

The Facets of Aspect:
A Comparative Study of Hungarian and Italian Systems
Part II: Analysis of Italian; Bridging Aspect: Comparison of Italian
and Hungarian with Practical Implications for Language Acquisition

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Abstract

This paper, the second part of a comparative study on aspect in Hungarian and Italian, adopts a Cognitive-Functional and typological perspective to analyze the Italian aspectual system and its relation to the Hungarian one. Integrating insights from prototype theory and usage-based linguistics, it explores how both languages encode the conceptual categories of completeness and continuity through distinct grammatical strategies, synthetic and inflectional in Italian, analytic and constructional in Hungarian. The study highlights the cognitive and pedagogical implications of these typological contrasts for second language acquisition, proposing a contrastive approach that fosters learners' metalinguistic awareness and conceptual flexibility in understanding and expressing aspectual distinctions.

Keywords

aspect; Cognitive Linguistics; Hungarian; Italian; Second Language Acquisition

1. Introduction

This essay constitutes the second part of a study grounded in Cognitive-Functional Linguistics, integrating insights from linguistic typology, usage-based linguistics, and prototype theory to develop a comprehensive framework for understanding the structure and use of Italian and Hungarian aspectual systems from a contrastive perspective. It also contributes to the theoretical debate on ATAM structures, exploring scalar categorization



through prototypicality and *continuum* models, while supporting the second language acquisition of Hungarian and Italian.

In the first part of this study (Rózsavölgyi 2024), we outlined the broader theoretical framework of Cognitive-Functional Linguistics that underpins the present discussion, examined the key features of the Hungarian aspectual system, and reflected on the role of prototype theory in language acquisition. The current companion study focuses on the Italian system, enabling cross-linguistic comparison and providing empirical grounding for pedagogical applications in both languages.

The linguistic encoding of events remains a central concern across disciplines such as linguistics, philosophy, psychology, and computational modeling, with many questions still unresolved. Within the functionalist paradigm, Cognitive Linguistics offers a framework that emphasizes the semiological function of language and the central role of conceptualization in social communication. The notion of conceptualization is understood broadly, encompassing not only abstract concepts but also sensory, motor, and emotional experience, as well as the comprehensive perception of physical, social, cultural, and linguistic contexts (Langacker 1998). A central tenet of this approach is its subjectivist conception of meaning: as Langacker (1987, 6-7) notes, the same objective situation can yield distinct semantic interpretations depending on the speaker's perspective or *construal*. These perspectival choices are not neutral but are shaped by the grammatical resources available in each language. In this sense, languages tend to privilege particular ways of conceptualizing and representing events, influencing how speakers construe aspectual distinctions such as telicity, completion and ongoingness within their linguistic systems (Slobin 1996).

Beyond offering a robust theoretical framework for describing systematic L2 learning patterns, Cognitive Linguistics also provides valuable pedagogical implications. The generalizations it proposes about linguistic organization can be explicitly formulated and effectively integrated into classroom practice. Nevertheless, research in second language acquisition inspired by Cognitive Linguistics remains at an early stage and calls for further empirical validation.

Aspect, which determines how events are depicted in discourse, permeates the entire linguistic system. It is grounded in the fundamental distinction between completeness and continuity and processed through general cognitive mechanisms of perception. Although these are universal categories for conceptualizing events, and their role in clarifying event relationships in discourse is similar across languages, the means of encoding them vary, shaping each language's aspectual organization and conceptual preferences.

2. The Italian aspectual domain

Italian is an aspectual language with a clear binary perfective–imperfective (PFV–IPFV) system, where aspect is only expressed in the domain of past temporal reference. Many Indo-European languages belong to this linguistic type (Bertinetto, Squartini 2016).

The fact that Tense¹ and aspect do not always appear as distinct and clearly defined categories, can be clearly illustrated by the example of Italian. Although they are separate categories, they work together to situate utterances in time. Linguistic categories do not always need to act independently to be considered autonomous entities. From a functional perspective, it suffices that they do so in a few relevant cases. Typologically, it is common for two features to be expressed independently in one language but to interact in specific contexts or to be even fused together in another. Cross-linguistic comparison reveals that these features, though neutralized in certain instances, still exist as autonomous conceptual entities. Bertinetto (1994, 1997) notes that such interactions and neutralizations² frequently occur in the Tense-aspect systems of natural languages, reflecting the significant

¹ We will use capital letters for the names of the Tenses: for example, we will distinguish between “perfect(ive)” (as an aspectual category) and “Perfect” (as a class of Tenses). Similarly, “Past”, “Present”, and “Future” will be typographically distinguished from their general, non-linguistic meanings, as they refer to specific sets of Tenses.

² By “neutralization” Bertinetto (1997, 65) means «the occasional suspension of a given category», while by “interaction” the «occasional convergence of some otherwise alternative categories». The interaction between aspect and temporal reference is fundamental, as it is this interaction that gives rise to the concept of Tense in its various, language-specific forms (cf. Rózsavölgyi 2024).

typological variability in this domain. Tense is considered a formal notion, as it involves a concrete morphological expression, whereas aspectuality and temporal reference are semantic notions that require a specific Tense to be expressed. However, the relationship is not one-to-one: each Tense carries both aspectual and temporal meanings, often encompassing a range of these meanings that vary depending on the context in which the Tense is used (Bertinetto, Delfitto, 2000). In Indo-European languages, particularly Romance languages, temporal relations are typically the predominant factor³.

Aspectuality in Italian is based on the opposition between perfective and imperfective (see Figure 1).

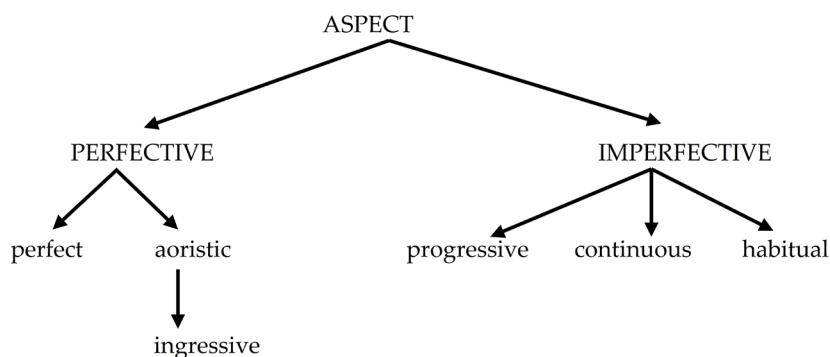


Figure 1 – Aspectual values of Italian (based on Bertinetto 1991, 41).

Bertinetto (1991, 58-60) identifies an ingressive aspect in specific contexts within the aoristic domain. This aspect highlights the anticipation of a future situation and can be applied to durative verbs without telic value as well as non-permanent stative verbs. Consider the following examples from Bertinetto (ivi, 58):

³ However, there are languages where aspect is the primary component, requiring temporal relations to be inferred from it. For example, in many West African languages, imperfective forms are usually interpreted as non-Past, while perfective forms are interpreted as Past (Comrie 1976, 82-84).

- | | | | |
|----|---|-----------|--|
| 1. | In quel
momento | l'acqua | <i>zampillò/
è zampillata</i> |
| | at that moment | the water | spurt-PS-3SG:PFV /
be-PR-3SG(=AUX)+spurt-PP-F (=PC):PFV |
| | dal rubinetto. | | |
| | from the tap | | |
| | At that moment, the water spurted from the tap. | | |
| 2. | Finalmente | Gianna | <i>pianse.</i> |
| | Finally | Gianna | cry-PS-3SG:PFV |
| | Finally, Gianna cried. | | |

Although ingressivity appears infrequently and plays a secondary role in the system of perfectivity, Bertinetto regards it as a true aspect, as it exclusively selects aoristic Tenses. The concept of ingressivity should be differentiated from inchoativity, which indicates actionality (see sentences 3 and 4 below) independent of the Tense used, as shown in Bertinetto's examples (ivi, 60):

- | | | | | |
|----|---|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 3. | Paolo | <i>s'incamminò</i> | da solo. | |
| | Paolo | PrRifl-set-off-PS-3SG:PFV | on his own | |
| | Paolo set off on his own. (ingressivity) | | | |
| 4. | Mentre | Amerigo | <i>si incamminava</i> | da solo, gli altri |
| | while | Amerigo | PrRifl set-off-IMP-3SG:IPFV | on his own the others |
| | restarono | a confabulare | ancora | per un pezzo |
| | remain-PS-3PL:PFV | to chat | still | for a while |
| | While Amerigo was setting off on his own, the others stayed behind to chat for a while longer. (inchoativity) | | | |

2.1. Perfective aspect in Italian

The perfective aspect refers to:

events that are specifically pinpointed in time, highlighting their terminal moment, though not necessarily the event's conclusion, and providing a global view of the event. It is compatible with expressions of determined duration:

5. Quattro uomini *costruirono* questa città dal niente
 four men build-PS-3PL:PFV this town from nothing
 in un anno.
 in a year
 Four men built this town out of nothing in a year.
- a) typically, a single occurrence (6). To indicate multiple occurrences, explicit contextual specifications are necessary. It is compatible with expressions of determined iteration (see 7):
- 6a. Alle nove *me ne andai.*
 at nine PrRifl away go-PS-1SG:PFV
 At nine I left.
- 6b. Alle nove *me ne sono andato.*
 at nine PrRifl away be-PR-1SG(=AUX)+go-PP-M (=PC):PFV
 At nine I left.
7. *Mangiò* pizza due volte a settimana
 eat-PS-3SG:PFV pizza twice in a week
 durante il suo soggiorno in Italia.
 during his/her stay in Italy
 (S)he ate pizza twice a week during his/her stay in Italy.

The perfective aspect, due to its global perspective, is compatible with adverbials such as *in X tempo* 'in X time' (with transformative and resultative

verbs) and *per X tempo* ‘for X time’ (with transformative, resultative, and continuative verbs) (ivi, 33–34). It also pairs well with delimitative adverbials like *da X tempo a Y tempo* ‘from X time to Y time’, circumscriptive ones like *tra X tempo e Y tempo* ‘between X time and Y time’, and culminative ones like *fino a X tempo* ‘until X time’. Additionally, adverbials such as *da X tempo* ‘since X time’⁴ are used with telic verbs to indicate the duration of the interval between the end of the event and the reference time⁵ which is positioned differently in relation to the moment of enunciation, depending on the Tense used. This implies that such usage is compatible only with compound perfective Tenses that involve a reference moment:

⁴ The adverbial *da X tempo* ‘since X time’ is also used with the progressive (with durative verbs, cf. example A below) and habitual (cf. example B below) aspects within the imperfective domain. In these cases, unlike in the perfective domain, it indicates the duration of the interval from the event’s beginning to the moment of focus, or, in the case of a habitual process, to the moment being highlighted (see for discussion later):

- | | | | | | |
|----|-------------|---|--------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| A. | Quando | I’ho conosciuto, | | Davide | <i>giocava</i> |
| | when | him have-PR-1SG(=AUX)+know-PP-M (=PC):PFV | | Davide | play-IMP-3SG:IPFV |
| | a calcio | da tre anni. | | | |
| | at football | for three years | | | |
| | | When I met him, Davide had been playing football for three years. | | | |
| B. | Da un anno | ormai | Davide | <i>andava</i> | a ballare ogni venerdì sera. |
| | for a year | now | Davide | go-IM-P-3SG:I-PFV | to dance every Friday evening |

For a year now Davide had been going dancing every Friday night.

⁵ We use the term “reference time” following Reichenbach (1947), who distinguishes between (a) the point of speech, (b) the point of the event, and (c) the point of reference, which is the perspective from which the event is viewed.

8. A cena era affamato perché non *aveva mangiato*
 at dinner be-IMP-3SG because not have-IMP-
 hungry-M 3SG(=AUX)+eat-
 PP-M (=PC):PFV
- da almeno otto ore
 for at least eight hours
 At dinner he was hungry because he hadn't eaten for at least eight hours.

Based on the compatibility between Past Tenses (both simple and compound) and the adverbial *da X tempo* 'since X time', Bertinetto (ivi, 56-62) distinguishes between the aoristic aspect and the perfect aspect within the perfective domain.

The primary function of the aoristic aspect is to explicitly temporally locate the event, mainly in narrative contexts, typically through Preterite (Simple and Compound Past) Tenses (*Passato remoto* and *Passato prossimo*)⁶. However, the use of the Simple Past is ungrammatical with the adverbial *da X tempo* 'since X time' (see examples 9a and 9b below), due to the absence of a reference moment in the temporal frame implied by Simple Tenses (not only regarding past events); they cannot emphasize the completeness and persistence of a result:

⁶ The "historical" Present (cf. example A below) and the Imperfect in a narrative context (the so-called "narrative Imperfect", cf. example B below) can convey an aoristic meaning as well:

Eravamo ormai arrivati al binario. Ma proprio quando cominciavamo a pensare di avercela fatta, il treno *si muove*! Troppo tardi... (Bertinetto 1991, 58)

We had finally arrived at the platform. But just when we started to think we had made it, the train *starts* moving! Too late...

Quella stessa sera, alle dieci in punto, l'ingegnere Ribera *batteva* due colpi discreti alla porta del signor Giacomo Puttini in Albogasio Superiore. Poco dopo *si apriva* una finestra sopra il suo capo e *vi compariva* al chiaro di luna il vecchio visetto imberbe del "sior Zacomo" (ivi, 85: extract from A. Fogazzaro, *Piccolo mondo antico*).

That same evening, at exactly ten o'clock, Engineer Ribera *knocked* discreetly twice on the door of Mr. Giacomo Puttini in Albogasio Superiore. Shortly after, a window above his head *opened, revealing* [lett. and there appeared] in the moonlight the old, beardless face of "Sior Zacomo".

- 9a. *Davide non *mangiò* da almeno otto ore.
 Davide not eat-PS-3SG:PFV for at least eight hours
 Davide hasn't eaten for at least eight hours.
- 9b. *Davide non *mangerà* da almeno otto ore.
 Davide not eat-FUT-3SG:PFV for at least eight hours
 Davide will not have eaten for at least eight hours.

The typical function of the perfect aspect is to indicate that the event's temporal location precedes a specific reference time which is obtained using the compound Past Tenses. The semantic functions of perfect contexts [referred to as *compiuto* by Bertinetto (ivi, 56)], listed in descending order of relevance, include: inclusivity (indicating a durative or iterative situation that starts in the past and continues up to the speech time), experientiality, hot news, and persistent result (Squartini, Bertinetto 2000).

The difference between simple and compound verb Tenses in this context is clear-cut: compound Tenses, unlike simple Tenses, presuppose both a specific moment in time when the event occurs (temporal locator) and a subsequent moment that serves as a privileged point of observation and evaluation of the outcomes of the event (reference time). The temporal locator conveys extrinsic information linking the event to the dimension of physical time (see example 10 below). The reference moment, on the other hand, offers information intrinsically required by compound Tenses (see example 11 below). Such information is necessary only for Tenses that express relative time indications, which applies to the compound Tenses of the indicative mood, except for the Compound Past (*Passato prossimo*) when used in an aoristic sense (Bertinetto 1991, 17-23, 53-62):

10. *Quando hai chiamato* Davide *è uscito*.
 (temporal locator)
 when have-PR-2SG(=AUX)+call-PP (=PC):PFV Davide be-PR-3SG+leave-PP-M
 (=PC):PFV (=PC):PFV
 When you called, Davide left.
 (your calling and Davide's leaving are two simultaneous actions)

- | | | |
|---|--------|---|
| 11. <i>Quando hai chiamato</i>
(reference time) | Davide | <i>era già uscito.</i> |
| when have-PR-
2SG(=AUX)+call-PP
(=PC):PFV | Davide | be-IMP-3SG+ already go out-
PP-M (=PC):PFV |
| When you called, Davide had already left.
(Davide's leaving preceded your calling) | | |

2.2. Imperfective aspect in Italian

Within imperfectivity, which conveys indeterminacy, the situation described is considered not in its entirety, but from within, with explicit reference to its internal temporal structure (ivi, 132-133, 146). This domain exhibits distinct subcategories such as progressivity, continuity and habituality (see Figure 1)⁷.

