds of strategies learners use when acquiring a feature such as the partitive case. In addition, previous studies that have more specifically examined language production did not have language data where the contexts or specific language was comparable across many speakers. These studies were using corpora where L2 speakers were responding to a variety of different prompts in a variety of different contexts. They focused on finding certain words or structures rather than contexts. Providing a consistent context across several speakers might give us more comparable responses and highlight style choices to a greater degree.

Although a small number of studies have examined how L2 speakers use the Finnish partitive case, no known studies have examined how highly proficient L1 English speakers of Finnish use this case. In addition, no known studies have examined how Finnish speakers maneuver similar constructions when speaking English. This is interesting considering the high degree of English usage in Finland (Taavitsainen & Pahta, 2003). Also, most research focuses on only the L2 of participants. Observing L1 and L2 use of language for both languages in a singular, easily comparable context could allow us to better understand the nature of bilingualism. While some researchers have used similar methodologies (e.g., Pavlenko & Driagina, 2007), no known morphological studies focused on tense and aspect address both the L1 and L2 of both groups. Such methods have the potential to give a more complete picture of acquisition and processing of L2 and bilingual speakers. Such findings have implications not
only for teaching Finnish to L1 English speakers and vice versa, but also adds to our understanding of how bilingualism affects language processing in both the L1 and L2.

**English Strategies for Boundedness and Definiteness**

Boundedness can be expressed in many ways in English. As it is an aspectual distinction, it is no surprise that a primary method of communicating boundedness is through aspectual “conjugation” (e.g., progressivity: go vs. am going; perfectivity: eat vs. have eaten, etc.). However, changes in boundedness can also be shown through changes in tense, article usage, the use of prepositional phrases, verb choice, and adjective choice (Declerck, 1979; Paradis, 2001). For example, instead of saying “the family finished eating their meal and are talking” someone might express the same aspect by saying “the family are talking around their finished meal.”

Definiteness is expressed primarily in English through the use of articles (Chesterman, 2005). ‘Give me the book that is on the shelf’ is definite while ‘could you hand me some grapes’ is indefinite. ‘The book’ is referring to a specific book known to both the speaker and the addressee, the grapes however are not defined, and any grapes ‘handed’ could reasonably fit the request of the indefinite qualifier ‘some’.

**Current Study**

The current study examines L1 and L2 expression of boundedness and definiteness with emphasis on the partitive case in Finnish, by comparing L1 and L2 language in both Finnish and English. In the comparison, various factors are explored including avoidance and its significance, the form-meaning relationship in acquisition implied in the Aspect Hypothesis and Prototype theory, and the role that transfer plays in L2 expression.

**Methods**
To determine how L1 Finnish and L1 English speakers express boundedness and definiteness in both of these languages, participants were asked to describe pictures that would elicit these constructions in both English and Finnish. The specific design of the study is discussed below.

Participants

The participants for this study were 15 Americans and 15 Finns for a total of 30 participants. The Americans were all L1 English speakers and spoke Finnish as a second language. The Americans gave themselves an average of 6.47 when asked to ‘Please rate your language ability in Finnish on a scale from 1 “I don’t know this language at all” to 10 “I am a native speaker of the language.”’ The Finns all spoke English as a second language and gave themselves an average score of 8.2 on the same scale when answering the same question about English. All of the Americans learned Finnish while serving a service mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). These missions lasted from 14 to 24 months. Four Americans spoke a third language and only one of those spoke a fourth. Two spoke German (one of these also speaking Arabic), one spoke French, and one spoke Spanish. All reported Finnish as their second most proficient language. Eleven of the Finns also reported having served an LDS mission with six of them having gone to an English-speaking country (either the US or the UK). The remaining Finns learned English either through the school system, through personal interest, through interactions with English speakers, or combinations of these sources. All but one Finn reported at least some proficiency in a third language with many speaking four and one person reporting at least some knowledge in eight languages. Swedish was by far the most common third language followed by German then Spanish and Russian. One Finn reported Swedish as their second most proficient language after Finnish while the rest reported English as their
second most proficient language, even the ones who had reported serving missions in other non-English speaking countries.

Americans reported that they spent an average of 16.8 percent of their total time speaking in Finnish, 7.73 percent of the time they spent reading, reading in Finnish, and 26.53 percent of the time they spent writing, writing in Finnish. Finns reported spending 31.33 percent of the time they spent speaking, speaking in English, 36.47 percent of the time they spent reading, reading in English, and 49.87 percent of the time they spent writing, writing in English. Most Finns were living in Finland with two in the US and one in the UK and all Americans were living in the US at the time of the survey. All American participants were recruited via Facebook, email, or through an advertisement in a college Finnish course. All Finns were recruited via Facebook, email, or word of mouth. All participants who completed the survey were compensated with a $10 Amazon gift card.

Materials

After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Brigham Young University, participants were invited to complete a Qualtrics survey (see Appendix 1). Anyone who did not meet the qualifications of speaking both English and Finnish were not allowed to continue. Those who agreed to participate first filled out a short demographic portion of the survey. This questionnaire asked questions such as the participant's age, first and second language experience, where the participant is from, and other demographic information.

The demographic portion was followed by 12 open response questions. Six images (see Figures 1-6) were drawn depicting events that are intended to address boundedness or definiteness. The first two images (Figures 1&2) included in the survey were intended to help answer research question 1 (RQ1). For these images, the participants needed to make a
judgement on the question of boundedness. Both images depict ongoing actions—one of eating a meal and the other of writing a letter. Because the action in both images is yet incomplete, it is possible to use the partitive case to express the unbounded nature of the action. The next pair of images (see Figures 3-4) were chosen to address research question 2 (RQ2) and elicited the partitive case by showing an inherently unbounded continuous action. Verbs in this category are different from the previous pair because they require the partitive case. In Finnish, when you finish dinner or writing a letter, you could use the accusative case to express the action. These images show someone walking a dog and a couple kissing. In Finnish, you would pair these actions with the accusative case even if the action has been completed. The last pair of images (Figures 5-6) were chosen to address research question 3 (RQ3) and attempted to elicit verbs that are inherently bounded. If you give (antaa) something, you are sure the action is received. If it has not been received, then it hasn’t been given, it has only been offered. When such a verb is used, using the plural partitive case for the direct object indicates its indefiniteness. These images depict a man delivering mail and a salesman handing over the keys to a recently bought car.