2.2.1. Progressivity

Progressivity is represented by imperfective situations that are ongoing at a temporal reference point (Bybee, Perkins, Pagliuca 1994, 126). Bertinetto, Ebert, and De Groot (2000) provide a comprehensive typological overview of progressive aspect constructions across European languages, examining their semantic, morphosyntactic, and areal properties. The authors define the progressive as a grammatical category expressing an event in internal development, typically focusing on an ongoing, dynamic phase, and excluding both its inception and completion. The study highlights significant variation in how European languages encode progressivity. Some, such as English and the Romance languages, possess dedicated grammatical markers (e.g., English *be* + *-ing* form, Italian *stare* + Gerund periphrasis), whereas others, particularly Slavic, Finno-Ugric, and Germanic groups, express the same meaning lexically or contextually, without a specialized progressive form. Through extensive cross-linguistic comparison, the authors argue

⁷ Moser (2014, 117) posits that «The categories that have become known as subdivisions of the imperfective are in fact intermediate categories on the aspect-Aktionsart *continuum*».

that the progressive is not a universal category but an areal and diachronic development that tends to emerge in languages with rich aspectual or periphrastic systems. They also distinguish the progressive from the broader imperfective, noting that in many languages (e.g., Hungarian and Slavic languages), progressive meaning is subsumed under imperfective aspect, rather than encoded by a separate form.

The fundamental characteristics of the progressive aspect are as follows:

a) there is a moment of focus in which the ongoing event is observed during its progression;

b) the indeterminacy trait of the progressive aspect is revealed by leaving the continuation of the process beyond the moment of focus uncertain (obviously, this criterion is only necessary when referring to a past event, while for an ongoing event at the time of the utterance, future developments are inherently unknown);

c) the progressive aspect implies a single occurrence of a process (self-factivity);

d) the temporal reference is always determined or at least determinable from the context (use of time frame adverbials like *in quel momento preciso* 'at that precise moment', *alle 8 di mattina* 'at 8 in the morning', etc., or a subordinate clause that identifies a single moment of focus).

It is not necessary to select a progressive morphology to convey a progressive reading: any Tense with a fundamentally imperfective meaning, such as the Present (*Presente*), Imperfect (*Imperfetto*), and, to a lesser extent, the Simple Future (*Futuro semplice*), can readily be interpreted as progressive in the appropriate contexts. See the following example:

12. In questo momento Davide *fa merenda/
sta facendo merenda.*
- at this moment Davide do-PR-3SG:IPFV snack/
be-PR-3SG(=AUX)+do-GER:IPFV snack
- At this moment Davide is having a snack.

As seen in example 12, in addition to Tenses, the verbal periphrasis⁸ ‘*stare* + Gerund’, also known as the “progressive periphrasis”⁹, is frequently employed to represent the concept of progressivity (Bertinetto 2000, Musto, Ripa 2007, Squartini 1990)¹⁰. The evolution of the Italian progressive periphrasis is marked by its narrowing to situations that involve a single point of reference rather than an interval (Bertinetto 1997, 133).

The *stare* + Gerund periphrasis has specific semantic and morphological restrictions (Daloiso 2018). The semantic restrictions are as follows: a) its incompatibility with stative verbs [e.g., **sta essendo vecchio* ‘(s)he is being old’, **sta stando in piedi* ‘(s)he is standing (on feet)’], unless these verbs are used in a non-stative sense [e.g., *sta avendo successo* ‘(s)he/it is having success’]¹¹; b)

⁸ In general, a periphrastic structure is an expression made up of multiple components that collectively convey a single meaning. The concept of a periphrastic structure in terms of verbal periphrasis, though lacking a singular definition, can be delineated using a set of properties (see Bertinetto 1990). For a discussion on the challenges of arriving at a definitive definition and a review of various scholarly positions on the relationship between verbal periphrases and verb aspect, see Bertinetto (1989/1990, 1990); Squartini (1990, 1998); Musto, Ripa (2007).

⁹ The *stare* + Gerund periphrasis is highly grammaticalized and fully integrated into the Italian Tense-aspect system (see Bertinetto 1986, 131; 1990; 1991, 131-137, Cortelazzo 2007, Musto, Ripa 2007, Squartini 1990 for details). In contemporary Italian, it only applies to Tenses conveying imperfective value. This restriction did not exist until the 19th century; the current usage is due to a narrowing of its scope, leading Italian to limit the progressive periphrasis to cases that strictly correspond to the progressive aspect (Bertinetto 1986, 177). Villarini (2002, 654) points out that using this periphrasis is not merely a stylistic choice but can be mandatory to avoid significant changes in meaning. Cerruti (2007) investigates the aspectual characterization and sociolinguistic variability of certain Italian verbal periphrases that display diatopic variation. The study focuses on how the *stare* + Gerund, *andare* + Gerund, *venire* + Gerund periphrases (the last two marking continuous aspect, for discussion see 2.2.2.) function aspectually across different Italian varieties, examining their distribution, semantic nuances, and degree of grammaticalization. Through both qualitative and quantitative analysis, Cerruti shows that these periphrases exhibit distinct aspectual values, typically related to progressivity, iteration, or gradual development, but their usage also varies according to regional norms and sociolinguistic factors such as formality and education. He highlights how aspectual periphrases in Italian are not uniform but part of a dynamic system in which grammatical, pragmatic, and social dimensions interact.

¹⁰ In the use of periphrases, Italian distinctly separates the progressive aspect from the continuous aspect by employing two distinct but complementary constructions: ‘*stare* + Gerund’ for the progressive aspect and ‘*andare* + Gerund’ for the continuous aspect (see below).

¹¹ Liffredo (2011) examines the interaction between the Italian progressive periphrasis *stare* + *gerundio* and stative verbs, which are traditionally considered incompatible due to

its assumption of an imminent value (similar to *stare per* + Infinitive) when used with a non-durative telic main verb, i.e., a verb that denotes an event that concludes and is almost instantaneous (e.g., *sto partendo* 'I am about to leave'); and c) its resistance to being governed by modal verbs (e.g., **doveva stargli raccontando una storia* '(s)he must have been telling him a story'). The morphological restrictions refer to its incompatibility with: a) the passive voice (e.g., **l'automobile sta essendo riparata* 'the car is being repaired'); b) perfective tenses (e.g., **è stato camminando* '(s)he was walking'); c) the imperative mood (e.g., **sta' leggendo!* 'be reading!'); and d) the Infinitive form (e.g., **spero di non stare finendo* 'I hope I am not ending').

A periphrasis has a typical progressive value when a previously initiated verbal process is observed at a specific point in its progression; in other words, it is characterized by *monofocalization*. Typically, the progressive value of a construction is conveyed by the so-called "incidence scheme" (*schema di incidenza*, Durante 1981, 181); this involves pairing a sentence with a verb in the perfective aspect indicating a non-durative action with a sentence containing a verb in the imperfective aspect generally expressing a durative action:

their non-dynamic nature. The study argues, however, that this restriction is not absolute: in specific pragmatic or contextual conditions, progressive forms with stative verbs are acceptable and convey interpretive nuances such as temporariness, attitudinal stance, or aspectual reinterpretation. Exceptions generally arise when the stative character of the verb is weakened or absent; stative verbs exhibit varying degrees of compatibility with the progressive. Cases in which the progressive periphrasis is entirely excluded correspond to verbs that are fully non-dynamic, prototypical statives such as *essere equivalente* (to be equivalent) or *essere in gamba* (to be smart). The use of stative verbs in progressive constructions becomes possible through a semantic shift whereby the verb acquires dynamic features that render it compatible with the progressive aspect. This may occur through the verb's inherent polysemy, through polysemy induced by the progressive context itself, or through broader contextual factors, such as temporal adverbials, that delimit the temporal boundaries of the event and push the interpretation toward meanings of change, graduality, and dynamism. The sentence *Ho appena cominciato a leggere questo libro e mi sta piacendo tanto*. 'I've just started reading this book, and I'm really enjoying it' (ivi, 254, example 7) is perfectly acceptable. Here, the progressive periphrasis conveys a sense of change within the state, weakening the assertion and implying that the book's appeal may fade as reading continues. Thus, although *piacere* 'like' retains its general meaning, it takes on a punctual rather than stative interpretation due to the progressive form. Examples like this highlight the interpretive flexibility of the Italian progressive, showing how contextual and semantic factors can modulate aspectual readings.

13. Davide *andava via / stava andando via* quando *mi vide* arrivare
- Davide go-IMP-3SG:IPFV away / when me see-PS- arrive-Inf
 be-IMP-3SG(=AUX)+ go- 3SG:PFV
 GER away:IPFV
- Davide was leaving when he saw me arriving.

2.2.2. Continuity

The domain of continuity typically presents an event as uninterrupted in its unfolding and with indeterminate temporal boundaries. The continuous aspect has two variants: durative (cf. 14) and iterative (cf. 15), both of which share the same main characteristics. They incorporate the idea of indeterminacy regarding the continuation of the process over time and, in the case of the iterative variant, the number of event iterations:

14. Durante Davide *fumava /* nervosamente.
 la discussione *continuava a fumare*
- during Davide smoke-IMP-3SG:IPFV / nervously
 the discussion continue-IMP-3SG+ smoke-Inf:IPFV
- During the discussion, Davide was smoking/kept on smoking nervously.
15. Quando sua madre gli *chiedeva*
 when his mother he-Dat ask-IMP-3SG:IPFV
 che cosa *faceva,* lui *mentiva.*
 what do-IMP-3SG:IPFV he lie-IMP-3SG:IPFV
- Every time his mother asked him what he was doing he would lie to her.

The properties of the continuous aspect can be summarized as follows (cf. Bertinetto 1997):

Unlike the progressive aspect, which aligns with a point of focus, the continuous aspect assumes an interval of reference (see the subordinate clause *mentre ero all'estero* 'while I was abroad' in 16a below). The boundaries of this interval must be somewhat vague: temporal adverbials like *per due mesi* 'for two months' or *da maggio a giugno* 'from May to June' cannot

be used (see 16b). In 16a, the writing event can be understood as not concluded at the end of the reference interval, as evidenced by the contextual detelicization of the inherently telic predicate:

- 16a. L'anno scorso, mentre ero all'estero
 last year while be-IMP-1SG:IPFV abroad
 Davide *scriveva* un libro.
 Davide write-IMP-3SG: IPFV a book
 Last year, while I was abroad, Davide was writing a book.

- 16b. * L'anno scorso, Davide *scriveva* un libro
 last year Davide write-IMP-3SG:IPFV a book
 per due mesi/da maggio a giugno.
 for two months/from May to June
 Last year Davide was writing a book for two months/from May to June.

- b. As mentioned earlier, the continuous aspect can manifest in two distinct but fundamentally equivalent forms: durative, as in 14, or iterative, as in 15. Aside from this marginal difference, which is due to the actional nature of the predicate, the semantic properties remain the same. In the iterative form, too, the closure of the interval corresponding to the event's progression is entirely excluded, as shown by the impossibility of adding a quantifying specification that would implicitly temporally delimit the macro-event (see 17a). Note, conversely, the perfect acceptability of the perfective form *ha preparato* 'she prepared' in 17b with quantifying specifications:

- 17a. Mercoledì mentre Davide lavorava,
 Wednesday while Davide work-IMP-3SG:IPFV
 sua mamma *preparava* (*due) torte.
 his mom prepare-IMP-3SG:IPFV (*two) cakes
 On Wednesday, while Davide was working, his mother was preparing cakes
 (*two cakes).

- 17b. Mercoledì mentre Davide lavorava,
 Wednesday while Davide work-IMP-3SG:IPFV
 sua mamma *ha preparato* (due) torte.
 his mom have-PR-3SG(=AUX)+ (two) cakes
 prepare-PP (=PC):PFV

On Wednesday, while Davide was working, his mother prepared (two) cakes.

Iterativity cannot occur in the present domain because it presupposes a closed interval, whereas the time frame of the speech moment is inherently unbounded (Bertinetto, Lenci 2012). The continuous aspect works well with the notion of stativity. In fact, within the scope of imperfectivity, it is the only applicable usage for permanent stative verbs as in 18:

18. Davide era noto a tutti per la sua grande generosità.
 Davide be-IMP-3SG:IPFV known to all for his great generosity
 Davide was known to all for his great generosity.

In addition to Tenses (primarily the Imperfect, but also the Present), the continuous aspect can also be rendered by the verbal periphrases *andare/venire* + Gerund¹² (Bertinetto 1997, Musto, Ripa 2007, Squartini 1990),

¹² When a verbal process is captured in its duration, i.e., with a durative focus, the *andare/venire* + Gerund periphrasis has a continuous value if the event is semelfactive, meaning it occurs on a single occasion (while it has a habitual value if the event repeats regularly). Typically, the continuous value of this periphrasis is conveyed by a contemporaneity scheme (Squartini 1990: 132), which involves pairing a sentence containing a verb in the imperfective aspect denoting a durative action, with a sentence containing a verb in the perfective or imperfective aspect denoting a durative action, as in the following example:

- | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|
| Mentre | la sua salute | <i>migliorava,</i> |
| while | his/her health | improve-IMP-3SG:IPFV |
| la sua amicizia | con Davide | <i>andava affievolendosi.</i> |
| his/her friendship | with Davide | go-IMP-3SG fade-GER:IPFV |

While his/her health was improving, his/her friendship with Davide was fading.

continuare a/seguitare a/persistere a + Infinitive, *non far altro che* + Infinitive, *essere intento a* + Infinitive:

19.	Durante tutto il pomeriggio	Davide	<i>andava correggendo/continuava a correggere</i>	compiti.
	during the whole afternoon	Davide	go-IMP-3SG+correct-GER:IPFV / continue-IMP-3SG+Prep+correct-Inf:IPFV	papers

Throughout the afternoon Davide was correcting/continued to correct papers.

2.2.3. Habituality

Habituality is represented by imperfective situations that repeat on various occasions over a period (Bybee, Perkins, Pagliuca, 1994: 127). Habituality can manifest in all temporal domains, including future in the past, but is most clearly observed in the past domain (Bertinetto, Lenci 2012). The indeterminate nature here is evident in the reference to an indeterminate number of iterations of an event and in the generic reference concerning temporal location (use of time frame adverbials like *in quel periodo* ‘in that period’, *quando era giovane* ‘when (s)he was young’, etc.). In particular contexts, there is an implication of indeterminacy regarding the possible continuation of the series of events that make up the habitual process:

As shown by this example, the continuous periphrasis is marked by a semantic nuance of incrementality, making it particularly suitable for durative telic verbs, i.e., verbs that describe prolonged events with a conclusion. Given the detelicizing effect that the periphrasis has when applied to telic verbs (see example above), it is hypothesized that the periphrasis possesses a more distinctly actional, atelic characterization rather than an aspectual one (Bertinetto 1997). It can also be used with perfective tenses without indicating the completion of the described event, as in the following example:

La qualità dei prodotti	<i>è andata migliorando</i>	anno dopo anno.
he quality of the products	be-PR-3SG(=AUX)+go-PP-F (=PC) improve-GER:PFV	year after year

The quality of the products has been improving year after year.

However, it remains incompatible with stative verbs (e.g., **andava stando*).

20.	L'anno scorso	Davide	<i>frequentava/ era solito frequentare</i>	il corso di Linguistica.
	last year	Davide	attend-IMP-3SG:IPFV/ be-IMP-3SG+used to+ attend-Inf:IPFV	the course of Linguistics

Last year Davide was attending the Linguistics course.

The habitual aspect uses the same verb Tenses as the progressive aspect: Present (*Presente*), Imperfect (*Imperfetto*), and (to a lesser extent) Simple Future (*Futuro semplice*)¹³. Additionally, the verbal periphrases *solere/essere solito/esser uso* 'be used to' + Infinitive (belonging to high style) and *aver l'abitudine di* 'be in the habit of' + Infinitive¹⁴ (of common use) can be used with habitual aspect value where the event described is characterized by the non-uniqueness of the situational context (cf. 21a and 21b).