Participants were asked to describe these pictures using 2-4 complete sentences in English first and then in Finnish. The question in the English section read “Please describe the image above in 2-4 complete sentences in English.” And in Finnish, “Kuvaile yllä olevaa kuvaa 2–4 täydellä lauseella suomeksi.” Previous research has used a similar methodology, since it attempts to elicit natural speech by having participants react to pictures, videos, etc. (e.g., Pavlenko, 2008). Typically, in these studies, spoken responses are elicited. However, due to restrictions put in place during the COVID-19 lockdowns, written responses were elicited rather than spoken. Open-ended responses were chosen to avoid influencing participants’ responses.
American participants took an average of 25 minutes to complete the survey while Finnish participants took an average of 22 minutes.

**Data Analysis**

All responses were analyzed and coded. Responses in Finnish were coded for the use of the partitive and accusative cases as well as for verb tense and aspect used. Take for example the following response from a participant:

“Nainen ulkoiluttaa koiraansa.”
(A woman takes out her dog)
Tense: Present
Aspect: Ø
DO Case: Partitive

After data collection, a sample of the English responses were analyzed, and it was determined that the most salient strategies for expressing boundedness and definiteness in the responses were tense, aspect, and article usage, meaning responses to most images relied on one or more of these. These elements were coded for every image. Some images required more specific coding. For example, in the picture of a woman walking a dog, it was noted whether the word “dog” was used as a direct object or in another morphological construction for both English and Finnish.

For example:

“A woman is walking her dog in the park along a worn trail.”
Tense: Present
Aspect: Progressive
DO Article: her
DO dog: yes

Or

“A woman is on a walk with her dog”
Tense: Present
Aspect: Ø
DO Article: her
DO dog: no
After the coding was completed, a second coder (an L1 English speaker who speaks Finnish as an L2) reviewed the coding of the Finnish responses and corrected any mistakes. The second coder speaks Finnish with greater proficiency than the author and has immersive experience in the language. The two coders then met to review the coding together and any discrepancies were discussed and decided on. Only three instances of the use of the partitive were missed by the first coder.

The quantitative analysis consisted of counting how often the partitive case, as well as different tense and aspect markers were used. In English, the frequency of different tenses, aspects and articles were noted. The qualitative analysis consisted of looking at where and when the participant chose to use the partitive case and other related strategies in Finnish. The same was done in with the English responses and English strategies. English and Finnish responses were then compared within L1 language groups and then across L1 language groups.

Results

In English, Americans gave an average response of 26.79 words per question while Finns gave an average response of 21.74 words per question. In Finnish, Americans gave an average response of 14.61 words per question and Finns gave an average response of 14.66 words per question. Despite being more likely to say more in one’s L1, the difference in the number of words across Finnish and English is likely due to the fact that Finnish is an agglutinating language, and a skilled speaker can say more with fewer words.

In the Finnish responses, the average overall use of the partitive for L1 English speakers was 0.89 times per question. The average use of the partitive for L1 Finnish speakers was slightly higher at 1.02 times per question. A more specific analysis of the use of the partitive was done on each specific question.
RQ1: Bounded and Unbounded Action: Family Dinner and Writing a Letter

The current study first examined RQ1: How do L1 English and Finnish speakers convey bounded versus unbounded action in Finnish and English? What types of syntactic constructions are used by L1 or L2 speakers of the language? The two images used to answer this research question depicted actions which could reasonably be interpreted as ongoing actions; however, neither of the actions in the images necessarily had to be interpreted that way. Using these two images allowed for speakers to use different strategies for expressing boundedness. They also allowed for different strategies (e.g., object case choice, tense, adjective use) of L1 and L2 speakers to be explored.

In the first image (Figure 1), a family is eating dinner with plates that still have food on them. The meal is ongoing and thus if the respondent wants to mention that the family is eating dinner, they would likely do it using the partitive case. For this image, tense, aspect, and use of the partitive for the direct object of ‘syöda’ (to eat) or related verbs were noted in the Finnish responses. In the English responses, tense, aspect, and article usage before the direct object of eating were recorded.
The second image (Figure 2) shows a series of four panels depicting various stages of the letter writing process. The first three panels show a hand and a piece of paper with increasingly more and more writing on it. The final panel shows an addressed envelope, suggesting that the writing process is over. This image gives the respondents the chance to distinguish between the process and completion in their description. For this image, tense, aspect, and use of the partitive for the direct object of ‘kirjoittaa’ (to write) and related verbs were noted in the Finnish responses. In the English responses, tense, aspect, and article usage were all noted. If the participant made any changes in any of these areas between describing the first three panels and describing the last panel, the changes were documented.
Finnish Responses: L1 Finnish speakers used the partitive seven out of 15 times (or 47% of the time) and only one used a progressive construction. The remaining Finns used a variety of strategies to explain what was going on that did not use either a direct object in the partitive case or a progressive structure. They instead described the picture in a different way, like saying ‘Perhe on kokoontunut ruokailemaan’ (A family has gathered to eat) or as illustrated in the example below:

(5) Näljä ihmis-tä istu-u ruokapöydä-ssä
    four people-PART sit-3P food table-INESS
    ‘Four people sit at the dinnertable.’

These responses included no indication of boundedness.

In Finnish, nine out of the 15 (60%) L1 English speakers used the partitive case to describe this image.
Three Americans (20%) used a progressive verb conjugation without using a partitive.

Of the remaining American participants, two (13%) used the simple present, but did not specify what the family was eating by adding a direct object.

The last respondent used the accusative case meaning that they either made a mistake or interpreted eating the meal as a completed action.

English Responses: When responding in English, a similar strategy was used by both Americans and Finns. Thirteen of the 15 (87%) Americans used a progressive construction to convey the ongoing nature of the scene and 11 of the 15 (73%) Finns did the same.

Interestingly, while there was a difference in the number of people who did not feel the need to explicitly express unboundedness in Finnish (3/15 (20%) of the Americans and 7/15 (47%) of the Finns), there was less of a difference in the number of people who did this in English (2/15 (13%) of the Americans and 4/15 (27%) of the Finns). This tentatively suggests that while Americans thought it equally important to express unboundedness in Finnish and English, the Finns thought it more important to express unboundedness in English than in
Finnish. This potentially suggests that Finns are succeeding at picking up on L1 English preferences for the expression of boundedness. The Americans, however, when speaking Finnish, were not using similar expressions of boundedness as the L1 Finnish speakers did.

There was no notable difference between the article use of Americans and Finns in English. Everyone used the article ‘a’ if the direct object was meal and did not use an article if dinner was the direct object. Results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Finn</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Explicit – Progressive</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explicit – Accusative</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nonexplicit</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Writing a Letter**

It is important to note that both the Finnish and the English responses of two Finns (13%) and the English response of one American (7%) were not included in the analysis because they did not write descriptions of the image but wrote more reflective responses that were not easily compared to the descriptive responses of the others. For example, one Finn responded ‘Writing longhand is a desired skill and it indicates the writer's ability to acquire and attain learned skills.’

**Finnish Responses:** In Finnish, 12 of the 13 (92%) Finns used the partitive to describe writing the letter in the first three panels.

(11) *Joku kirjoitta-a kirjet-tä*  
someone write-3S letter-PART  
‘Someone writes a letter’
and only one of the 13 used the accusative.

(12) *Henkilö kirjoitt-i kirjee-n*
    someone write-3S-PST letter-ACC
    ‘Someone wrote a letter’

It is important to note that the individual who used the accusative case also used past tense and spoke only of the whole process, not the beginning and the end separately. An additional two respondents (15%) did not address the end of the process, and thus only used the partitive. Of the remaining respondents who addressed both the beginning and the end of the process, two of the 10 (20%) switched to the accusative case. One of the two also dropped the progressive aspect.

(13) *Hän lait-ta se-n kirjekuore-en*
    3 place-3S it-ACC envelope-ILL
    ‘He places it into an envelope’

Five out of 10 (50%) changed and used one of two passive constructions,

(14) *Se laite-taan kirjekuore-en*
    it place-PASS envelope-ILL
    ‘It is placed into the envelope’

or,

(15) *Kuvassa on kirjekuori johon kirje on laite-ttu*
    picture-INESS be-3S envelope which letter be-3S place-PTCP
    ‘In the picture is an envelope in which the letter is placed’

The final three (30%) used the adjective ‘valmis’ (*ready*). None of the participants used the partitive case to address the final panel.

Only five of the 15 (33%) Americans began using the partitive case while describing the first image. All of these participants described the last panel as well. To do this, two used the adjective ‘valmis’, one switched to the accusative case, one used passive voice, and one simply stated that there was an envelope in the last panel.
Eight (53%) of the Americans began with the accusative case. Of these, three did not address the writing and the finishing separately. Of the five who did, four used a passive construction to describe the last panel.

(16) Joku kirjoitta-\textit{a} kirje-\textit{n} kynä-llä. kun kirje-\textit{n} kiroitte-taan
someone write-3S letter-ACC pen-ADESS when letter-ACC write-PASS
sen laitte-taan kirjekuore-en
it-ACC place-PASS envelope-ILL

‘Someone writes a letter in pen. When the letter is written, it is put into an envelope.’

The last participant added the adjective ‘valmis.’ The first three were likely describing the four panels as a whole, but the other five were clearly addressing the final panel and were trying to differentiate it. This suggests that they were trying to distinguish the last panel as bounded. As they had already used to accusative case to describe the first three panels, however, this strategy was not accurate since they needed a new strategy to describe the last panel.

**English Responses:** In English, Americans’ and Finns’ strategy for the first three panels was essentially the same. All but one of the Americans (93%) and one of the Finns (92%) used a progressive construction and all used the article ‘a’ before ‘letter’ except for one Finn who left it out. In the final panel, both the Americans and the Finns switched the aspect of their descriptions, generally going from present progressive to simple present. Nine of the 13 (69%) Americans dropped the progressive aspect and maintained their original tense, while one American dropped the progressive aspect and changed to past tense and another maintained both tense and progressive aspect. Two of the Americans did not explicitly address the end of the process and described the whole image with a present progressive construction. The one who did not start with the progressive aspect maintained both aspect and tense.

Nine of the 12 (75%) Finns dropped the progressive aspect and maintained tense. One Finn dropped the progressive aspect but changed to a future tense and another started without the
progressive aspect and maintained aspect and tense. Two of the Finns did not explicitly address the end of the process and described the whole image with a present progressive construction.

While these changes in aspect and tense do not necessarily show the completion of a process, the changes were consistent and notable. The more explicit way of showing the completion of the process in the final panel was the use of the adjective ‘ready’ and/or the past participle of a verb.

(17) *Finally his work is accomplished and the letter is ready to be sent.*

- PST PTCP

Only two (14%) Americans failed to use the word “ready” or the past participle to convey boundedness, one of which was the individual who described both the beginning and the completion of the process with the progressive aspect. The other was the one who dropped the progressive aspect. Five (38%) of the Finns did not use the word “ready” or the past participle. Results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in description of boundedness from beginning of process to end of process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning Panels</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finnish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final Panel</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
While the Finns matched the Americans in dropping the progressive aspect in English, they were less likely to confirm the completion of the process by using an adjective such as “ready” or using the past participle of a verb. The Finns perhaps did not account for how productive and prevalent a strategy for expressing boundedness this was. In Finnish, Americans and Finns who described the unboundedness of the first three panels using the partitive agreed mostly on strategies to describe the boundedness of the final panel. Few used the accusative case while most either used passive voice or the adjective ‘valmis.’ However, more Americans preferred to use the accusative case.

With reference to RQ1, combined, the responses from these two images suggest that Americans and Finns agree that the best way to express unbounded action in English is with the progressive aspect. They also generally agree on using the partitive in Finnish to express the same. The discrepancy arises when both the duration and the end of a process are shown. When this happens, the Finns in this sample were more likely to distinguish between them, and when they do not, they are more likely to view it as an unbounded process. The Americans in this sample who did not make the distinction were more likely to see it as a bounded process.

**RQ2: Unbounded Continuous Actions: Walking a Dog and A Couple Kissing**
This second pair of images (Figures 3 & 4) were chosen to address RQ2: How do L1 English and Finnish speakers convey boundedness in Finnish and English when describing inherently unbounded images? What types of syntactic constructions are used by L1 or L2 speakers of the language? Different from the first pair of images (Figures 1 & 2), both images depict actions that are inherently unbounded and require the use of the partitive in Finnish. Even having completed these actions, one would still use the partitive case. Differences in the descriptions of these images might be a result of how the action in the image is interpreted or it may be the result of avoidance of the partitive construction.