¹³ Fortuin's crosslinguistic analysis (2023) based on 36 languages from different language families (excluding Uralic languages) led to the conclusion that habituality as such is not inherently IPFV; there is no general cognitive or semantic (functional) restriction on PFV's in habituals. He shows that there is a strong but certainly not absolute association between the imperfective and habitual constructions/expressions of unbounded repetition with past reference; however, perfective habituals are allowed in many languages (e.g. Hungarian, see Rózsavölgyi 2024). In general, the association between the PFV or IPFV aspect and habituality can be determined in a straightforward manner for languages that have a binary PFV – IPFV aspectual structure (such as Italian); however, this is typologically not very common. Most of the languages do not exclude PFV habituals, and there are specific triggers for their occurrence.

¹⁴ As Bertinetto and Lenci (2012) note, *aver l'abitudine di* + Infinitive stands apart from the other periphrases mentioned because it is compatible with perfective Tenses. Therefore, it can be regarded as a device conveying iterativity rather than true habituality. See for example:

<i>Ha sempre avuto/ebbe sempre l'abitudine di reprimere</i>	le sue passioni	a causa del condizionamento sociale.
have-PR-3SG(=AUX)+ always have-PP(=PC):PFV / have-PS-3SG:PFV always the habit to repress	his passions	because of social conditioning
He always had the habit of repressing his passions due to social conditioning.		

This domain presents two subcategories:

- a. pertaining to an event that regularly recurs¹⁵:

21a. Davide di solito/sempre *va via* prima di cena.
 Davide usually/always go-PR-3SG:IPFV away before dinner
 Davide usually/always leaves before dinner.

21b. Davide *è solito andare via* prima di cena.
 Davide is used to go away before dinner
 Davide usu-
 ally leaves
 before dinner.

- b. presenting an event or process as an attitude: the regularity of an event can develop into a genuine sense of continuity over time, to the point of indicating a constant attribute that, even when interrupted, can be seen as an inherent property of a particular subject where a consistent willingness to continue the process is sufficient. Within the semantics of permanent stative verbs, the attitudinal meaning is especially prominent, although not all permanent stative verbs exhibit attitudinality: the context must preserve the criterion of the process' repeatability. Other verbs, which may not fall among the permanent statives but are re-categorized as such in a given context, can also be employed in this domain (cf. 22):

22. Gli ungheresi *combattevano* a cavallo.
 the Hungarians fight-IMP-3PL:IPFV on horseback
 The Hungarians used to fight on horseback.

¹⁵ For criteria to differentiate habituality from iterativity within event-external pluractionality, where the same event repeats in various situations, refer to Bertinetto and Lenci (2012, 854-860).

2.3. Interference of domains of aspectuality and temporality

In Italian, aspect is primarily realized through verb Tenses and verbal periphrases, as we have already seen above. In Figure 2 the Tense system of the Italian indicative mood can be observed (based on Bertinetto 1997, 75). It shows the extent to which the domains of aspectuality and temporality may interfere in a language. The verb Tenses indicated in bold have a PFV aspectual value, those having typically IPFV values are in italics, while the rest is aspectually ambiguous, despite their typical uses being quite clear-cut.

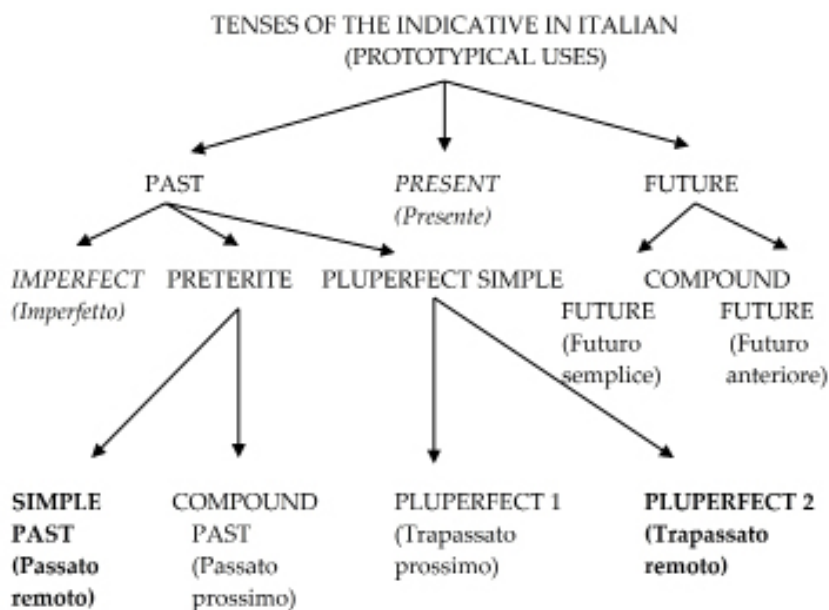


Figure 2. – Interference of domains of aspectuality (PFV/IPFV) and temporality in Italian. Purely PFV forms are in bold, typically IPFV forms are in italics.

Among the eight Tenses of the Italian Indicative, only the Simple Past (*Passato Remoto*) and Pluperfect 2 (*Trapassato Remoto*) exhibit consistent aspectual behavior, both possessing a purely perfective nature.

The Simple Past (Passato Remoto) is a deictic Tense, indicating that the event time and the reference time coincide, and are prior to the speech time. It typically embodies the aoristic aspect, signifying a completed process or event with its endpoint emphasized, without the speaker considering its consequences to be current and without allowing for habitual, continuous, or similar interpretations:

23. Davide *suonò* il pianoforte per lunghi anni.
 Davide play-PS-3SG:PFV the piano for long years
 Davide played the piano for many years.

Sentence 23 means that the event is necessarily completed, regardless of the time interval between the time of the event designated by the Simple Past and the speech time, that is, Davide no longer plays the piano. The Simple Past can also highlight the initial moment of the event, and will then have an ingressive value (Bertinetto, 1986, 19 ff.; 1991; see also examples 1 and 2 above).

Pluperfect 2 (Trapassato Remoto) is formed using the Simple Past of the auxiliary (*have* or *be*) and the Past Participle form of the main verb. This Tense, also found in other Romance languages, implies that the event occurred immediately before the reference time. Therefore, it represents a specific case of the perfect aspect, with a strong emphasis on the event's termination:

24. Quando *ebbe concluso* il suo lavoro se ne andò.
 when have-PS-3SG(=AUX)+ his/her work PrRifl away go-
 finish-PP:PFV PS-3SG:PFV
 When he had finished his work, he left.

The remaining Tenses display varying degrees of aspectual ambiguity and can be placed on a continuum whose end points are represented by the perfective and imperfective aspects respectively. Here is the list of them in order of increasing ambiguity (Bertinetto 1997):

Imperfect (*Imperfetto*): typically, imperfective Tense,
 Compound Future (*Futuro anteriore*): a predominantly perfective Tense,
 Present (*Presente*): typically, imperfective Tense,
 Compound Past (*Passato Prossimo*): has a predominantly perfective character but can accept imperfective usages,
 Pluperfect 1 (*Trapassato Prossimo*): has a predominantly perfective character but can accept imperfective usages,
 Simple Future (*Futuro semplice*): has a predominantly perfective character but can accept imperfective usages.

In what follows we will show how, based on the context, the aspectual value of Tenses can change.

Within the indicative mood, there are absolute Tenses, which refer to the present, past, and future, i.e., to contemporaneity, anteriority, and posteriority with reference to the speech time (deictic time reference); and there are relative Tenses, typically compound ones, which express anteriority relative to the moment of other events (anaphoric time reference).

2.3.1. The Imperfect Tense (*Imperfetto*)

The Imperfect Tense (*Imperfetto*) is typically employed in imperfective contexts (see also section 2.2). Using the Imperfect Tense gives the situation an indeterminate character, meaning the action is viewed in its progression without regard to its beginning, end, or the number of possible repetitions of the events. Occasionally, it permits contextual neutralization as in 25a, or even the reversal of its aspectual value:

- 25a. Se *accettavi* l'offerta *guadagnavi* molto.
 if accept-IMP-2SG:PFV the offer earn-IMP-2SG:PFV a lot
 If you had accepted the offer, you would have earned a lot.

In example 25a, the Imperfect is used in a counterfactual sentence where, in a colloquial context, it loses its predominant imperfective character and acquires a hypothetical value. The counterfactual event is perceived holistically, like perfective events. In a formal style, two Compound Tenses

25b.	Se	avessi accettato	l'offerta	avresti guadagnato	molto.
	if	have-SubjPl-2SG+ accept-PP:PFV	the offer	have-Cond-2SG earn-PP:PFV	much

It can also be used as an alternative to the Pluperfect 1 (*Trapassato prossimo*), particularly with transformative verbs, as seen in the following example from Bertinetto (1991, 80), to indicate the permanent result of a previously completed process:

¹⁷ Marginally, the Imperfect can have present-time reference in the so-called “politeness” *Imperfect* (A), or even future-time reference in the “potential” *Imperfect* (B) (cf. Bertinetto 2001):

A Ciao, *mi chiedo* se ti andrebbe di giocare a scacchi.
 hi PrRifl wonder-IMP-1SG if you-Dat Go-Cond-3SG Prep play-Inf Prep chess
 Hi, I am wondering if you'd like to play chess.

B	Domani	<i>c'era</i>	un concerto	fantastico	ma	i biglietti	sono esauriti.
	tomorrow	there be-IMP-3SG	a concert	fantastic	but	the tickets	be-PR-3PL(=AUX)+ sell out-PP-M-PL (=PC):PFV

Tomorrow there was going to be a fantastic concert, but the tickets are sold out.

26. L'esperienza passata gli insegnava/aveva insegnato che
 the past experience he-Dat teach-IMP-3SG:PFV/have-IMP-3SG(=AUX)+teach-PP:PFV that
 l'impulsività è controproducente.
 the impulsiveness is counterproductive
 Experience taught/had taught him that impulsiveness was counterproductive.

2.3.2. The Compound Future (*Futuro anteriore*)

The Compound Future (*Futuro anteriore*) is primarily a perfective Tense with an indefinite temporal aspect, meaning that the timing of the event often remains unspecified. It usually indicates that the event will be completed by a certain moment:

27. Quando arriveranno, avremo già pranzato.
 when arrive-FUT-3PL have-FUT-1PL(=AUX) already
 have-lunch-PP:PFV
 By the time they arrive, we will have already had lunch.

The strong perfective nature of the Compound Future is also evident from its actional restrictions: it shows a clear preference for telic verbs, i.e., verbs that inherently reference an achievable goal.

This Tense marginally permits an imperfective interpretation, such as the so-called “inclusive” usage, which should be considered aspectually hybrid as it represents ambiguous situations from an aspectual perspective. These structures have specific restrictions on the types of verbs used, particularly activity verbs and contingent statives:

28. Al loro ritorno avremo già studiato per cinque ore e
 at their return have-FUT-1PL(=AUX) for five hours and
 already study-PP:PFV
 potremo continuare per altre due.
 be-able-FUT-1PL continue-Inf for another two
 When they return, we will have already studied for five hours and will be able to continue for another two.

Within the imperfective domain, habituality can marginally be expressed with the Compound Future Tense:

29. Tutte le volte che *avrai sbagliato*, dovrai rifare il lavoro.
 every time that have-FUT-2SG(=AUX) make-a-mistake-PP:IPFV have to-FUT-2SG redo-Inf the work
 Every time you make a mistake, you will have to redo the work.

2.3.3. Present Tense (*Presente*),

In the Present Tense (*Presente*), speech time, event time and reference time coincide. The Present is predominantly imperfective (Bertinetto 1991, 62-73), whether in a habitual (30) or progressive (31) sense:

30. Davide *va* a lezione di pianoforte ogni martedì.
 Davide go-PR-3SG:IPFV to lesson of piano every Tuesday
 Davide goes to piano lessons every Tuesday.
- 31a. Il bambino *dorme*.
 the baby sleep-PR-3SG:IPFV
 The baby is sleeping.
- 31b. Il bambino *sta dormendo*.
 the baby be-PR-3SG(=AUX)+sleep-GER:IPFV
 The baby is sleeping.

In 31a, the event lasts until the speech time, without indicating what happens afterward. As shown in 31b, the progressive periphrasis can be used in such cases, except with stative verbs (see the agrammaticality of 32, cf. 2.2.1):

32. *Davide *sta essendo malato*.
 Davide be-PR-3SG(=AUX)+be-GER:IPFV ill
 Davide is (being) ill.

The so-called “immediate” Present (*Presente “immediato”*) also falls within the imperfective category, referring to an instantaneous event that coincides with the moment of utterance, such as in live news broadcasts.

The so-called “immediate” Present (*Presente immediato*) also belongs to the imperfective domain. It denotes an instantaneous event that unfolds simultaneously with the moment of utterance, typically occurring in live reporting or sports commentary. In such cases, there is a close temporal overlap between the event and the speech act: the speaker describes momentary actions as they occur, as in real-time narrative texts. See the following example of Bertinetto (ivi, 66):

33. Brambilla *dribbla* sulla *crossa* al centro, *irrompe*
 destra,
 Brambilla dribble-PR- on the cross-PR- to the charge
 3SG:IPFV right 3SG:IPFV centre in- PR-
 3SG:IPFV
 Sornioni, che *si perde* sul fondo.
 palla
 Sornioni ball that get lost- PR- at the
 3SG:IPFV bottom
 Brambilla dribbles down the right wing, crosses to the center, Sornioni
 charges in, the ball goes out of play.

This usage occupies a borderline position within the aspectual continuum: while formally imperfective, the immediate Present approximates the aoristic function by conveying a sequence of punctual, bounded events perceived as unfolding in real time. It thus exemplifies how aspectual interpretation in Italian may shift dynamically along the perfective–imperfective axis according to discourse type and pragmatic context.

The interaction of perfectivity and imperfectivity can be seen in the “inclusive” usage typical of predominantly Perfect Tenses whose typical function is to indicate that the event’s temporal location precedes a specific reference time. However, in Italian the Present Tense must be used instead of the Compound Past (*Passato Prossimo*) when the reference time and the speech time coincide (cf. 34) entailing current relevance and/or duration of the situation referred to. This is because the perfect aspect of

the Compound Past has weakened over time, adopting a predominantly aoristic value. Therefore, the Compound Past can only be used in contexts with an aoristic meaning, excluding any reference to the speech time (35):

34. Il bambino *dorme* da due ore.
 the child sleep-PR-3SG:PFV/IPFV for two hours
 The child has been sleeping for two hours.
35. Il bambino *ha dormito* due ore fa/dalle due alle tre.
 the child have-PR-3SG(=AUX)+ two hours ago/
 sleep-PP(=PC):PFV from two to three
 The child slept two hours ago/from two to three.

Perfective uses of the Present Tense include references to future events, which are particularly common in colloquial language (see 36), statements with “immediate effectiveness” (*efficacia immediata*) like various declarations (see 37), or the historical Present (*Presente storico*) where past events are ideally brought to the present temporal level. This latter use is typical of narratives and certain literary genres such as fairy tales, biographies, anecdotes, jokes and generally in spontaneous speech. The historical Present can be divided into narrative¹⁸ (*Presente narrativo*, 38¹⁹, cf. also footnote 6), to heighten the dramatic force by describing events as if they were still unfolding, and dramatic (*Presente drammatico*, 39), to highlight some events over others.

36. Davide *arriva* domani.
 Davide arrive-PR-3SG:PFV tomorrow
 Davide arrives tomorrow.
37. *Rifiuto* di crederci.
 refuse-PR-1SG:PFV to believe-it
 I refuse to believe it.

¹⁸ The narrative Present can recover the imperfective value where, by transposing the narrative into the corresponding Tenses of the past, a progressive Imperfect would be obtained.

¹⁹ Source of the examples 38 and 39: <<https://www.agenziadedalo.it/2020/06/12/tem-po-narrativo/>>.