The first image (Figure 3) is of a young woman walking her dog. In Finnish, the case of the direct object of ‘kävellä’ (to walk) and related verbs, as well as tense and aspect were noted. In English, the article was used before dog as well as tense and aspect were recorded. Because “dog” has to be used as the direct object of walk for it to require the partitive case in Finnish, I also compared how often it was used as a direct object between the English and Finnish responses.
The second image (Figure 4) shows the outline of a man and a woman kissing. For the kissing picture, tense and aspect were noted in both Finnish and English. In Finnish, the use of the partitive for the direct object of ‘suudella’ (to kiss) was also noted.
Walking a Dog

**Finnish Responses:** In Finnish, only 3 (20%) of the Finns used a progressive construction, two of which also used the partitive and one of which did not. Ten of the 15 (67%) Finns used ‘dog’ in partitive as the direct object,

(18) *Nainen on kävelytä-mä-ssä koira-a-nsa*
woman be-3S walk-PTCP-INESS dog-PRT-3POSS
‘A woman is walking her dog.’

but only 3/15 (20%) Americans did the same.

Despite a clear preference in English for using the dog as the direct object and despite a clear parallel in the Finnish of L1 Finnish speakers, Americans chose instead to say that the woman walked with her dog or that a woman and a dog were walking and thus were able to avoid the partitive case.

(19) *Nainen kävellä koira-n-sa kanssa*
woman walk-3S dog-GEN-3POSS with
‘A woman walks with her dog’

None of the Americans used a progressive construction.

**English Responses:** In English, 12 of the 15 (80%) Americans using a progressive construction. Americans consistently wrote in the present tense. Of the Americans, 11 (73%) used ‘her dog,’ two (13%) used ‘the dog,’ and two (13%) used ‘a dog.’ Thirteen (87%) of the 15 Americans used ‘dog’ as the direct object of the sentence.

(20) A woman is walking her dog

Fourteen of the 15 (93%) Finns used a progressive construction. Finns also consistently wrote in the present tense. Finns also used articles consistent with the way that Americans had.

Nine of the 15 (60%) Finns used ‘her/his,’ one (7%) used ‘the,’ and and three (20%) used ‘a dog.’ 13 (87%) of the 15 Finns used ‘dog’ as the direct object. Results are summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Use of ‘Dog’ as the Direct Object*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Finn</th>
<th>American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>13</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Finnish</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Americans largely avoiding the use of ‘dog’ as the direct object in Finnish while overwhelmingly they did use it as the direct object in English. This hesitation to use dog as a direct object in Finnish may possibly be due to avoidance of the partitive in Finnish. In most of the images included in this study, if the object is mentioned, it must be as the direct object of the
verb (e.g., someone writes a letter). In the case of the present image, subjects were presented with a second option, walking with the dog. This second option allowed them to include just as much detail as using ‘dog’ as the direct object. As this is the structure they overwhelmingly preferred in English, it can be inferred that the clear second option in Finnish facilitated avoidance of the partitive.

**A Couple Kissing**

**Finnish Responses:** Because in both Finnish and English adding a direct object (each other, toisiaan) does not change the meaning at all, it was interesting to note that six (40%) Finns and five (33%) of the Americans added a direct object, all of them using the partitive case.

(21) *Mies ja nainen suutelevat toisi-a-an*
  
  *man and woman kiss-3P each other-PART-POSS*

  ‘A man and a woman kiss each other’

Only one American used a progressive construction in Finnish.

**English Responses:** In English, only one (7%) American and two (13%) Finns added the direct object ‘each other.’ Eleven of the 15 (73%) Americans and nine of the 15 (60%) Finns used a progressive construction in English. Results are summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Use of ‘Each Other’ as the Direct Object*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For this image in particular, it is important to note that it is possible that the Americans may have just learned ‘toisiaan’ as a word by itself as it is used when people love, hate, hug.
kiss, or do any number of other actions to each other. Because it is so commonly used in this form, it is possible that they were not consciously aware that they needed to use the partitive; rather, they just knew that ‘toisiaan’ (which is in the partitive case) was the right word.

For this image, both the Americans and the Finns produced similar constructions to the L1 speakers of their respective L2s. Finns used tense and aspect in English similarly to the Americans and the Americans similarly added a direct object in the partitive case in Finnish. With reference to RQ2, combined, the responses to these images show that when Americans use the partitive case for unbounded verbs of continuous action, they appear to do it well. The use of the partitive most closely matched Finns’ in this pair supporting the idea that, in this case, form does follow meaning. However, given the option, Americans also avoided the need to use the partitive case and chose a different method of describing the image (e.g., walking with a dog instead of walking a dog).

RQ3: Definiteness: Buying a Car and Mailman Delivering Letters

This final pair of images (Figures 5 & 6) was chosen to address RQ3: How do L1 English and Finnish speakers convey definiteness in Finnish and English when describing an inherently bounded image? What types of syntactic constructions are used by L1 or L2 speakers of the language? Both images show actions that are inherently bounded. Because of this, case choice reflects definitiveness. Differences in descriptions then allows us to explore L1 and L2 strategies for the expression of definiteness.

The first image in this pair (Figure 5) shows a mailman delivering letters to a woman. For this image, the target of the analysis was the description of the giving or receiving of the letters. In Finnish, verb choice as well as tense, aspect, and the case of the direct object were noted. In English, verb choice as well as tense, aspect, and the article of the direct object were recorded.
The second image (Figure 6) depicts the sale of a car with the dealer handing over the keys to the new owner. This image introduced two elements to analyze, the buying of the car and the exchanging of the keys. In English, verb choice, tense, aspect and article use were all noted. In Finnish, verb choice, tense, aspect and case of the direct object were documented.

Figure 5 Mailman Delivering Letters

Figure 6 Buying a Car
Mailman Delivering Letters

Because they were not comparable to the other responses, two of the Finns’ English and Finnish responses (13%) were removed as well as three of the Americans’ Finnish responses (20%) for this image. For example, one of the responses read, ‘I see a man and a women. They are smiling.’

Finnish Responses: In Finnish, all but two Finns (85%) used the partitive.

(22) Postimies toimitta-a kirje-i-tä naise-lle
mailman deliver-3S letter-PL-PART woman-ALL
‘A mailman delivers letters to a woman’

Of the two Finns that used the accusative case, one described the mailman as delivering a single letter and the other used the word for a bundle of letters.

(23) Posteljooni anta-a kirjenipu-n naise-lle
mailman give-3S letter bundle-ACC woman-ALL
‘A mailman gives a bundle of letters to a woman’

Five of the 12 (42%) Americans used the partitive case in their responses while five (42%) used the accusative case.

English Responses: Ten of the 15 (67%) Americans used the progressive in English.