38. Napoleone Bonaparte *nasce* ad Ajaccio il 15 agosto del 1769 e
 Napoleon Bonaparte be born-PR-3SG:PFV in Ajaccio on the 15 August of 1768 and
muore in esilio a S. Elena, il 5 maggio del 1821.
 die-PR-3SG:PFV in exile in S. Elena on the 5 May of 1821
 Napoleon Bonaparte was born in Ajaccio on 15 August 1769 and died in exile in S. Elena on 5 May 1821.
39. Eravamo nel pub. Ecco che *arriva* Marco,
 be-IMP-1PL in the pub here arrive-PR-3SG:PFV Marco
 tutto *dice* che lo hanno accoltellato.
 insanguinato: say-PR-3SG:PFV that him have-PR-3PL(=AUX)+stab-PP(=PC):PFV
 all bloody
 Uscimmo di corsa, per portarlo in ospedale.
 go out-PS-1PL:PFV running to take him in hospital
- We were in the pub. Here comes Marco, all bloody: he says he was stabbed. We rushed out to take him to the hospital.

The aspectual value of the Present Tense becomes neutralized in hypothetical constructions or in situations that are omnitemporal or atemporal, such as in stage directions, recipe instructions, landscape descriptions, proverbs, moral precepts, and similar contexts:

40. [La Sardegna] *si situa* tra il 41^o e il 39^o parallelo nord, mentre
 Sardinia PrRifl-3SG locate-PR-3SG:N between the 41st and 39th parallel north while
 il 40^o la divide quasi a metà²⁰.
 the 40th it-Acc-F divide- PR-3SG:N almost in half

[Sardinia] is located between the 41st and 39th parallel north, while the 40th divides it almost in half.

41. Can che abbaia non morde.
 dog that bark-PR-3SG:N not bite-PR-3SG:N
 Barking dogs do not bite. (proverb)

2.3.4. Compound Past (*Passato Prossimo*)

The Compound Past (*Passato Prossimo*) primarily has a perfective nature but can accommodate imperfective usages. In the Compound Past, the speech time and the reference time coincide and follow the event time. As a result of neutralization, this Tense has diminished its original perfect aspectual connotations and adopted a predominant aoristic value²¹. This process is called the “aoristic drift” by Squartini and Bertinetto (2000, 403-404)²².

²⁰ Source of the example: <<https://www.wikiwand.com/it/Sardegna>>.

²¹ Squartini and Bertinetto (2000) note that the trend of convergence from the Past Perfect to the Past Aoristic (or, less commonly, vice versa) is a common phenomenon in Indo-European languages. This occurs because the Present form of the Perfect Tense is typically unstable and often evolves into a Past Perfective Tense. For more on the Perfect Tense and aspect, as well as the definition and characterization of the semantic category “perfect”, see Ritz (2012), who concludes: «the perfect, rather, is the shapeshifter of tense-aspect categories, changing and adapting its meaning to it in a given system and to serve the communicative goals of speakers. If changeability is its very essence, it is no wonder that it has been, and continues to be, a challenge to tense-aspect theories».

²² Comparing the Compound Past (*Passato Prossimo*) and the Simple Past (*Passato Remoto*), we can state that in the context of perfectivity, where the action is viewed as a whole, regardless of its duration, the final moment (aspect of completeness) can become significant in the Compound Past, while a punctual (aoristic) aspect can be emphasized in the Simple Past, which can also highlight the initial moment of the action, thus giving it an ingressive value.

In contemporary Italian, the use of the Compound Past is increasingly encroaching upon the domain of the Simple Past (*Passato Remoto*) in aoristic contexts²³:

- | | | | |
|------|--|-------------------|----------------------|
| 42a. | <i>Si sono trasferiti</i>
PrRifl be-PR-3PL(AUX)+
move-PP(=CP):PFV
They moved to Rome in 1961. | a Roma
to Rome | nel 1961.
in 1961 |
| 42b. | <i>Si trasferirono</i>
PrRifl move-PS-3PL:PFV
They moved to Rome in 1961. | a Roma
to Rome | nel 1961.
in 1961 |

With deictic temporal reference, the Compound Past has a perfect aspectual value, indicating the current relevance of the process, either considered psychologically current in its enduring effects (43) or even suggesting an indeterminate conclusion of the process (inclusive meaning), which is imperfective in nature (44):

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 43. | Cosa ti ha detto?
what to you have-PR-3SG(=AUX)+say-PP(=PC):IPFV
What has he told you? (it is clear you are upset by what has been said to you) |
|-----|---|

²³ The use of the Compound Past (*Passato prossimo*) and the Simple Past (*Passato remoto*) in spontaneous speech varies regionally. In northern Italy, the Simple Past is not used at all, and in many dialects, it has even disappeared from verbal morphology. The distinction between Compound Past and Simple Past remains active in Tuscany and central Italy, while in southern Italy, particularly in Sicily, the Simple Past prevails. Since the Middle Ages, there has been an expansion of the Compound Past at the expense of the Simple Past in northern Italy, where the Simple Past vanished, and since the Renaissance, albeit to a lesser extent, in Tuscany. The Compound Past's ability to assume the functions of the Simple Past creates an uncertain and confusing situation in the literary language, where the Simple Past is typically used in narratives to indicate events connected in chronological succession (A. L. Lepschy, G. Lepschy 1992, 82-83, Squartini, Bertinetto 2000, 422-426).

44. *Abbiamo sempre fatto* così.
 have-PR-1PL(=AUX)+ always do-PP(=PC):IPFV so
 We have always done it this way. (why should we change?)

With non-deictic temporal reference, the Compound Past denotes anteriority:

- a. with respect to a reference time located in the past as in 45:

45. Davide *ha lavato* i piatti
 Davide have-PR-3SG(=AUX)+ the dishes
 wash-PP(=PC):PFV
 dopo che gli ospiti *sono andati via.*
 after that the guests be-PR-3PL(=AUX)+go-PP-
 PL-M(=PC):PFV away
 Davide washed the dishes after the guests had left.

- b. with respect to a reference time located in the future (46), usually expressed by the main clause:

46. Solo la settimana sapremo se hai passato l'esame.
 prossima
 only next week know-FUT-1PL:PFV if have-PRES-2SG(=AUX-)+pass-PP(=PC):PFV the exam
 Only next week will we know if you passed the exam.

- c. without chronological designation in omnitemporal or atemporal uses, where the anteriority refers to a hypothetical reference time that can be arbitrarily placed on the temporal axis (47), and habitual uses (48) where the reference time is not unique:

47. Uno che *ha studiato* medicina deve sapere questo.
 one who have-PR-3SG(=AUX)+ medicine must-PR-3SG this
 study-PP(=PC):PFV know-Inf
 One who has studied medicine must know this.

48. Ad ogni lezione inventa delle scuse perché
 at every lesson think up-PR-3SG excuses because
 non *ha fatto* i compiti.
 not have-Pres-3SG(=AUX)+-do-PP(=PC):PFV the assign-ments
 At every lesson he makes excuses for why he didn't do his homework.

2.3.5. Pluperfect 1 (*Trapassato Prossimo*)

The Pluperfect 1 (*Trapassato Prossimo*) predominantly has a perfective character but can also accommodate imperfective usages (Bertinetto 1991, 101-110; A. L. Lepschy, G. Lepschy 1992). Its uses are entirely non-deictic, as they require connection to a reference time that precedes the speech time, indicating relative precedence to another past reference point. Thus, in Pluperfect 1, the speech time, the event time, and the reference time are all distinct from one another.

From an aspectual perspective, the Pluperfect 1 Tense expresses completeness in the past, presenting the entire process as an event that concluded. It is thus compatible with expressions indicating a specific duration (cf. 49) as well as those indicating a numerically determined repetition (cf. 50), a scope not covered by the canonical meanings of the Imperfect:

49. In quegli anni *eravamo andati* in vacanza in Toscana.
 in those years be-IMP-1PL(=AUX)+ go-PP-PL-M(=PluP1):PFV on holiday in Tuscany
 In those years, we had gone on holiday to Tuscany.
50. Durante le vacanze del 2005 Riccardo e
 during the holidays of 2005 Riccardo and
 Davide *avevano visto* il film tre volte.
 Davide have-IMP-3PL(=AUX)+see-PP(=PluP1):PFV the film three times
 During the 2005 holidays, Riccardo and Davide saw the film three times.

The primary imperfective value of Pluperfect 1 is evident in its aspectually hybrid inclusive usage, which applies to all Compound Tenses except the Pluperfect 2 (as seen earlier, cf. 2.3.). This usage occurs when the event time includes the reference time, with any duration of the process beyond the reference time left undetermined. Only the context can clarify the interpretation (51)²⁴:

51. Prima di venire in Italia, Árpád *aveva già studiato* l'italiano.
 before Prep in Italy Árpád have-IMP-3SG(=AUX)+ already study-PP (=Plup1):PFV/IPFV Italian
 Before coming to Italy, Árpád had already studied Italian.

Pluperfect 1 can also express the habitual interpretation of the imperfective value as in 52:

52. Ogni volta, dopo che *avevano giocato* a pallacanestro nel parco,
 every time after that have-IMP-3PL(=AUX)+ play-PP(=PluP1):IPFV basketball in the park
 Davide lo accompagnava a casa.
 Davide him accompany-IMP-3SG:IPFV home
 Every time, after they had played basketball in the park, Davide accompanied him home.

2.3.6. Simple Future (*Futuro Semplice*)

The Simple Future (*Futuro Semplice*) primarily has a perfective aspect, indicating an event that will occur after the speech time and presenting the event in its entirety, often highlighting its endpoint (53):

²⁴ In Modern Italian, unlike in Ancient Italian, the progressive form is incompatible with perfective Tenses. Thus, the aspectually ambivalent inclusive meaning is conveyed by the Compound Tenses themselves in appropriate contexts (Bertinetto 1997, 71).

53. La settimana prossima Davide *farà* l'esame di guida.
 next week Davide take-FUT-3SG:PFV the driving test
 Next week, Davide will take his driving test.

However, the Simple Future can also occasionally take on imperfective uses, which can be habitual (54), progressive, or continuous in nature.

54. Nell'anno accademico prossimo *frequenterò* il corso di Letteratura ungherese ogni martedì.
 in the next academic year attend-FUT-1SG:IPF the course of Hungarian literature every Tuesday
 In the next academic year, I will attend the Hungarian literature course every Tuesday.

For the progressive meaning, the progressive periphrasis can also be used, see 55a and 55b:

- 55a. Quando arriverai al conservatorio i ragazzi *suoneranno* già.
 when arrive-FUT-2SG at the conservatory the boys play-FUT-3PL:IPFV already
 When you arrive at the conservatory, the boys will already be playing.
- 55b. Quando arriverai al conservatorio i ragazzi *straranno* già suonando.
 when arrive-FUT-2SG at the conservatory the boys be-FUT-3PL(=AUX)+ already play-GER:IPFV
 When you arrive at the conservatory, the boys will already be playing.

In its continuous sense, the periphrasis *andare* + Gerund²⁵ can also be employed. It constitutes a stylistically marked device that highlights the

²⁵ The difference between the progressive and continuous periphrases lies in whether the event is viewed from a single focal point or multiple focal points. Progressive periphrasis is grammatical only when there is a single point of focus (Bertinetto, 1997):

durative and multi-phasal nature of an event within a single temporal frame, typically expressing gradual progression (56) and, more rarely, iterativity (57):

56.	Quando	si sposteranno	in periferia	la situazione	<i>peggiorerà/andrà peggiorando</i>
	when	PrRifl move-FUT-3PL	to periphery	the situation	worsen-FUT-3SG:IPFV/go-FUT-3SG(=AUX)+ worsen-GER:IPFV

When they move to the suburbs, the situation will worsen/will be worsening.

Giorno dopo giorno	Franco	<i>andrà/ *starà convincendosi</i>	dell'innocenza	di Maria.
day by day	Franco	go-FUT-3SG(=AUX)+ / be-FUT-3SG(=AUX)+ convince-himself-GER:IPFV	of the innocence	of Maria

Day by day, Franco will become convinced of Maria's innocence. (only the continuous periphrasis is grammatical)

In cases of single focalization, the distinction is less clear:

a.	Quando	Riccardo	entrerà	Davide	<i>starà scrivendo</i>	una lettera.
	when	Riccardo	enter-FUT-3SG	Davide	be-FUT-3SG(=AUX)+ write-GER:IPFV	a letter

When Riccardo enters, Davide will be writing a letter. (use of progressive periphrasis)

b?	Quando	Riccardo	entrerà	Davide	<i>andrà scrivendo</i>	una lettera.
	when	Riccardo	enter-FUT-3SG	Davide	go-FUT-3SG(=AUX)+ write-GER:IPFV	a letter

When Riccardo enters, Davide will be writing a letter. (use of continuous periphrasis which sounds somewhat strange)

57. Davide *ripeterà /andra ripetendo* la propria estraneità ai fatti.
 Davide repeat-FUT-3SG:IPFV/ his unfamiliarity with the events
 go-FUT-3SG(=AUX)+
 repeat-GER:IPFV
 Davide will repeatedly assert his unfamiliarity with the events.

The sense of continuity can also be conveyed by a temporal subordinate clause introduced by *mentre* 'while' (58):

58. Gli suggeriremo l'idea una notte *mentre* giocheremo a biliardo.
 to him suggest- the idea one night while play-FUT-1PL:IPFV
 FUT-1PL billiards
 We will suggest the idea to him one night while we are playing billiards.

2.4. Conclusions on the aspectual system of Italian

Based on our analysis of the Tense-aspect system in Italian, it can be concluded that the conceptual distinctions within the category of aspect correspond to the Tenses with some degree of fuzziness. The temporal values of the Tenses are generally multifaceted, with each Tense encompassing a broad range of possibilities that can be identified in appropriate contexts. This is why Bertinetto (1997, 76) asserts that the complexity of the Italian Tense-aspect system is intrinsic to the nature of verbal Tenses themselves. Nonetheless, certain correlations between Tenses and specific temporal and aspectual functions are preferred. Tenses can be organized hierarchically based on their typicality concerning their perfective and imperfective aspectual values. The internal structuring of the Italian Tense-aspect system can be captured more adequately in the context of prototype theory which permits category boundaries to be unclear, with ambiguous or indeterminate membership.

3. Functions and strategies in cross-linguistic comparison: the case of aspectual constructions

Recent developments in linguistic typology (Cristofaro 2009; Croft 2016, 2022; Dryer 2016) have emphasized that meaningful cross-linguistic compa-

parison cannot be achieved by relying solely on traditional morphosyntactic categories assumed to be universal. Martin Haspelmath has been especially influential in arguing that the uncritical use of descriptive labels such as *perfect* or *progressive* across languages generates conceptual ambiguity and terminological confusion (Haspelmath 2010, 2018, 2020, 2021, 2023).

To address this problem, Haspelmath proposes that typology and comparative grammar should operate with comparative concepts, that is, explicitly defined analytical notions designed for cross-linguistic comparison and applicable to any language by uniform criteria. Comparative concepts are heuristic tools rather than universal categories: they function as standardized instruments for description, much as the International Phonetic Alphabet provides a shared framework for representing sound categories without assuming language-specific phonemes to be identical.

In later work (Haspelmath 2025), this approach is reformulated through the distinction between construction-functions and construction-strategies.

- *Construction-functions* denote cross-linguistically comparable semantic–pragmatic roles, that is, the universal communicative purposes fulfilled by linguistic constructions.
- *Construction-strategies* refer to the language-specific formal means employed to realize those functions.

Languages may therefore share the same function yet differ radically in the strategies through which they express it. Failing to distinguish between the two levels risks typological distortion, either by assuming that formally similar constructions have identical meanings, or by concluding that a language lacks a given category simply because it encodes the same function through a different formal device. This function–strategy framework proves particularly illuminating in the domain of aspect, where diverse grammatical strategies encode comparable aspectual functions. Comparative concepts such as *perfective* or *progressive* thus serve as functional labels independent of the morphosyntactic or lexical strategies by which individual languages realize them. This methodological distinction prevents the imposition of language-specific categories and enables a genuinely function-based typological comparison.

Confronting Italian and Hungarian aspectual domains

Table 1 summarizes the aspectual values of Hungarian (adapted from Rózsavölgyi 2024).