One American used future tense; the rest of the responses were in present tense. Four of the five Americans who used the partitive case in Finnish also used a determiner like ‘some’ or another phrase that indicated the ambiguity of the number of letters being delivered in English.

‘A woman excitedly receives a bundle of letters from a mailman.’

None of the Americans who used the accusative case did the same.

If the woman was expecting the letters to come, the accusative case could reasonably be used to indicate that specific and expected nature, or definiteness, of those letters. Therefore,
whether the Americans or Finns gave any indication that the letters were expected was also noted. Three Americans indicated that the letters were expected in both Finnish and English. For example, one said,

(24) Kaunis nainen odottaa kirjeet-ta innolla-an
beautiful woman wait-3S letter-SgPART excitement-3POSS
‘A beautiful woman excitedly waits for a letter’

However, all three of these respondents used the partitive case when describing the giving or receiving of the letter.

Seven of the 13 (54%) Finns used the progressive in English. One Finn used past tense; the rest of the responses were in present tense. Six of the 15 (40%) Finns used an indefinite determiner or phrase in English similar to the Americans, including the individual who used the word for a bundle of letters in the accusative in Finnish. Two of the 15 (13%) Finns indicated that the woman was expecting the letter, but only in English. For example, one individual wrote ‘Finally the long-awaited letter arrives’ but in Finnish wrote,

(25) Postiljooni: "On-pa kivaa kun joku vielä kirjoittaa kirje-i-tä".
mailman be-3S-EMPH nice when someone yet write-3S letter-PL-PART
“Mailman: “it’s nice when someone still writes letters”

Nuori nainen: "Onpa kivaa kun joku kanta-a posti-a”
young woman be-3S-EMPH nice when someone deliver-3S mail-PART
“Young woman: “it’s nice when someone delivers mail”

Results are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Indefinite determiner</th>
<th>Partitive</th>
<th>Accusative</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

35
While Finns used a progressive construction and determiners similarly to Americans in English, Americans were more likely to use the accusative case in Finnish than were the L1 Finnish speakers. It is possible that they assumed the woman was expecting those specific letters. It is also possible that because they could see the specific letters being given, that definiteness translated over into their description. Finns on the other hand were not very likely to express the definiteness of the letters in Finnish.

**Buying a Car**

As with some of the other images, three of the 15 (20%) Finns’ English responses and five of the 15 (33%) of Finns’ Finnish responses either did not mention both the buying or the giving, or were not comparable to the other responses in some other way. Not all respondents addressed both the car and the keys with some only mentioning one or the other.

**Finnish Responses:** Two of the 10 (20%) Finns mentioned only the buying of the car, and four (40%) Finns mentioned only the giving or receiving of keys while four (40%) Finns addressed both. Of the Finns who mentioned the buying of the car, four of the six (67%) used a past or perfect construction and of the other two, one used a progressive construction and the other used simple present. Five of the six (83%) Finns used the accusative case for the direct object of ‘ostaa’ (buy) or related verbs. The last Finn, who used the partitive case, was also the participant who used a progressive construction and has ‘auto’ as the subject.

(26) *Auto-a osta-ma:ssa*  
    car-PART buy-PTCP-INESS  
    ‘car buying’

Of those who mentioned the giving or receiving of keys, four of the eight (50%) Finns used simple present while two (25%) used a progressive construction, one used a perfect
construction, and the last participant used passive voice. Five of the eight (63%) Finns used the accusative case while the remaining three used the partitive for keys.

Three of the 15 (20%) Americans mentioned only the buying of the car. Eight (53%) Americans mentioned only the giving or receiving of keys, while four (27%) Americans addressed both.

Of the Americans who mentioned buying the car, five of the seven (71%) used past or perfect tense and aspect.

(27) *Joku*  *ost-i*  *auto-n*  
someone  buy-PST3S  car-ACC  
‘Someone bought a car’

The other two (29%) used simple present. All Americans used the accusative case for the direct object of ‘*ostaa*’ (to buy) or related verbs.

Of those who mentioned the giving or receiving of keys, all twelve Americans used the simple present. All but one (92%) of the Americans used the accusative case in describing the giving or receiving of the keys.

(28) *Myyja*  *anta-a*  *ihmise-lle*  *avaime-t*  
seller  give-3S  person-ALL  key-PLACC  
‘The seller gives the keys to the person’

The last American used the partitive.

(29) *Joku*  *ojenta-a*  *avaim-i*  *toise-lle*  
someone  hand-3S  key-PLPART  other-ALL  
‘Someone hands the keys to another’

**English Responses:** In English, three out of the 15 (20%) Americans mentioned only the buying of the car, and four (27%) Americans mentioned only the giving or receiving of keys. Eight of the 15 (53%) Americans addressed both the buying of the car and the giving or receiving of keys.
Of those who mentioned the buying (or selling) of the car, only three of the 11 (27%) valid American responses used the progressive aspect in English. The rest, eight (53%) Americans, used either past tense, perfect aspect, or passive voice. This is notable because, up to this point, every image has been overwhelmingly described in English in a progressive aspect or in simple present tense. The participants clearly see the event as passed or completed. Only two (13%) Americans used the article ‘the’ before car. The Americans who used ‘the’ made it clear that they were talking about a specific car.

‘A set of keys changes hands, presumably following the sale of the car pictured.’

Of those who mentioned the giving or receiving of the keys in English, two of the 12 (17%) Americans used passive voice. The remaining (83%) Americans used a progressive aspect. Americans all referred to the keys with the article ‘the.’ One of the 12 (8%) Finns mentioned only the buying of the car and two (17%) Finns mentioned only the giving or receiving of keys. Nine of the 12 (75%) Finns addressed both the buying of the car and the giving or receiving of keys.

Of those who mentioned the buying (or selling) of the car, only one of the 10 (10%) valid Finns’ responses used the progressive aspect in English. One Finn also used a simple present tense. The rest, eight (67%) Finns, used either past tense, perfect aspect or passive voice. Four (33%) Finns used the article ‘the’ before car, doubling the frequency of the Americans. While the Americans had made sure to express in other ways that they were referring to a specific car (see above), the Finns who used ‘the’ did not make that clear.

‘The car dealer has just sold the car and giving the car keys to the car's new owner.’

Of those who mentioned the giving or receiving of the keys in English, one of the 10 (10%) Finns used passive voice. Seven (70%) Finns used a progressive aspect. Of the remaining
Finns, one used past tense and the other used future. Just like the Americans, Finns nearly universally referred to the keys with the article ‘the,’ showing that both Americans and Finns understood them to be specific keys, or in other words, they understood them to be the keys that go to the car that was bought. Results are summarized in Table 6.