Aspectual domain		Main semantic features	Typical examples
main	subdomains		
PERFECTIVE (indivisible events)	Delimitative, single occurrence	The event is viewed as a single, completed whole with finite duration.	<i>Megírta a házi feladatát.</i> '(S)he did her/his homework.'
	Delimitative, repetitive	Series of completed events. Habitual meaning possible when iterations are conceived as discrete completed events.	<i>Minden este megírta a házi feladatát.</i> '(S) he did her/his homework every evening.'
	Momentary, unbounded, single occurrence	Instantaneous event without internal temporal structure.	<i>Tüsszentett.</i> '(S)he sneezed.'
	Momentary, unbounded, repetitive	Repetition of short, non-durative events.	<i>Sokszor tüsszentett ma reggel.</i> '(S)he sneezed several times this morning.'
	Momentary, bounded, single occurrence	Instantaneous change-of-state event with an endpoint/ result.	<i>Rájött az igazságra.</i> '(S) he realized the truth.'
	Momentary, bounded, repetitive	Multiple punctual resultative events, each with its own endpoint.	<i>Háromszor győzött az iskolai sakkversenyen.</i> '(S)he won three times at the school chess tournament.'

IMPERFECTIVE (divisible events)	Durative bounded, single occurrence (progressive)	Ongoing event within a defined time span.	<i>Éppen jött fel, amikor találkozott a szomszédoddal.</i> '(S) he was coming up when ((s)he) met the neighbour.'
	Durative unbounded, single occurrence (continuous)	Continuous, internally divisible event; beginning and end are irrelevant.	<i>Egész nap olvasott.</i> '(S) he was reading all day.'
	Durative unbounded, repetitive (habitual)	Event repeated in time without fixed limit or closure.	<i>Minden este olvasott.</i> '(S)he used to read/ read every evening.'
STATE (uninterrupted events)	Uninterrupted, single occurrence	Static, durative situation without internal change.	<i>Beteg volt.</i> '(S)he was ill.'
	Uninterrupted, repetitive	Iteration of static situations.	<i>Gyakran beteg volt.</i> '(S) he was often ill.'

Table 1 – An overview of aspectual values of Hungarian.

Table 2 reinterprets these values within Haspelmath's framework of construction-functions and construction-strategies (2025), thereby facilitating a more precise and effective comparison with Italian.

CONSTRUCTION-FUNCTION	CONSTRUCTION-STRATEGY	TYPICAL EXAMPLES
PFV, Delimitative (telic, completed event)	In preverbal position: verbal modifiers (particle, indefinite Lative complement, indefinite Direct Object). In postverbal position: a linguistic element elaborating a natural endpoint ensuring boundedness: a definite Direct Object, an NP with Lative cases, temporal modifiers functioning as arguments.	<i>Megírta a házi feladatát.</i> '(S)he did her/his homework.'

PFV, Delimitative (repetitive)	Same strategy as above + repetition marker (adverbials: <i>minden este</i> 'every evening', etc.); bounded.	<i>Minden este megírta a házi feladatát.</i> '(S) he did her/his homework every evening.'
PFV, Momentary (punctual, instantaneous)	Lexical verb denoting short event + perfective particle (optional). No overt morphology; lexical aspect (semelfactive <i>Aktionsart</i>) signals punctuality and episodicity. Unbounded.	<i>Tüsszentett.</i> '(S)he sneezed.'
PFV, Momentary (repetitive)	Lexical verb denoting short, repeatable events without explicit boundary marking + repetition marker (frequency adverbials: <i>sokszor</i> 'several times', etc.); unbounded,	<i>Sokszor tüsszentett ma reggel.</i> '(S)he sneezed several times this morning.'
PFV, Momentary (single occurrence, resultative. Telic semantics marks instantaneous result/change-of-state)	Combination of perfective particle (often <i>ra-/re-, meg-</i>) + telic verb; bounded.	<i>Rájött az igazságra.</i> '(S) he realized the truth.'
PFV, Momentary (repetitive: sequence of completed punctual events)	(Perfective particle +) lexical verb in iterative context (frequency adverbials: <i>háromszor</i> 'three times', etc.); bounded.	<i>Háromszor győzött az iskolai sakkversenyen.</i> '(S)he won three times at the school chess tournament.'
IPFV, Durative (single occurrence ongoing, progressive)	Particle in postverbal position (or absent) + adverb <i>épp(en)</i> (just, right now/then) + framing effect + a particular intonation contour; bounded.	<i>Éppen jött fel, amikor találkozott a szomszédal.</i> '(S) he was coming up when ((s)he) met the neighbour.'
IPFV, Durative (continuous single occurrence)	Base verb with no particle + durative context (adverbials: <i>egész nap</i> 'all day', etc.); unbounded.	<i>Egész nap olvasott.</i> '(S) he was reading all day.'

IPFV, Durative (unbounded, repetitive, habitual)	Base verb with no particle + habitual context (iterative adverbials: <i>minden este</i> 'every evening', etc.); unbounded.	<i>Minden este olvasott.</i> '(S)he used to read/ read every evening.'
STATE, Uninterrupted (single occurrence)	Lexical stative verb or copular clause (with <i>van</i> 'be' or zero- copula).	<i>Beteg volt.</i> '(S)he was ill.'
STATE, Uninterrupted (repetitive)	Stative predicate + frequency adverbial (<i>gyakran</i> 'often', etc.)	<i>Gyakran beteg volt.</i> '(S) he was often ill.'

Table 2 – Hungarian aspect in terms of construction-functions and construction-strategies.

In Hungarian, the primary aspectual opposition is that between the imperfective, which denotes events conceived as internally divisible, and the perfective, which presents events as indivisible and bounded. The perfective highlights the attainment of a goal and the successful completion of an action, which is thus construed as no longer continuable or repeatable. States may be regarded either as a specific subcategory of the imperfective aspect or, following Kiefer (2006), as forming a third, independent domain of uninterrupted situations.

The representation of events in Hungarian depends both on the event schema inherently encoded in verbal semantics and on the grammatical constructions that interact with it. It emerges from the interplay of a wide range of semantic, grammatical, prosodic, and pragmatic factors, including *Aktionsart*, the use of verbal particles, alternations in word order, transitivity and the definiteness of objects and arguments, temporal adverbials, sentence stress, intonation, and the information structure of the clause. The language lacks dedicated morphological aspect markers, providing a clear example of the syntactic–semantic realization of aspect. In Modern Hungarian, aspectual distinctions are context-dependent and scalar, rather than strictly binary.

For comparative purposes, Table 3 provides a concise overview of the aspectual values of Italian, while Table 4 shows Italian aspect in terms of construction-functions and construction-strategies.

Aspectual domain		Main semantic features	Typical ways of expression	Typical examples
main	subdomains			
PFV	Aoristic	Denotes temporally bounded, single events viewed as complete or globally delimited; compatible with expressions of determined duration or iteration.	Passato remoto, Passato prossimo (with aoristic value), Trapassato remoto. Compatible with telic verbs; often co-occurs with delimiting adverbials ("in X time", "from X to Y", etc.). Common in narrative contexts.	<i>Costruirono la città in un anno.</i> 'They built the city in one year.'
	Perfect (resultative)	Situates an event prior to a specific reference point, viewed from the perspective of that point. Semantic functions include: inclusivity (ongoing or iterative situation up to the present), experientiality (event experienced at least once), recent past (newly occurred event), and persistent result (past action with still-valid effects).	Expressed mainly through compound past forms (Passato prossimo with resultative use, Trapassato prossimo, Futuro anteriore). Compatible with completed duration expressions ("for X time").	<i>Quando hai chiamato, Davide era già uscito.</i> 'When you called, Davide had already left.'
	Ingressive	Highlights the onset of an action or state.	Selects aoristic tenses (Passato remoto, Passato prossimo with aoristic value). Occurs with durative verbs without telic value or temporary stative verbs. Use of periphrases (<i>iniziare a</i> + Infinitive, <i>mettersi a</i> + Infinitive).	<i>In quel momento l'acqua zampillò/è zampillata dal rubinetto.</i> 'At that moment, the water spurted from the tap.'

IPFV	Progressive	Event in progress at a specific reference point; internal viewpoint. Characterized by indeterminacy (uncertainty about continuation beyond the focus point, in past events), semelfactivity (single occurrence). Requires punctual, determinate temporal reference often marked by adverbials (<i>in quel momento</i> 'at that very moment', <i>alle 8</i> 'at 8 a.m.').	Imperfetto, Presente, Futuro semplice, progressive periphrasis <i>stare</i> + Gerund. Incompatible with delimiting adverbials; prefers durative verbs.	<i>Davide stava andando via quando mi vide arrivare.</i> 'Davide was leaving when he saw me arriving.'
	Continuous	Presents an event as uninterrupted in a time interval. Implies absence of temporal closure. (N.B.: iterativity cannot occur in the present, as it presupposes a closed interval). Two main subtypes: durative and iterative.	Imperfetto, Presente, Perifrasi verbali: <i>andare/venire</i> + Gerund; Verbi fraseologici: <i>continuare a/seguire a/persistere a</i> + Infinite; Costruzioni specifiche: <i>non far altro che</i> + Infinite, <i>essere intento a</i> + Infinite. Compatible with durative or permanent stative verbs.	<i>Durante la discussione, fumava/continuava a fumare nervosamente.</i> 'During the discussion, (s) he was smoking/kept on smoking nervously.' <i>Davide era noto a tutti per la sua grande generosità.</i> 'Davide was known to everyone for his great generosity.'

IPFV	Habitual	Repeated events over a period of time. Characterized by indeterminacy in frequency and temporal anchoring (<i>quando era giovane</i> ‘when he was young’ etc.), and in some contexts, by uncertainty regarding the possible continuation of the habitual series of events.	Most salient in the past, though it can appear in all temporal domains (Imperfetto, Presente, Futuro semplice). Periphrases <i>essere solito/avere l’abitudine di</i> + Infinitive. Compatible with dynamic and stative verbs in iterative readings. With permanent stative verbs, it expresses attitudinality.	<i>Da giovane andava/era solito ad andare a cavallo.</i> ‘When young, he used to ride horses.’
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Table 3 – An overview of the aspectual values of Italian.

CONSTRUCTION-FUNCTION	CONSTRUCTION-STRATEGY	TYPICAL EXAMPLES	NOTES
PFV, Perfective (global, telic)	Passato remoto; Passato prossimo (aoristic use); Trapassato remoto	<i>Arrivò tardi alla festa.</i> ‘(S)he arrived late at the party.’	Presents the event as completed and bounded; external viewpoint; canonical narrative and aoristic function.
PFV, Resultative/ anterior (state resulting from prior event)	Passato prossimo (resultative use); Trapassato prossimo; Futuro anteriore	<i>Ho finito il lavoro.</i> ‘I have finished the work.’	Expresses anteriority or current relevance; focuses on resultant state of a completed event.

PFV, Ingressive (onset-focused)	Passato remoto; Passato prossimo (aoristic inchoative use), periphrases	<i>Cominciò a piovere.</i> 'It began to rain.'	Marks entry (or transition) into an action or state; onset highlighted lexically or contextually; common with punctual or stative predicates.
PFV, Momentary, repetitive	Passato remoto (punctual iteration); Passato prossimo (episodic series); use of lexical punctuals and frequency adverbials	<i>Suonò tre volte il campanello.</i> '(S) he rang the bell three times.'	Refers to discrete, completed repetitions; the temporal frame is externally bounded.
IPFV, General imperfective (ongoing)	Imperfetto; Presente; Futuro semplice	<i>Mangiava lentamente.</i> '(S) he was eating slowly.'	Expresses unbounded, durative, ongoing events from an internal viewpoint. Typical of background description, states, and actions in progress.
IPFV, Progressive (internal viewpoint)	Imperfetto; Presente; Futuro semplice; <i>stare</i> + Gerund;	<i>Sto leggendo un articolo.</i> 'I am reading an article.'	Denotes ongoing action simultaneously with bounded reference time; the progressive periphrasis reinforces the progressive meaning.

IPFV, Continuous (durative, uninterrupted)	Imperfetto; Presente; periphrases	<i>Andava ripetendo/ continuava a ripetere le stesse parole.</i> '(S)he kept repeating the same words.'	Events presented as uninterrupted within an interval, without defined boundaries. Highlights temporal continuity and gradual progression; often stylistically marked; may convey incremental or iterative nuance; works well with stative verbs.
IPFV, Habitual/ iterative	Imperfetto; Presente; Futuro semplice; periphrases	<i>Ogni sera guardava la televisione.</i> 'Every evening (s)he watched TV.'	Marks regular repetition or characteristic behavior over time; generic temporal reference.
IPFV, Momentary, repetitive	Imperfetto (iterative use); Presente (repeated actions)	<i>Batteva il pugno sul tavolo.</i> '(S)he kept pounding his fist on the table.'	Repeated punctual acts viewed as unbounded.

Table 4 – Italian aspect in terms of construction-functions and construction-strategies.

Italian expresses aspectual distinctions primarily through Tense morphology, periphrastic constructions, and lexical semantics, rather than

through dedicated aspect markers, with a flexible and context-dependent opposition between perfective and imperfective values.

The perfective–imperfective contrast emerges most clearly in the Past Tense system (e.g., *Imperfetto* vs. *Passato remoto/Passato prossimo*), while Present, Future, and compound forms exhibit greater contextual flexibility. Perfective meanings tend to prevail in the Simple Past and compound Tenses, whereas imperfective readings are typically conveyed by the *Imperfetto* and periphrastic constructions.

Although Italian is traditionally described as an aspectual language characterized by a binary opposition between perfective and imperfective values, closer examination reveals that this distinction is not always clear-cut. Aspectual oppositions often blur, and cases of neutralized or hybrid instances emerge due to temporal, pragmatic, or discourse-related factors.

Certain tense forms, such as the Present (*Presente*), Compound Past (*Passato prossimo*), Imperfect (*Imperfetto*, especially in its narrative use, *Imperfetto narrativo*), and the Compound Future (*Futuro anteriore*, in its inclusive reading), may convey meanings that oscillate between perfective and imperfective interpretations. This overlap gives rise to contextual ambiguity, whereby an event can be construed as either ongoing or completed, depending on discourse perspective and temporal anchoring. For example, in *Il bambino dorme da due ore* (The child has been sleeping for two hours), the present form *dorme* denotes an imperfective continuous situation while simultaneously implying a bounded temporal frame approaching a perfective interpretation.

Some Italian Tenses are inherently aspectual, such as the Simple Past (*Passato remoto*) and the Pluperfect 2 (*Trapassato remoto*) for perfective meanings, or typically aspectual, such as the Imperfect (*Imperfetto*) and Present (*Presente*) for imperfective ones. Others, including the Compound Past (*Passato prossimo*), Pluperfect 1 (*Trapassato prossimo*), Simple Future (*Futuro semplice*), and Compound Future (*Futuro anteriore*), display variable aspectual readings. The perfective–imperfective contrast is most consistently maintained within the Past Tense domain, whereas in compound forms temporal reference often predominates over aspectual value.

Overall, the scalar and context-sensitive nature of aspect in Italian functionally parallels, to some extent, the flexibility observed in Hungarian.

Table 5 highlights key correspondences and contrasts between Hungarian and Italian in terms of how aspectual meanings are encoded through construction-functions and construction-strategies.

Construction-function/ Aspectual domain	Hungarian construction-strategies	Italian construction-strategies	Notes
PFV – General perfective (global, telic)	Syntactic constructional strategy interacting with verbal semantics.	Tense morphology	Bounded and completed single event; external viewpoint; temporal endpoint included.
PFV – Resultative/ Perfect (current relevance of completed event)	Syntactic constructional strategy interacting with verbal semantics and context. Resultative <i>Aktionsart</i> strategy	Tense morphology	Expresses resultant state or present relevance of a past event.
PFV – Ingressive (onset-focused)	Inchoative <i>Aktionsart</i> strategy	Tense morphology; periphrases	Focus on the starting phase of an event
PFV – Momentary (repetitive)	No dedicated morphosyntax. Arises from lexical and contextual cues (base verb + iterative context).	Tense morphology, use of lexical punctuals and frequency adverbials	Refers to discrete, completed repetitions; the temporal frame is externally bounded. Compatible with punctual verbs or reduplicated telic predicates.