*Table 6*

*Article and case usage for expression of definiteness*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Buying/Selling a Car</th>
<th>Giving/Receiving Keys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Finn</td>
<td>American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Past tense and/or perfect aspect</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Simple present or progressive</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Article “the”</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Article “a”</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finnish</td>
<td>Partitive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finnish</td>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Some participants used multiple strategies, as such, the sum of the numbers exceeds the number of participants. The numbers in the parentheses note how many participants addressed these aspects of the picture.

Article use in this image, specifically the use of ‘the’ with ‘car’ by Finns, potentially shows that Finns’ English was influenced by the use of the accusative in Finnish. Additionally, even though in English both Americans and Finns suggested that they saw the keys as a specific set with the use of the article ‘the,’ more Finns used the indefinite partitive case for the keys in
Finnish. For Americans, even though most described both the buying and the giving in English, most only described one or the other in Finnish.

With reference to RQ3, in the responses to both of these images, the Finns were more likely to use the partitive case and the Americans were more likely to use the accusative case when it came to the question of definiteness. As there does not seem to be a language reason for this potential difference, the choice may be a result of how both groups interpreted the images. Finns also seemed to differ in their use of articles when writing responses in English. This is expected if transfer is playing a role because Finnish does not make use of articles in the way that English does.

Discussion

Many aspects of the use of the partitive case and equivalent constructions in English were shared between L1 and L2 speakers. Very few ‘wrong’ answers were given, and most L2 responses were grammatical. Most differences were due to the frequency with which a construction was used by L1 and L2 speakers. Examination of these frequency differences suggest potentially interesting implications about how L1 and L2 speakers use as well as acquire constructions that indicate boundedness and definiteness.

RQ1: Bounded and Unbounded Action: Family Dinner and Writing a Letter

The first research question of this study asked, how do L1 English and Finnish speakers convey bounded versus unbounded action in Finnish and English? What types of syntactic constructions are used by L1 or L2 speakers of the language? The first pair of images gives us insight into general differences in the expression of boundedness. Unboundedness was largely expressed by L1 speakers with the partitive in Finnish and the progressive aspect in English. Boundedness was expressed with the accusative as well as passive and perfective constructions.
in Finnish and through adjective use and perfectivity in English. L2 speakers also used many of 
the same strategies but with some differences in frequency and form as discussed below.

When addressing the partitive case in Finnish, previous research has often addressed the 
Responses from the participants seemed to agree with this conclusion. Because the current study
does not examine the psychological and neurological processes occurring with the participants,
no proof of transfer was found, only evidence pointing in that direction. When responding to the 
image of a letter being written, Americans maintained the accusative case for both the process 
and the end of the process. They did, however, use different strategies such as a change in tense 
or use of an adjective to convey the change from unbounded to bounded. Because Americans are 
using tense, aspect, and adjective strategies that they would use in English, but not case strategies 
which are not used in English, this seems to suggest a transfer of strategy from their L1 English 
is occurring to their L2 Finnish.

Evidence of transfer of the part of the Finns is also suggested in responses to the same 
picture. Finns in general showed the ability to use constructions similar to L1 English speakers in 
English. However, one area they where they were not as successful was the use of adjectives.
Americans were especially likely to use adjectives to distinguish the end of a process from the 
rest of the process (e.g., “someone is writing a letter” to “the letter is ready”). Finns did not 
employ this strategy to the same degree as L1 English speakers. The L1 Finnish speakers’ lack of 
adjectives may have occurred since the expression of boundedness through adjectives is not as 
common in Finnish. Finns’ acquisition of the expression of boundedness was accurate and 
similar to L1 English speakers but was seemingly limited due to transfer. From these responses it
seems, as the literature suggests (Fuchs & Werner, 2018), that the lack of a certain strategy in an L1, might play a role in acquisition and how L2 speakers express boundedness.

Both of these instances of transfer are negative transfer. This means that instead of an aspect of an L1 being found in an L2, something limited or absent in the L1 (in this case adjective and case usage) means that the speakers were not quite able to produce these as L1 speakers do. It is interesting that all instances of transfer found in the current study were examples of negative transfer. No evidence pointing to positive transfer was found.

Also suggested in the responses to the first pair of images were possible differences in how the actions depicted in the images were interpreted. When responding to the first image (Figure 1), in both English and Finnish, Americans appeared more likely to express unboundedness explicitly (e.g., responses were progressive or included the partitive) while Finns appeared much less likely to express unboundedness explicitly (e.g., keeping aspect simple or leaving out the partitive) in Finnish, and though they did increase explicit expression in English, they did not do so at the same percentage as L1 Finnish speakers. This suggests that the explicit expression of boundedness is potentially more important to state in English and that L1 English speakers might transfer that importance to Finnish, and that Finns possibly recognize the importance of explicit expression in English and produce boundedness more in English than they did in Finnish.

Additionally, when seeing and describing the whole process of something from start to finish (Figure 2), Americans seemed to prefer a bounded description while Finns preferred an unbounded description in both languages. These preferences do not seem to be necessitated by language but seem to be a matter of how the actions in the images were interpreted. In other words, whether an action is bounded or not seems to be an important focus of English versus
Finnish language. This is interesting considering that English does not use a specific morphological construction to dictate this difference while Finnish does. This may in some way relate to the Relativity Hypothesis that language has an impact on an individual’s perspective (Hussein, 2012). However, responses seemed to imply the opposite of what you would expect in that the English speakers are more likely to focus on boundedness when it is Finnish that has a case primarily focused on this aspect. More research is needed to understand the role that this potential difference has and what it means for language learners. It could be that this is unique to this group of English speakers because they all spoke Finnish as a second language. The methods of the current study used here make these comparisons easier, as it allows for direction comparison of what participants wrote in Finnish to what they wrote in English and compare both of those to the responses of the other group. As corpus studies pull from a variety of language samples and response types, this would be a much harder connection to make using that methodology.

**RQ2: Unbounded Continuous Actions: Walking a Dog and A Couple Kissing**

The second research question of this study (RQ2) asked, how do L1 English and Finnish speakers convey boundedness in Finnish and English when describing inherently unbounded images? What types of syntactic constructions are used by L1 or L2 speakers of the language? The second pair of images show inherently unbounded actions in order to answer these questions. Once again, with inherent unboundedness was largely expressed by L1 speakers with the partitive in Finnish and the progressive aspect in English. L2 speakers also used many of the same strategies. In Finnish, all participants used the partitive case if they used the direct object at all. However, there were some differences in frequency in who decided to use the direct object in response to these images.
Addressed in the literature is the question of acquisition and acquisition order (Fuchs & Werner, 2018). Participants’ responses seemed to support the idea in Andersen’s (1989) Aspect Hypothesis and in Prototype Hypothesis that form follows meaning. The second pair of images (a couple kissing and walking a dog) were included to elicit the partitive case by portraying actions that are inherently unbounded. Correspondingly, the Americans seemed to use the partitive more like the Finnish speakers did in their responses to these images than the first images examined. In other words, the actions with the most inherently unbounded meanings had the most L1-like L2 use of the form (partitive case). The L2 speakers had acquired this form most completely and therefore may have acquired it earlier than its use in the first set of images. Because both Aspect Hypothesis and Prototype Hypothesis predict this outcome, this research does not point to either of them as a more universal hypothesis. More research is necessary then to examine the differences between these two theories and how they are applicable in learner languages.

The second image of this pair (Figure 4) also provides potential support for another aspect of L2 morphological processing brought up in the literature: avoidance. While the current study has no way of knowing what the participants thought processes were, and can therefore not make any certain claims of avoidance, there was some evidence pointing in that direction. In the responses to the image of a woman walking a dog, Americans overwhelmingly used dog as the direct object of ‘walk’ in English. In Finnish, this same construction is possible but requires ‘dog’ to be in the partitive case. L1 Finnish speakers prefer this construction in Finnish suggesting that learners of Finnish would likely be exposed to such a construction. Despite their strategy in English, Americans largely seemed to avoid using ‘dog’ as the direct object in Finnish thus appeared to avoid the use of the partitive case. They instead reported that the woman was
walking with the dog or some other variation. The direct comparison of responses suggests that this is not a result of cross-linguistic differences or similarities leaving the idea that it is the result of the intrinsic complexity of the partitive case (Laufer & Eliasson, 1993). While I do think this is the reason for what seems to be avoidance, I think there is more to the picture that needs to be explained. While some Americans did not use the form they overwhelmingly favored in English, those that did use the partitive used it more L1-like than in any of the other responses. It seems that despite proficient acquisition by the group, some L2 speakers still did not use the partitive case. As there were Finns who also responded in Finnish saying that the woman was walking with her dog, the presence of a clear second option seems to have led to avoidance despite high proficiency and preferences in English.

**RQ3: Definiteness: Buying a Car and Mailman Delivering Letters**

The third research question of this study asked, how do L1 English and Finnish speakers convey definiteness in Finnish and English when describing an inherently bounded image? What types of syntactic constructions are used by L1 or L2 speakers of the language? The responses to the final pair of images give us insight to the L1 and L2 expression of definiteness. Definiteness was largely expressed by L1 speakers with the partitive vs. accusative in Finnish and article choice in English. L2 speakers also used many of the same strategies however, there were some differences that gave insight into processing and acquisition differences.

This pair of images also implied the role of transfer. In the car sale image (Figure 6), Finns were more likely to avoid or misuse articles than the Americans. This again points towards negative transfer as article usage is not a consideration in Finnish. Notably, Finns did not seem to have difficulty with articles in the images that targeted boundedness, only the ones that targeted
definiteness. This is interesting considering that article usage is a salient method for expressing definiteness but not boundedness in English.

How the image was interpreted is also brought up once again in this pair of images. In both of these images (Figures 5 & 6), Americans preferred a definite description of the letters, the car and the keys while Finns preferred an indefinite expression. Once again, there was no requirement from either language for this difference, rather, it seems to be a matter of how the individuals in each group chose to interpret the images. This points to either an unspoken pattern in these languages to favor either definiteness or indefiniteness or could possibly be the result of cultural differences and perspectives.

**Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research**

Eliciting narrative responses in both Finnish and English for both groups proved very informative. Results were easily comparable both across groups and across languages. With responses to images in both an L1 and an L2, it was easier to see when answers were different across the two languages and what factors may have contributed to these differences. For example, it was easy to see that the avoidance of ‘dog’ as the direct object in American’s Finnish responses was more likely due to avoidance rather than transfer because we could easily compare it to their English responses as well as the Finn’s responses. This methodology might have potential for classroom usage. Teachers could collect and compare students’ narrative responses to target problem areas. Future research should investigate the effectiveness of this practice.

Despite the potential of the methods used, the current study also has some limitations. Other research looking at production of language often use corpora. While these studies do not have some of the above-mentioned benefits, they tend to incorporate a wide range of the phenomena they are looking at. This allows them to interpret their data broadly. Though, the
responses collected for this project are highly comparable and specific, they do not address all possible uses of the partitive case, making the conclusions less generalizable. Part of the benefit of the qualitative aspects of this study is the capacity identify patterns for future research. This study focuses on qualitative description and does not statistically rule out random chance in the responses seen. Ideally, quantitative research should build from qualitative research (Marks, 2015). Future research can explore differences found in this study to investigate their significance and generalizability. This is especially relevant in the understanding of avoidance as in this study various factors were involved and should each be looked at in detail. Additionally, all L1 speakers in this study were by purposeful selection proficient speakers of a second language. This means their L1 was potentially influenced by their L2. Additional research with monolinguals could help parse out some of the differences found between the groups.

This study also used a convenience sample to gather participants. This means that for the L1 English speakers, all learned Finnish during an LDS mission. Most Finns had consistent interactions with L1 English speakers. This means that the findings of the study might be especially applicable to LDS missionaries learning Finnish, but not extend to others learning in different contexts. A further limitation of this study is that participants responded to the images first in English and then in Finnish regardless of their L1. Randomizing the order of response would improve future research.

Conclusion

This study contributes to research on second language learning and bilingualism. Specifically, it adds to our understanding of L2 morphological processing and L2 tense and aspect acquisition. Transfer seemed to play a significant role. Avoidance and differences in language and cultural perspectives also seemed to play an important role in the differences
between Americans’ and Finns’ responses. This study also provided support for the idea that form follows meaning in aspect acquisition. Notably, how the image is interpreted, and the influence of language and culture on that interpretation appeared to play a role in the responses of the participants. Finally, this study also demonstrated the potential and benefits of narrative elicitation and analysis.
References


*University of California, Los Angeles.*


Appendix 1: Survey

Consent to be a Research Subject

Introduction

This research study is being conducted by Wendy Baker-Smemoe, PhD at Brigham Young University (BYU) to look at differences in how native and nonnative speakers speak Finnish. Torin Kelley, a current master’s student in BYU’s Linguistic program will be assisting in this research. You were invited to participate because you are either a native or nonnative speaker of Finnish.