IPFV – General imperfective (ongoing)	No dedicated morphosyntax. Arises from lexical and contextual cues.	Tense morphology	Expresses unbounded, durative, or ongoing situations without inherent endpoint from an internal viewpoint.
IPFV – Progressive (ongoing)	Syntactic constructional strategy + particular intonation contour.	Tense morphology; progressive periphrasis	Denotes ongoing action simultaneously with bounded reference time from an internal viewpoint. Prefers durative verbs.
IPFV – Continuous (durative, static)	No dedicated morphosyntax. Arises from lexical and contextual cues (base verb + durative context).	Tense morphology; periphrases	Marks durative meaning with no inherent endpoint; compatible with durative and stative verbs.
IPFV – Habitual (iterative)	No dedicated morphosyntax. Arises from lexical and contextual cues (base verb + habitual context).	Tense morphology; periphrases	Marks regular repetition or characteristic behavior over time; generic temporal reference; compatible with dynamic and stative verbs in iterative readings.

PFV in Hungarian/ IPFV in Italian Momentary (repetitive)	No dedicated morphosyntax. Arises from lexical and contextual cues (use of frequency adverbials).	Tense morphology	Repeated punctual events viewed as unbounded.
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Table 5 – Italian–Hungarian comparison: aspectual meanings encoded through construction-functions and construction-strategies.

In Italian, verbs schematically encode the entire event and may highlight its internal temporal structure to express ongoingness. Consequently, the continuous or imperfective perspective represents the more marked and semantically elaborate member of the opposition. In contrast, Hungarian follows the opposite pattern: the imperfective is unmarked, while the perfective, which presents the event as a whole by foregrounding a natural endpoint or resultant state, is marked and semantically more complex.

Bertinetto (2001) argues that perfectivity and telicity must not be conflated, as these two notions, though related, operate at distinct levels of linguistic description. Aspect concerns temporal bounding, the viewpoint adopted by the speaker on an event (whether it is seen as complete or ongoing), whereas telicity is an inherent property of the predicate, belonging to lexical semantics, and refers to event delimitation, that is, whether the event schema includes a natural endpoint. This distinction is crucial for cross-linguistic comparison, as it prevents the mistaken assumption of a one-to-one correspondence between grammatical aspect and event structure.

For instance, the Italian *Passato Prossimo* may occur with both telic predicates (*ha scritto la lettera* ‘(s)he wrote the letter’) and atelic predicates (*ha camminato per un’ora* ‘(s)he walked for an hour’), depending on contextual and pragmatic factors. Conversely, a situation may be telic without perfective marking, as in imperfective forms that still convey bounded events. Habituality, which is viewed as an imperfective specification (Delfitto, Bertinetto 2000), does not suspend telicity, as shown in the following example:

- 59a. Ogni settimana *faceva le pulizie* in un’ora.
- IT every week do-IMP-3SG:IMP the cleaning in an hour
- Every week, (s)he did the cleaning in an hour.

59b.	Minden héten	<i>kitakarított</i>	egy óra alatt.
HU	every week	PART-clean(the house)-PST- 3SG-PFV	in an hour
	Every week, (s)he did the cleaning in an hour.		

In 59, the presence of the *in X time* adverbial indicates that telicity is preserved. Within the Italian aspectual system, the predicate *faceva le pulizie* ((s)he was doing the cleaning) is classified as imperfective, whereas in Hungarian the complex verb form *kitakarított* (composed of the particle *ki* and the verb base *takarít* ‘clean (the house)’) belongs to the perfective domain. As shown in Tables 1 and 2, in Hungarian the perfective aspect also encompasses the representation of repetitive telic events.

Further conceptual clarity is offered by Pilar Guerrero Medina (2001), who draws a systematic distinction between telicity, which refers to an event’s conceptual potential to reach an endpoint, and boundedness, which concerns its formal delimitation within the clause, that is, whether a boundary is encoded in the predicate or the clause. This clarification is particularly valuable for cross-linguistic and acquisitional research, as it elucidates how languages such as Hungarian and Italian encode event schemas through distinct grammatical and lexical means. The present analysis follows this distinction.

In this light, the Italian–Hungarian contrast becomes even more revealing. While Italian primarily encodes viewpoint aspect through Tense morphology and periphrastic constructions, Hungarian expresses it through constructional and lexical means (notably verbal particles and verb semantics), which interact with syntactic, information and prosodic structures. This aligns with Haspelmath’s (2025) distinction between construction-functions and construction-strategies: the two languages fulfill comparable aspectual functions, namely the fundamental distinction between perfective and imperfective domains, yet, rooted in different linguistic traditions, they conceptualize aspectual subdomains in slightly different ways emphasizing different facets of the category of aspect and employ different grammatical strategies.

Within the perfective domain, Hungarian distinguishes six subtypes. Each of the three Hungarian perfective subdomains (Delimitative, Momentary

unbounded, and Momentary bounded) including both single-occurrence and repetitive realizations, thereby allowing for perfective habitual and repetitive event types. As Fortuin (2023) notes, habituality is not inherently imperfective; there are no cognitive or semantic constraints that prevent the perfective from encoding habitual events.

In Italian, alongside the two main perfective subdomains, Aoristic and Perfect, Bertinetto (1986) identifies a third category, the Ingressive, which highlights the onset of an event. The repetitive variants of Hungarian Delimitative and Momentary Bounded constructions fall under Aoristic and Perfect readings in Italian. By contrast, repetitive instances of the Momentary Unbounded type are classified as imperfective in Italian.

The ingressive value is absent from the Hungarian aspectual system, belonging instead to the domain of *Aktionsart*, much like the resultative value to some extent. In Hungarian, *Aktionsart* is morphologically expressed, although most *Aktionsart* types also carry inherent aspectual meaning. Italian, on the other hand, lacks overt morphological marking for *Aktionsart*; such distinctions are realized lexically and interact closely with aspect (Bertinetto 2001; Bertinetto, Delfitto 2000), as is typical of Romance languages. Consequently, certain *Aktionsart* types are compatible with, or constrained by, specific aspectual values.

Within the imperfective domain, the two languages exhibit broad correspondence, both distinguishing three major subdomains: Progressive, Continuous and Habitual. Since in Hungarian the fundamental criterion governing aspectual division is whether an event is perceived as divisible, Kiefer (2006) proposes an additional major domain of States, referring to uninterrupted situations. Other scholars, however, include States within the imperfective domain proper.

Turning to construction-strategies – a comparative concept referring to the formal linguistic means used to encode a given function – Italian and Hungarian differ sharply in both the mechanisms and the locus of grammatical realization.

Italian is a Tense-prominent language, where aspect is tightly integrated into a rich verbal Tense system: the perfective – imperfective opposition is grammaticalized within the Tense paradigm itself. Aspectual distinctions are expressed through verbal inflection and periphrastic constructions, while

contextual and pragmatic factors further refine interpretation. Italian verbs are typically polysemous, allowing multiple *Aktionsart* readings depending on context. As a result, aspectual oppositions may be neutralized or blurred, and hybrid aspectual readings can emerge under temporal, pragmatic, or discourse-related influences (see 2.3).

Hungarian, by contrast, features a minimally marked Tense system that does not itself encode aspectual values. Aspect is an inherent semantic property of the verb, shaped and modified by syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and prosodic structures as well as by constructional patterns. Aspectual interpretation is contextual and scalar. The perfective–imperfective contrast is realized at the syntax–semantics interface, involving verbal particles, object or argument definiteness, word order, focus, and prosodic configuration.

These distinct encoding pathways exemplify two typologically divergent yet functionally equivalent solutions to the universal challenge of representing an event’s internal temporal organization. Ultimately, both systems confirm that aspect is a gradient, multi-layered category, shaped by the interplay of form, meaning, and discourse, and realized through distinct grammatical and constructional architectures.

4. The Aspect Hypothesis and the role of prototypicality in Tense–aspect acquisition

One of the most influential cognitive–functional frameworks for explaining the development of aspectual systems in both first and second language acquisition is the *Aspect Hypothesis* (AH), originally formulated by Andersen and Shirai (1996) and grounded in the prototype account developed in Shirai and Andersen (1995). As emphasized by Quintana Hernández and Rodríguez Arrizabalaga (2021), current research on TAM (temporality, aspectuality and modality) acquisition in L2²⁶ contexts highlights the ongoing relevance of the AH within an increasingly integrated cognitive–typological and pe-

²⁶ For the purposes of this study, we use the term “L2” to refer to all contexts in which a language is not acquired as a native language, serving as an umbrella term for a second, foreign, ethnic, or contact language.

dagogical framework²⁷. Salaberry (2024) notes that while core predictions of the AH remain robust, future directions must emphasize the role of proficiency, typological divergence and input distribution.

Within the AH model, aspect acquisition is viewed not as the mastery of abstract inflectional paradigms but as a semantically guided process, in which developing morphosyntax is initially grounded in lexical aspect. The central claim of the AH is that, in early interlanguage, learners interpret aspectual morphosyntax as meaning bearing and tightly connected to the inherent semantics of verbs: perfective markers typically occur with telic predicates (achievements and accomplishments), whereas imperfective or progressive markers appear first with atelic predicates (activities and states). These pairings constitute the most salient and frequent combinations in the input and therefore act as cognitive and distributional prototypes. They represent what Andersen and Shirai (1996) describe as semantic prototypes, that is, cognitively privileged form–meaning pairings that serve as a foundation for subsequent generalization. Over time, learners are expected to extend aspectual marking to less prototypical verb types, for example, using perfective forms with atelic predicates or imperfective forms with telic ones, thereby reflecting a gradual abstraction from semantically motivated patterns toward grammatical control.

In a subsequent reformulation, Shirai (2002) elaborates this account into what he terms the *Prototype Hypothesis*, clarifying that the associations between lexical and grammatical aspect should not be viewed as categorical developmental stages but as probabilistic tendencies arising from cognitive salience and input frequency. Learners initially rely on these semantically coherent and frequent pairings because they are cognitively salient prototypes. As exposure increases, aspectual markers are extended to less prototypical contexts as learners gain grammatical control. Crucially, Shirai emphasizes that this process reflects general cognitive mechanisms of categorization and prototype formation rather than rigid acquisitional stages. Later, Shirai (2004) proposed a multiple-factor account of Tense–

²⁷ For an extensive review of empirical research on the *Aspect Hypothesis* from 2000–2020, see Bardovi-Harlig and Comajoan-Colomé (2020), who reaffirm its explanatory strength while calling for refinements that address advanced proficiency and discourse-pragmatic effects.

aspect acquisition, situating the AH within a broader usage-based model of language learning, in which Tense–aspect morphology emerges through the interaction of conceptual salience, typological constraints, and distributional regularities.

Building on these cognitively oriented reformulations, Bardovi-Harlig (2002) offers important methodological refinement to the AH, emphasizing that analyses of aspect in interlanguage must clearly distinguish between lexical aspect, grammatical aspect, and Tense. Within her framework, the developmental patterns predicted by Andersen and Shirai (1996) can only be meaningfully tested when verbs are classified by their inherent semantic type and aspectual morphology is analyzed in its discourse context. In this sense, the AH should not be read as a rigid sequence of stages, but as a set of probabilistic tendencies emerging from the interaction of verb semantics, morphological form, and discourse function. Her approach reinforces the cognitive–functional nature of the AH, situating aspect acquisition within a broader usage-based perspective in which learners move from lexically driven, semantically motivated associations to morphologically and discourse-anchored control.

Empirical validation of these theoretical claims comes from studies on Romance languages, particularly on Spanish as a second language, lending further support to these predictions. Research has shown that the acquisition of aspectual morphology follows predictable semantic hierarchies: in L2 Spanish, perfective forms are typically acquired in the order *achievements* > *accomplishments* > *activities* > *states*, whereas imperfective forms follow the reverse sequence, gradually extending from *states* and *activities* to *accomplishments* and *achievements* (Andersen, Shirai 1996). These findings corroborate the prototype-based pattern proposed in the AH and further demonstrate that the alignment between telicity and perfectivity reflects not an arbitrary learning bias but a cognitively motivated pathway observable across typologically similar systems.

This developmental trajectory supports a usage-based conception of grammatical learning, in which constructions emerge from input through processes of frequency, analogy, and pattern detection (Bardovi-Harlig 2000, 242–255). In this model, prototype constructions – the “nucleus exemplars” of constructional patterns (Andersen, Shirai 1996) –, characterized

by redundant and semantically transparent cues, serve as perceptual and cognitive anchors. With increasing exposure, learners gradually extend these patterns to less prototypical verb–aspect combinations, marking the transition from semantically driven to formally abstract grammatical control. Learners thus rely on distributional regularities and conceptual coherence to infer the meanings of new morphological forms and to categorize temporal and aspectual contrasts. Consequently, the AH connects the acquisition of Tense–aspect morphology to broader cognitive processes such as categorization, prototype formation, and semantic generalization.

Andersen and Shirai (1996) argue that the dominance of aspect over Tense is not limited to interlanguage development but recurs across multiple domains of language emergence, including first language acquisition and pidgin–creole genesis. Across these contexts, the same mechanisms – semantic transparency, prototype-based mapping, and input frequency – govern the development of Tense–aspect systems. Individual or group learners initially categorize events in terms of boundedness and dynamism before acquiring morphosyntactic devices to encode these distinctions. This unified perspective situates the AH within a broader theory of grammaticalization and cognitive motivation, suggesting that learners’ early reliance on prototypical pairings mirror the diachronic pathways of language change through which aspectual morphology itself evolves.

Subsequent research refined and, in some cases, challenged the original predictions of the AH. McManus (2013), investigating English and German learners of French, found that prototype effects persist, contradicting the AH’s prediction that they should diminish with increasing proficiency. Even advanced learners continued to favour prototypical verb–aspect pairings, suggesting that prototypes may function as entrenching attractors rather than temporary scaffolds in L2 development. McManus (ivi) also emphasized the role of L1 transfer and input distribution, showing that crosslinguistic and contextual factors shape both the strength and persistence of prototype effects. This evidence supports a dynamic, interactionist interpretation of AH, according to which acquisition results from the interplay of universal cognitive biases²⁸, typological distance, and language-specific experience.

²⁸ For a generative account of L2 aspect acquisition emphasizing the universal availabi-

Recent research has also questioned whether early interlanguage systems encode lexical aspect distinctions as clearly as the AH presupposes. Rastelli (2023), testing 299 learners of Italian with various L1 backgrounds, found that even intermediate learners failed to display native-like sensitivity to telicity in compatibility judgments with time-span adverbials (e.g., *for/in + time expressions*). His findings support the Lexical Underspecification Hypothesis (LUH), according to which learners' early aspectual systems are semantically underspecified: they do not fully represent the telic-atelic contrast and aspectual morphology may thus emerge before stable lexical aspect categories are established. From this perspective, aspectual development may reflect not only prototype-based mapping, as posited by Andersen and Shirai (1996), but also gradual differentiation within an initially diffuse semantic space. This view usefully complements the AH, suggesting that learners' aspectual competence evolves through both prototypical associations and progressive specification of lexical aspect categories.

Further support for a multi-factorial view of aspectual development comes from Chan *et al.* (2012), who refine the AH by integrating the additional dimension of morphological regularity. Their cross-linguistic analysis confirms that, while learners universally associate perfective morphology with telic predicates and imperfective morphology with atelic ones, the pace and scope of this development are modulated by morphological transparency and L1 influence. Regular and semantically transparent inflectional forms tend to appear earlier and generalize more readily than irregular ones, suggesting that frequency and form–meaning iconicity interact with prototypicality in shaping acquisition patterns. Moreover, transfer from the learners' L1 aspectual system, whether morphologically marked or semantically encoded, affects how robustly these prototype-based associations emerge. The study thus reinforces a usage-based, interactionist interpretation of the AH, where universal cognitive biases toward prototypical form–meaning mappings coexist with language-specific constraints stemming from morphological salience and conceptual transfer.

lity of aspectual semantics and the language-specific nature of morphological realization, see Slabakova and Montrul (2002), who examine the acquisition of viewpoint aspect in L2 Bulgarian and Spanish.

Empirical work on L2 Italian provides convergent evidence for a prototype-driven pattern in aspect acquisition. Giacalone Ramat (2002), in a longitudinal and cross-sectional study of learners of Italian, demonstrated that learners initially express temporality through semantic and pragmatic cues – such as telicity, habituality, and discourse context – before establishing stable morphological marking. Temporal contrasts are first expressed lexically (through adverbs or periphrases) and only later morphologically, confirming a staged developmental sequence consistent with the AH's predictions. The Italian data reveal that semantic verb classes serve as the primary interface through which learners conceptualize temporality: telic verbs attract past-oriented morphology early on, while atelic verbs retain Present Tense or generic marking until later stages. The Present (*Presente*) and Compound Past (*Passato prossimo*) emerge earlier and occur more frequently than the Imperfect (*Imperfetto*), reflecting a strong semantic alignment between telicity, perfectivity, and pastness. As learners advance, they progressively extend morphological distinctions to non-prototypical contexts, thereby internalizing the full range of temporal–aspectual contrasts encoded in Italian. These findings illustrate what Andersen and Shirai (1996) describe as the progression from semantic solidarity to grammatical abstraction. Giacalone Ramat's (2002) results further show that discourse function and task type, especially narrative contexts, play a crucial role in accelerating the shift from semantically to morphologically based expression of temporality.

More recent empirical work on learners of Italian as an additional language illustrates how typological proximity, prototypical associations, and target language proficiency influence aspectual morphology. Vallerossa (2021) reports that Swedish-L1 learners of Italian initially benefit from typological proximity in accelerating the emergence of the Imperfect (*Imperfetto*), but that the prototype factor (particularly predicate dynamism) continues to constrain past morphology decisions. Importantly, at advanced stages, learners with prior Romance-language experience are better able to move beyond prototypical Compound Past (*Passato prossimo*) associations, though the use of Imperfect (*Imperfetto*) is less influenced by this prior knowledge. Such findings underscore that prototypicality effects do not disappear entirely but are modulated by typological experience and competence levels.

Comparable developmental mechanisms are observed in both the acquisition and attrition of aspect across typologically diverse systems. Gebert (2011) shows that the acquisition, learning, and even attrition of aspect in Romance and Slavic languages consistently reveal a deep interdependence among grammatical aspect, verb class, and temporal reference, regardless of age or modality of acquisition. Crucially, the gradual process by which learners come to differentiate verb semantics from grammatical aspect provides theoretical confirmation of their conceptual independence. This observation reinforces the cognitive foundations of the AH, demonstrating that the mapping between lexical and grammatical aspect, though initially strong, is not structurally fixed but developmentally flexible.

From a broader cognitive and typological perspective, AH provides a coherent framework for understanding how conceptual and linguistic prototypes guide the acquisition of temporality. Typologically, the AH's predictions have clear implications for the study of L2 Hungarian and L2 Italian, two languages that differ substantially in how they encode aspectual distinctions (see 3). For learners with Indo-European backgrounds, such typological contrasts may test the limits of the AH's universalist claims. Do Italophone learners of Hungarian still display the same prototype-based sequence, preferring perfective particles with telic predicates and syntactic structures enforcing telicity, or does the typological novelty of Hungarian's aspectual system trigger L1-specific transfer and input-based reanalysis? Conversely, for Hungarian learners of Italian, the main challenge lies in mastering Tense-based morphology, where aspectual distinctions are less overtly tied to syntax, information structure and prosody. Do they exhibit the same early alignment between telicity and past morphology observed in other L2 Romance learners, or does the absence of a grammaticalized Tense system in Hungarian reshape their aspectual mappings?

A contrastive, cognitively informed analysis of these two learning pathways can provide a framework to examine the scope and persistence of prototypicality effects in Tense–aspect acquisition, revealing whether learners' early telicity–aspect mappings reflect universal cognitive biases (cf. Andersen, Shirai 1996) or language-specific influences from L1 conceptual patterns and input (cf. McManus 2013). Moreover, the contrastive study of L2 Hungarian and L2 Italian can shed light on whether prototypical

associations function primarily as facilitators of early acquisition or as persistent cognitive attractors constraining generalization. If prototype effects persist even in advanced interlanguage, they may reflect not developmental limitations, but deep-rooted conceptual preferences linked to how different languages structure temporal experience. Such findings would support a view of Tense–aspect acquisition as a dynamic equilibrium among cognitive salience, linguistic input, and crosslinguistic conceptualization, a view which is consistent with contemporary cognitive–functional theories of language as an emergent, usage-based system. In either case, the evidence indicates that Tense–aspect acquisition is a semantically driven, prototype-sensitive process, where cognitive salience, typological distance, and distributional frequency jointly determine the learner’s developmental trajectory.

In sum, the AH and its subsequent reformulations provide a powerful explanatory framework for interpreting Tense–aspect acquisition across typologically diverse languages. By integrating prototype theory, frequency effects, and crosslinguistic influence, this framework bridges cognitive and typological approaches to temporality, offering insights that extend beyond morphology to the conceptual foundations of event construal itself. In the case of Hungarian and Italian, two languages that encode aspect through distinct grammatical and semantic means, testing the predictions of the AH can yield valuable evidence regarding the interaction between universal cognitive biases and language-specific encoding strategies. Ultimately, understanding how learners move from prototypical associations to flexible, discourse-sensitive usage sheds light on the cognitive mechanisms underlying both aspect acquisition and the diversity of aspectual systems.

5. Practical hints

A truly effective foreign-language pedagogy must be relativity-informed, that is, grounded in the recognition that each language encodes its own culturally and cognitively motivated ways of construing reality. Within a cognitive-linguistic framework, linguistic forms are not neutral vehicles of meaning but reflections of underlying conceptualizations, habitual, culturally embedded patterns through which speakers interpret, segment and structure their experience. Consequently, learning a foreign language

implies more than mastering new lexical and grammatical forms: it requires developing the ability to re-construe reality according to the conceptual preferences of the target language community (Niemeier 2004, 97).

From this perspective, linguistic and cultural relativity becomes a central consideration in the teaching and learning of aspect, especially in typologically distinct languages such as Italian and Hungarian. The aspectual systems of these two languages, while functionally comparable, differ profoundly in their conceptual schemas and grammatical mechanisms (cf. 3). For learners whose native language conceptualizes temporality differently, mastering the aspectual domain requires more than formal accuracy; it demands awareness of the conceptual underpinnings that shape aspectual interpretation in each linguistic system.

Following Niemeier's (ivi, 115) call for a pedagogy that promotes conceptual and cultural awareness, the section that follows presents a series of classroom strategies and pedagogical ideas aimed at helping learners become conscious of how aspectual meaning is construed differently in Italian and Hungarian. Such a relativity-informed approach not only mitigates first-language conceptual transfer but also trains learners to shift perspective between the two systems, learning not simply how to express aspect grammatically, but how to think in aspectual terms as speakers of the target language. In this way, aspect teaching becomes a form of conceptual training, enhancing both linguistic proficiency and intercultural communicative competence.

5.1 Broader considerations for cross-linguistic transfer

Given the typological divergence between Italian and Hungarian, Italian being Tense-prominent and Hungarian aspect-prominent, explicit crosslinguistic comparison plays a pivotal role in guiding learners toward a more accurate conceptualization of aspect. Drawing learners' attention to how each language encodes foregrounding, telicity, and aspectual contour fosters a deeper understanding of the underlying cognitive principles that govern aspectual selection. In Italian, aspect is morphologically integrated within tense forms, while in Hungarian, it is distributed across syntax, semantics, and information and prosodic structure (see Tables 1 and 2). Making these

contrasts explicit allows learners to develop flexible mappings between form, meaning, and discourse function, thus reducing negative transfer and promoting more target-like aspectual choices.

Recent pedagogical perspectives further support the integration of contrastive awareness into aspect instruction. Vallerossa (2023) recommends explicit crosslinguistic instruction aimed at fostering positive transfer through the tailor-made use of learners' background languages, suggesting that leveraging the L1–L2 interface can become a powerful pedagogical resource rather than a source of interference. This approach aligns with usage-based and cognitive models of L2 acquisition, which emphasize contrastive noticing, guided comparison, and metalinguistic reflection as key mechanisms in restructuring aspectual representations across languages.

Hiver and Whitehead (2018) emphasize the importance of fostering “adaptive inside-out thinking²⁹” in language classrooms, urging teachers to engage metacognitively with their own instructional choices and with learners' evolving conceptualizations. Their model of “metacognitive adaptability”, the dynamic monitoring and adjustment of pedagogical strategies based on ongoing reflection, can be fruitfully applied to the teaching of aspect. When instructors consciously reflect on how they interpret and convey aspectual contrasts (for instance, in explaining telicity or the foreground–background distinction), they model the kind of reflective awareness that learners need to develop for themselves. Integrating metacognitive tasks, such as self-explanation of aspectual decisions, peer feedback on narrative structuring, or reflective comments on comparing Italian and Hungarian aspectual choices, can enhance both teachers' and students' awareness of the underlying cognitive and communicative functions of aspect. This aligns with the broader principle that mastering aspect involves not only procedural practice but also a conscious reorganization of conceptual frameworks across languages.

²⁹ *Adaptive inside-out thinking* (Hiver, Whitehead 2018) refers to a form of teacher metacognition in which educators consciously monitor and adjust their own thoughts, beliefs, and actions in response to classroom dynamics. It is termed *adaptive* because it involves continual adjustment to emerging situations, and *inside-out* because effective pedagogical action originates in the teacher's internal awareness and reflection rather than in externally imposed procedures.

Incorporating this kind of crosslinguistic reflection into the classroom not only promotes cognitive depth and learner autonomy but also bridges the gap between grammatical instruction and communicative practice. By situating aspect within broader conceptual and typological frameworks, instructors can help learners develop the ability to perceive and reproduce aspectual distinctions in a way that reflects the cognitive and discourse-driven preferences of the target language.

The integration of corpus-based evidence provides an empirical foundation for aspectual instruction. Studies such as that of Tracy-Ventura and Cuesta-Medina (2018) highlight how learner access to native-speaker corpora can clarify the input frequency and distributional patterns that shape aspect acquisition. Similarly, Füreder (2025) and Liu and Dras (2024) demonstrate how frequency effects and crosslinguistic corpus analyses can inform the sequencing of instructional materials, ensuring that learners are exposed to authentic, prototypical instances before progressing to less frequent and more complex constructions. Large-scale learner corpora can be repurposed to identify systematic patterns of L1 influence on L2 aspectual marking and to acknowledge how learners' native-language morphosyntactic preferences manifest in the distribution of Tense–aspect errors, thus revealing underlying conceptual transfer rather than merely surface interference (Liu, Dras, *ivi*). In the Italian–Hungarian context, similar corpus-driven analyses could expose recurring mismatches, such as Hungarian learners' tendency to over-mark perfectivity in Italian narratives or Italian learners' omission of Hungarian aspectual particles, allowing for explicit instructional intervention. Incorporating such corpus evidence into teaching materials provides a data-driven way of addressing negative transfer while promoting a more contrastive, metalinguistically informed awareness of aspectual systems.

5.2 Linking aspect to predicate semantics (telicity training)

The Aspect Hypothesis (AH, see 4.), repeatedly tested across languages other than Hungarian, predicts that early learners tend to produce pro-

tototypical combinations, namely, to align perfective morphology with telic predicates (achievements and accomplishments) and imperfective forms with atelic predicates (activities and states), only later developing sensitivity to non-prototypical pairings.

In the Italian–Hungarian context, training learners to recognize telicity (e.g., verbs of completion vs. verbs of continuous activity), even when encoded through different morphosyntactic means, can accelerate mastery of aspectual morphology. Targeted activities focusing on predicate telicity, like distinguishing completion-oriented from continuous action, help learners internalize how aspect interacts with event structure. It can be useful to include classification tasks where students identify telic vs. atelic predicates and choose the appropriate aspectual marking (object boundedness, quantification, use of completion verbs, etc.) can foster more accurate form–meaning associations. Explicitly contrasting atelic predicates (e.g., IT *camminare* – HU *sétál* ‘walk’, IT *lavorare* – HU *dolgozik* ‘work’) with telic ones (e.g., IT *scrivere una lettera* – HU *megír egy levelet* ‘write a letter’, IT *finire il lavoro* – HU *befejezi a munkát* ‘finish work’) allows learners to visualize how temporal boundaries interact with grammatical aspect, thus strengthening their conceptual understanding of event structure. Later, exceptions, that is, non-prototypical predicate types, can be introduced gradually: e.g., IT *continuava a leggere il libro fino a tardi* ‘(s)he kept reading the book until late’ (imperfective form with telic predicate), HU *elolvasta a könyvet többször is* ‘(s)he read the book several times’ (through to completion) (perfective form with atelic predicate).

While explicit instruction on telicity sharpens learners’ conceptual control of aspect, empirical evidence shows that the input itself crucially shapes how these mappings are acquired. This brings us to the role of corpus-based studies in understanding how learners’ aspectual development mirrors the statistical and discourse tendencies of native input. Corpus-informed pedagogy helps bridge theory and practice, reinforcing the connection between cognitive salience, processing ease, and acquisition order. Instructors can rely on corpus data to identify patterns of input salience, error-prone aspectual pairings, and discourse functions most relevant to their learners’ L1 backgrounds.

5.3 Integrating corpus-based pedagogy into aspectual training

Although corpus linguistics is, strictly speaking, a methodology rather than a theory of language, it has opened new avenues for matching theoretical models with real-world linguistic data. The integration of corpus-based pedagogy enhances the teaching of aspect in both Italian and Hungarian by providing authentic, usage-anchored input. Data-Driven Learning (DDL) enables learners to observe linguistic patterns directly and to construct aspectual generalizations inductively. Such engagement with authentic corpora encourages learners to cultivate awareness that extends beyond mastering new lexical or grammatical forms to include perceiving and interpreting aspect in ways that reflect the cognitive preferences of the target language (Römer, 2011).

Frequency also plays a decisive role in the acquisition and processing of complex verbal constructions in Romance languages (Füreder 2025). Frequent aspectual combinations, such as compound (analytic) Tenses and periphrases, are internalized more readily and processed more efficiently, suggesting that instructional design should prioritize high-frequency, functionally prototypical patterns before introducing rarer or stylistically marked variants. As shown by Wulff *et al.* (2009), high-frequency pairings between telic predicates and perfective morphology, and, conversely, between atelic predicates and imperfective forms, create strong associative cues that guide early aspect acquisition. Learners' overreliance on these prototypical combinations can thus be viewed as a reflection of the statistical regularities in the input. Tracy-Ventura and Cuesta-Medina (2018) demonstrate how native-speaker corpora provide crucial insight into the distribution of Tense–aspect combinations that learners encounter most frequently. Their study underscores that acquisition patterns cannot be understood without considering the input bias inherent in authentic language use. Certain pairings are massively overrepresented in discourse, shaping learners' implicit expectations and influencing how they map form to function. In this respect, DDL can serve as an effective complement to telicity training, allowing learners to explore corpus examples that illustrate how frequency and contextual usage jointly determine aspectual interpretation.

Furthermore, corpora provide a rich resource for demonstrating foreground/background structuring in authentic discourse. By analyzing real-world texts and concordances, learners can observe how perfective and imperfective forms correlate with narrative prominence, thereby linking morphosyntactic choice to communicative function.

From a pedagogical perspective, this calls for a shift from production-based to input-sensitive instruction. Incorporating corpus-informed tasks, where learners observe authentic examples of aspectual contrasts and identify how grammar, lexical aspect, and discourse context interact, enhances their data-driven awareness of usage. In practice, students may explore corpus excerpts or curated examples comparing Italian (*ha fatto* '(s)he did it' vs. *stava facendo* '(s)he was doing it') and Hungarian (*megcsinálta* '(s)he did it' vs. *éppen csinálta* '(s)he was doing it'), observing how morphosyntactic and lexical resources encode aspectual meaning differently. Classification or annotation tasks where learners detect telicity and aspectual markers foster both form–function sensitivity and metalinguistic reflection.