Procedures

If you agree to participate in this research study, the following will occur:

• you will be asked to fill out a brief survey about yourself (your age, where you are from and other questions like that). This survey will take about 5 minutes to complete.

• you will be asked to describe several pictures in Finnish, which will be recorded (audio only). This part of the study will take about 30 minutes to complete.

• total time commitment will be approximately 30-35 minutes

Risks/Discomforts

There are minimal risks for participation in this study. You may, however, feel some embarrassment when answering survey questions if they seem difficult. If you feel embarrassed about answering a particular question, you do not have to answer that question. You can also quit the study at any time. The researchers will be sensitive to those who may become uncomfortable. Moreover, your participation will have no effect on your grade in a class. Your individual results will not be reported to non-research personnel.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefits to you. It is hoped, however, that through your participation researchers may learn about specific differences in how native and nonnative speakers use Finnish.

Confidentiality

The research data will be kept on a password protected computer and only the researcher will have access to the data. At the conclusion of the study, all identifying information will be removed and the data will be kept on the same password protected computer. Your name will not be used on any of information—instead a research number will be used.

Compensation

You will receive $10 for your participation; compensation will not be prorated.
Participation

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time or refuse to participate entirely without jeopardy to your class status, grade, or standing with the university.

Questions about the Research

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Torin Kelley at 801-358-8088 or at torinkelley@hotmail.com. You may also contact Wendy Baker-Smemoe at 801-616-9848 or wendy.smemoe@byu.edu for further information.

Questions about Your Rights as Research Participants

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant contact IRB Administrator at (801) 422-1461; A-285 ASB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602; irb@byu.edu.

If you have read and agree to these terms, please type your name below as an indication of your agreement.

Demographic Questions

What is your native language?

English Finnish Other

Do you speak Finnish as a second language?

Yes No

Do you speak English as a second language?

Yes No

What is your age?

What is your gender?

Male Female Other
Where were you born?
United States Finland
Other

What state were you born in?

What region were you born in?

Where do you currently live?
Finland United States
Other

How long have you lived in Finland?

How long have you lived in the United States?

How long have you lived there?

Are you a returned missionary?
Yes No

Where did you serve?
United States, English speaking
Other, English speaking
Finland
Other (please indicate country and language you spoke)

How long were you in the mission country for (include MTC time but not visa waiting time if you were not speaking your mission language while awaiting your visa).
2 years 18 months Other (please indicate number of months)
When did you return from your mission?
Within the last 6 months
Between 6 months and 1 year ago Between 1 and 2 years ago
Between 2 and 3 years ago
Between 3 and 4 years ago
Between 4 to 5 years ago
Between 5 to 6 years ago
Between 6 to 7 years ago
Between 7 to 8 years ago
Between 8 to 9 years ago
Between 9 to 10 years ago Over 10 years ago

What is your second (most proficient language other than your native language.)
Finnish English
Other

Please rate your language ability in Finnish on a scale from 1 “I don’t know this language at all”
to 10 “I am a native speaker of the language.”

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Fluency

Please rate your language ability in English on a scale from 1 “I don’t know this language at all”
to 10 “I am a native speaker of the language.”

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Fluency

What percentage of the time you spend speaking, writing, or reading, is spent engaging in these respective activities in Finnish?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Time spent SPEAKING Finnish
Time spent WRITING Finnish
Time spent READING Finnish

What percentage of the time you spend speaking, writing, or reading, is spent engaging in these respective activities in English?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Time spent SPEAKING English
Time spent WRITING English
Time spent READING English

Do you speak any other languages?
Yes No

What other languages do you speak and what is your fluency in these languages?

English Responses

In the next section you will respond to the pictures in English.
To start yourself thinking in English, please read the following passage before you move on.

Whoever has made a voyage up the Hudson must remember the Kaatskill mountains. They are a dismembered branch of the great Appalachian family, and are seen away to the west of the river,
swelling up to a noble height, and lording it over the surrounding country. Every change of season, every change of weather, indeed, every hour of the day, produces some change in the magical hues and shapes of these mountains, and they are regarded by all the good wives, far and near, as perfect barometers. When the weather is fair and settled, they are clothed in blue and purple, and print their bold outlines on the clear evening sky; but, sometimes, when the rest of the landscape is cloudless, they will gather a hood of gray vapors about their summits, which, in the last rays of the setting sun, will glow and light up like a crown of glory.

Each image was then shown, along with this accompanying text:

Please describe the image above in 2-4 complete sentences in English.

**Finnish Responses**

In the next section you will respond to the pictures in Finnish. If you do not know how to use umlauts for high vowels, please visit the following website for help:

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Sweden_Typing_the_letters_Å,_Ä,_and_Ö

To start yourself thinking in Finnish please read the following passage before you move on.

Vaunu on täynnästä tärinästä tohloutuneita matkustajia, toiset makuulla, toiset veltoissa istuma-asemmoissa, päivänpaisteelta nurkkiin suojautuneina, päät kallellaan seinää vasten, sangen haluttomina siirtymään ja paikkaa vierreestään luovuttamaan. Asemasillan mukulakivistä paistaa sietämätön auringon heijastus ikkunoihin. Joku lapsi vaan elää, lyö sylkisillä, karamellintahmeilla kämmenillään ikkunalasiin, hokien: tetä tulee, tetä tulee … eikä näytä lainkaan vaivaantuneelta kivihiihenhajusta, kuumantomuisesta ilmasta ja auringon paahdeesta, joka käsittelee häntä kuin paistia.

Huomautettuani vihdoin, että pitkät penkit ovat asetuksen mukaan kolmen istuttavat, saan paikan upeilevan turistin ja sahaansa piilottelevan työläisen välilin.

Kukaan aikuisista ei hiisku sanaakaan. Pitkän hiljaisuuden jälkeen kuuluu ulkoa vihdoin asemamiehen saappaiden kopina, kuuluu hänen kolmas soittonsa, konduktööri puhaltaa pillinsä, vihellys—olemme liikkeellä, tärähtelemme, tärähtelemme kovemmin, tärisemme, lennämme…

Each image was then shown, along with this accompanying text:
Kuvaile yllä olevaa kuva 2–4 täydellä lauseella suomeksi.