Empirical findings from corpus-based research have proved instrumental in linking learners' aspectual development to the input they are exposed to. Frequency and distributional tendencies in native usage determine how learners perceive and generalize Tense–aspect patterns. Although corpus-based methods are gaining visibility in research, their classroom implementation, such as the practical application of DDL remains limited and should be encouraged as an evidence-driven extension of aspect pedagogy (Durand 2018; Liu, Dras 2024). The use of accessible corpora such as PAISÀ, itTenTen20, huTenTen20, SKELL, AntConc and the Hungarian National Corpus³⁰, can serve as valuable pedagogical tools for developing learners' inductive reasoning, discovery learning, and noticing abilities.

³⁰ Tenten (<<https://www.sketchengine.eu/documentation/tenten-corpora/>>): Italian Web 2020 (itTenTen20) and Hungarian Web 2020 (huTenTen20); PAISÀ (Piattaforma per l'Apprendimento dell'Italiano Su corpora Annotati): a Creative Commons-licensed large web corpus of contemporary Italian (<<https://www.corpusitaliano.it/it/contents/paisa.html>>); SKELL (Sketch Engine for Language Learning): for learners of Italian (<<https://www.sketchengine.eu/skell/>>); AntConc (<<https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/>>): a free concordance tool for classroom and self-study use; Hungarian National Corpus (<http://corpus.nytd.hu/mnsz/index_eng.html>).

5.4 From prototypical to non-prototypical combinations

It has been shown that learners' gradual acquisition of non-prototypical combinations is guided by discourse and pragmatic needs (e.g., habitual perfectives, iterative imperfectives). Both Italian and Hungarian offer fertile ground for illustrating these extensions. Contrastive Italian–Hungarian exercises highlighting such less prototypical uses foster interpretive flexibility and pragmatic control of aspectual meaning. Tasks can contrast literal vs. interpretive uses of aspect, showing how context can override lexical expectations. For example, consider the following pair of sentences: IT *Ogni volta che lo vide, rise*. 'Every time (s)he saw him, (s)he laughed' vs. HU *Minden alkalommal, amikor meglátta, nevetett*. 'Every time (s)he saw him/her, (s)he laughed'. In this habitual perfective construction the event (seeing) is presented as completed in each individual occurrence, but the series of events is iterative.

Incorporating corpus-informed examples into these exercises provides an empirical basis for interpreting such deviations from canonical mappings, helping learners to perceive them not as irregularities but as discourse-conditioned variants. Instructional design can benefit from pedagogical models grounded in cognitive and SLA research as shown by Comajoan-Colomé and Llop Naya (2021) who propose a cognitive-linguistic approach to teaching L2 Catalan Tense–aspect that directly operationalizes findings from aspect acquisition studies. Their sequencing model begins with prototypical perfective–imperfective contrasts aligned with telicity, before extending to non-prototypical uses such as habitual perfectives or iterative imperfectives. This progression, supported by guided noticing and narrative reconstruction tasks, offers an adaptable framework for Italian–Hungarian teaching contexts. Integrating such staged development aligns with the Aspect Hypothesis (see 4.) and ensures that learners acquire not only morphological accuracy but also discourse-pragmatic control over aspectual alternations.

5.5 Linking SLA research and pedagogical sequencing of aspect

Building on the cross-linguistic considerations discussed above, recent advances in Second Language Acquisition research have underscored the importance of connecting empirical findings on Tense–aspect development with pedagogical sequencing and task design. Bardovi-Harlig and Comajoan-Colomé (2022) provide a comprehensive framework linking SLA theory, instructed SLA and language teaching, viewed through the lens of aspect acquisition. They highlight that effective instruction must integrate the lexical, grammatical, and discourse dimensions of aspect, rather than treating aspectual morphology in isolation. Their synthesis supports the notion that instructional sequencing should mirror developmental patterns observed in naturalistic acquisition. Learners first master prototypical Tense–aspect pairings before progressing toward non-prototypical and context-dependent combinations. This pedagogical trajectory aligns with the predictions of the Aspect Hypothesis and should resonate with the Italian–Hungarian contrast.

Bardovi-Harlig and Comajoan-Colomé (2022) also advocate for explicit form–function mapping, whereby learners are guided to perceive how aspectual forms encode event construals and discourse organization. Such awareness-oriented instruction fosters a deeper understanding of the communicative value of aspect beyond morphosyntax. Within the Italian–Hungarian framework, this implies that learners should alternate between form-focused analysis, examining how each language encodes perfectivity and imperfectivity, and discourse-based practice, where aspectual distinctions are applied in narrative and descriptive contexts to achieve coherence and pragmatic precision. This research-driven approach thus bridges SLA theory and pedagogical practice, promoting an integrated view of aspect as both a grammatical and discourse-functional category, and ensuring that classroom instruction reflects the complex interaction between form, meaning, and use.

5.6 Foregrounding and backgrounding as aspectual scaffolds

Since aspect is not merely morphological but discourse-functional, learners should be guided to understand how morphosyntactic choice signals discourse prominence. Drawing explicit attention to the discourse–aspect interface (cf. Kihlstedtm, Izquierdo 2021) is one of the most productive ways to promote aspectual awareness. Narrative discourse provides a natural context for exploring the aspect–discourse interface. The distinction between foregrounding and backgrounding reflects how speakers structure information and guide attention across temporal and informational hierarchies. In narrative discourse, foregrounded clauses typically carry the main storyline, the sequence of bounded, completed events that advance the plot, whereas backgrounded clauses serve to encode descriptive or circumstantial information or continuous situations, providing temporal, causal, or evaluative context. This dichotomy correlates systematically with aspectual selection:

- Foreground → events presented as telic and complete, typically expressed through perfective forms.
- Background → situations viewed as atelic or ongoing, encoded by imperfective forms.

Incorporating this dimension into instruction allows learners to perceive how aspect interacts with discourse prominence. Learners begin by relying on lexical cues (telic verbs, resultative meaning) to mark foregrounding, before developing full control of aspectual grammar. Designing narrative tasks that explicitly cue foreground/background contrasts, using temporal connectors such as *until one day*, *while this was happening*, *at that very moment* etc., helps learners select appropriate aspectual forms.

They can be asked to retell the same story twice: once focusing on the action line (main events foregrounded ⊗ perfective aspect) and once emphasizing the setting (background circumstances ⊗ imperfective aspect), thereby reinforcing the aspectual contrast and enabling them to shift aspectual perspective and internalize the dynamic interaction between grammatical aspect and discourse structure, strengthening both accuracy and fluency in aspectual expression. Activities like narrative retelling, storyboard reconstruction, and contrastive corpus analysis can reveal how Italian and

Hungarian employ aspect to signal salience, continuity, and temporal anchoring. This awareness can significantly enhance learners' ability to produce cohesive and stylistically appropriate discourse.

5.7 Narrative-based elicitation for aspectual control

Finally, narrative-based tasks remain an effective pedagogical tool for eliciting and controlling aspectual use. Temporally sequenced narratives tend to elicit perfective marking, whereas descriptive or habitual contexts encourage imperfective forms. Adopting narrative elicitation techniques (cf. Kihlstedt, Izquierdo 2021) – through picture sequences, silent film retellings, guided storytelling and retellings with temporal prompts (e.g., *during that summer, suddenly, every morning*) – creates a controlled environment for observing and practicing aspectual contrasts and allows learners to operationalize their understanding of temporal contour, completion and viewpoint. Combining these tasks with corpus-informed exemplars and explicit contrastive discussion between Hungarian and Italian fosters aspectual awareness, discourse sensitivity, and crosslinguistic flexibility, aligning linguistic accuracy with communicative appropriateness.

Bridging morphological marking and discourse function is central to aspectual mastery. Learners should be encouraged to understand how morphological accuracy and discourse organization evolve together. Instructional designs that integrate both dimensions – such as narrative tasks combining Tense–aspect marking with information structure or analyzing authentic texts and identifying how grammatical form interacts with discourse structure, that is why certain events are foregrounded with perfective forms and others backgrounded with imperfectives – promote the simultaneous development of grammatical and pragmatic competence (ivi).

Teachers can scaffold learners' awareness by explicitly linking morphological forms to discourse functions (e.g., foregrounding main events via perfective forms or establishing narrative background via imperfective forms), thereby facilitating form–function integration and context-sensitive usage. Reflection tasks strengthen awareness of aspect as a communicative resource and promote more contextually appropriate usage.

6. Conclusions

As Bertinetto (2001) notes, a fundamental typological divide separates the aspectual systems of the European languages. On one side stand the Slavic and Baltic languages, Georgian, and to a large extent Hungarian, which display systematic grammaticalized opposition between perfective and imperfective aspect. In these languages, aspect is encoded morphologically or constructionally, independently of Tense, and directly reflects the speaker's construal of an event as complete or ongoing. On the other side are languages like Italian and the rest of the Romance and Germanic families, where aspect is not an autonomous grammatical category but is expressed through Tense morphology, periphrastic constructions, and contextual or lexical cues. Hungarian occupies an intermediate position: while it marks aspect systematically through verbal particles and constructional patterns, its aspectual distinctions also interact with word order, focus, and prosody, and are therefore far from being paradigmatically grammaticalized to the extent found in the Slavic languages. Typologically, this contrast highlights how the two languages under study represent opposite poles on a continuum of aspectual encoding: synthetic and Tense-based inflectional in Italian, analytic and construction-based in Hungarian.

Both Italian and Hungarian display a binary perfective–imperfective organization, yet the morphological and constructional means by which these values are realized differ fundamentally. In comparative perspective and following Haspelmath's (2025) framework of construction-functions and construction-strategies, aspectual meaning in Hungarian emerges from the interaction of syntactic structure, verb semantics, and information and prosodic structure; in Italian, it arises primarily from the morphological Tense system and periphrastic constructions, where temporal anchoring and viewpoint are crucial determinants of interpretation.

It is important to emphasize that Tense and aspect are distinct categories, even though Italian verb Tenses simultaneously express both temporal reference (past, present, future) and aspectual values (perfective, imperfective). Many grammars therefore treat them jointly under the heading of "Tense", since certain Tenses can indeed be viewed as formal realizations of aspect. For instance, to express the imperfective aspect of the perfective

sentence *Tornai a casa* (I returned home), one simply changes the Tense from the Simple Past (*Passato Remoto*) to the Imperfect (*Imperfetto*): *Tornavo a casa* (I was returning home). In Romance and Germanic languages, the clear distinction between the categories of Tense and aspect has largely disappeared, unlike in Slavic and Finno-Ugric languages.

In Hungarian, the distinction between imperfective and perfective predicates exists on a continuum rather than as a clear-cut division (Pete 1986, 1994). In Italian, while the Simple Past (*Passato Remoto*) and the Pluperfect 2 (*Trapassato Remoto*) clearly mark aspect, other Tenses display varying degrees of aspectual ambiguity, though each tends to have a typical aspectual value. This graded nature of linguistic phenomena underscores the relevance of prototype theory at both theoretical and practical levels, particularly in L2 acquisition.

Within the imperfective aspect, the notions of progressivity and continuity are closely related in meaning, which explains why many languages, including Hungarian, use the same means to express both. Hungarian lacks a specific morphological marker for the progressive aspect; however, progressive readings can be derived from word order and specific intonation patterns (Kiefer 1994a, b). Were it not for Italian and a few other languages, distinguishing progressive from continuous aspect would be challenging, as the former would likely be seen as a specific case of the latter. Notably, the difference lies entirely in the type of focus applied: *monofocalization* for the progressive and *plurifocalization* for the continuous. Even in Italian, despite the tendency toward functional specialization between progressive and continuous periphrases, simple Tenses frequently function as undifferentiated carriers of imperfectivity, encompassing nuances such as progressivity, continuity, and habituality (Bertinetto 1997). Consequently, the typological separation between progressivity and continuity remains relatively rare.

The comparative analysis of Hungarian and Italian aspectual systems demonstrates how grammatical structures are deeply intertwined with conceptual organization and linguistic worldview. Far from being a merely formal subsystem, aspect embodies how speakers construe the internal structure of events, whether as complete or ongoing, telic or atelic. In second language acquisition, such systems require not only formal reconfiguration

but also conceptual realignment: the need to perceive and encode reality through a new set of cognitive categories.

From a relativity informed and cognitive-typological perspective, these processes reveal the cognitive depth of grammatical learning. As Niemeier (2004) argues, the language classroom is a privileged site for raising students' awareness of the conceptual relativity of languages, how linguistic forms reflect distinct cultural and experiential mappings of the world. Similarly, Achard (2004) shows that grammar instruction grounded in Cognitive Grammar principles can facilitate this reorientation by linking meaning and form, and by making explicit the conceptual motivations underlying grammatical constructions. In this light, the teaching of aspect becomes an exercise in conceptual perspective-taking.

The bidirectional approach proposed here, examining both Italophones learning Hungarian and Hungarians learning Italian, underscores the symmetrical potential of contrastive pedagogy. Each group's difficulties mirror the other's: Italophones must learn to associate aspect with the divisibility and internal accessibility of events beyond completion and resultativity, while Hungarian learners must learn to view aspect as a global perspective on an event anchored in time, highlighting its terminal moment without necessarily implying its completion. At the level of constructional strategies, Italian learners must master Hungarian syntax–semantics interfaces involving verbal particles, argument definiteness, word order, information structure (focus), and prosody, whereas Hungarian learners must understand how Italian encodes temporal anchoring and viewpoint through verbal inflection and periphrastic strategies. By explicitly foregrounding not only grammatical divergences but also conceptual asymmetries, teachers can transform contrastive challenges into opportunities for metalinguistic awareness and crosslinguistic insight.

Drawing on research in L2 acquisition and SLA pedagogy, we proposed a series of practical recommendations for teaching not only how to express aspect grammatically, but how to think aspectually as speakers of the target language. Teachers should encourage learners to consciously shift perspective, engage in contrastive reflection and guided noticing, and make form–meaning links explicit. Through graded exposure, discourse-rich contexts, and culturally grounded narratives, learners can develop metalinguistic

awareness of construal options and conceptual flexibility, the capacity to adopt alternative linguistic perspectives on events and temporal relations. Such awareness supports the development of crosslinguistic metalinguistic competence, enabling learners to view grammar as a cognitive tool rather than a formal obstacle. Without attention to underlying conceptualizations, instruction risks reinforcing L1-based transfer and the fossilization of L1 construal habits. This view is especially powerful in teaching aspectual systems, where morphosyntax directly mirrors conceptual distinctions such as telicity and viewpoint.

While numerous studies exist on Romance languages, there are few, if any, on Finno-Ugric ones. This gap highlights the need for both theoretical and empirical research to test whether results derived primarily from Indo-European languages hold true in a wider typological context.

Ultimately, this study advocates a view of second language acquisition as a process of conceptual enrichment, a form of cognitive bilingualism in which learners internalize not only new linguistic forms but also alternative ways of construing experience. Integrating typological knowledge and cognitive-linguistic insights into pedagogy thus promotes not only linguistic competence but also a deeper understanding of how languages encode distinct perspectives on time, action, and human experience. In this sense, the teaching and learning of aspect become a window into the broader dialogue between language, cognition, and culture, reaffirming the value of a relativity-informed, cognitively grounded approach to linguistic education.

Abbreviations

1, 1st person; 2, 2nd person; 3, 3rd person; Acc, Accusative Case; AUX, auxiliary; Cond, conditional; Dat, Dative Case; F, feminine; FUT, Simple Future Tense (*Futuro semplice*); GER, gerund; HU, Hungarian; IMP, Imperfect Tense (*Imperfetto*); Inf, infinite; IPFV, imperfective; IT, Italian; M, masculine; N, neutral (from aspectual perspective); PART, particle; PC, Compound Past Tense (*Passato prossimo*); PFV, perfective; PL, plural; PluP1, Pluperfect 1; PP, past participle; PR, Present Tense (*Presente*); Prep, preposition; PrRifl, pronome riflessivo; PS, Simple Past Tense (*Passato remoto*); SubjPl, subjunctive pluperfect (*congiuntivo imperfetto*); PST, Past Tense; SG, singular.

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