

On L1 Transfer in Closely Related Language Learning: Conjectural Future in L2 Spanish by French and Italian Speakers

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Abstract: This study investigates cross-linguistic effects on the acquisition of non-chronological – specifically, conjectural and concessive – interpretations of the simple and compound future tenses in Spanish as a second language (L2). In particular, it seeks to compare the specific role of L1 transfer in L2 Spanish acquisition by L1 French (n=33) and L1 Italian learners (n=28), at two different proficiency levels (CEFR B2 and C1), yet with similar learning experiences. 36 native Spanish speakers formed the control group. Results of two written acceptability judgement tasks show a clear cross-linguistic effect depending on the participants' L1 backgrounds, leading to overall advantages proportional to the degree of L1-L2 similarity in the range of possible interpretations of future tenses, although certain aspectual configurations resist acquisition even at advanced levels. However, results also indicate that all the learner groups took advantage of sensitivity to the role of lexical aspect in judging the appropriate interpretations of future tense, suggestive of cognitive processes at the discourse-syntax interface that are activated independently from any effects of conscious learning or instruction.

Keywords: *aspect, future tense, L2 acquisition, feature reassembly, L1 transfer, romance languages.*

Sobre la transferencia L1 en el aprendizaje de lenguas próximas: el futuro conjetural en L2 español por hablantes de francés e italiano

Resumen: Este estudio investiga, desde una perspectiva contrastiva, la adquisición de las interpretaciones no cronológicas —concretamente, conjeturales y concesivas— del futuro simple y compuesto en español como segunda lengua (L2). En particular, busca comparar el papel específico de la transferencia de la L1 en la adquisición del español como L2 por parte de estudiantes cuya L1 es el francés (n=33) y el italiano (n=28), en dos niveles de competencia diferentes (MCER B2 y C1), pero con experiencias de aprendizaje similares. El grupo de control está formado por 36 hablantes nativos de español. Los resultados de dos tareas escritas de juicios de aceptabilidad muestran un claro efecto de la L1 de los participantes, conducente a una ventaja en función de la mayor similitud entre la L1 y la L2, en cuanto a las posibles interpretaciones de los tiempos verbales de futuro. Sin embargo, algunas configuraciones aspectuales son resistentes a la adquisición, incluso en los niveles avanzados. En contrapartida, los resultados también indican que todos los grupos de estudiantes son sensibles al papel del aspecto léxico al juzgar las interpretaciones adecuadas de los tiempos de futuro, lo que sugiere procesos cognitivos localizados en la interfaz discurso-sintaxis, que se activan independientemente de cualquier efecto del aprendizaje consciente o la instrucción.

Palabras clave: *aspecto, tiempos de futuro, adquisición de L2, reensamblaje de rasgos, transferencia de la L1, lenguas romances.*

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1. Introduction: An overview on L1 transfer

This paper describes a study on the cross-linguistic effects on the acquisition of non-future interpretations of the simple and the compound future tenses (henceforth, S-FUT and C-FUT, and FUT when both forms are jointly referred to) in Spanish as an additional language (L2/*Ln*). More specifically, it compares some aspects of the role of cross-linguistic influence on the acquisition of conjectural and concessive interpretations of FUT in Spanish by L1 French and L1 Italian learners, as exemplified in (1), (2) and (3).

- (1) Lllaman a la puerta. **Será** Juan.
“They are knocking at the door. **That’s probably (S-FUT)** Juan”.
- (2) La puerta no ha sido forzada. El ladrón **habrá entrado** por la ventana.
“The door has not been forced. The burglar **must have entered (C-FUT)** through the window”.
- (3) **Será** muy listo, pero no lo parece.
“He **may be (S-FUT)** very smart, but s/he doesn’t seem like it”.

To this end, the learning outcomes of speakers of these two different L1s will be compared. Genetically and typologically, both French and Italian are closely related to each other and to the target language, Spanish. However, the relative frequency and specific restrictions in the availability of non-future interpretations of the FUT differs across the three languages.

In the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), L1 cross-linguistic influence, also known as transfer, has been a recurrent research theme. The influence of the L1 on the acquisition of L2 tense-aspect morphology has been reported by many scholars (e.g., [Duff and Li, 2002](#); [Slabakova, 2005](#)). However, most previous studies are mainly concerned with transfer of form (i.e., morphology), not meaning (i.e., interpretation). L2 researchers (e.g., [Diaubalick and Guijarro-Fuentes, 2022](#); [Gabriele, 2005, 2009](#); [González and Quintana Hernández, 2018](#); [Rastelli, 2020](#); [Vallerossa, 2021](#), and references thereafter) have, nevertheless, started to pay attention to the effects of language transfer on the acquisition of the semantic interpretation of aspectual marking in an L2. Although such studies have brought new insights, the question of how language learners’ L1 affects the acquisition of L2 aspect still needs to be further explored.

Different hypotheses on the effects of L1 transfer have flourished in SLA in the past decades and continue to be so in current SLA research. One such hypothesis is the Full Access/Full Transfer hypothesis ([Schwartz and Sprouse, 2000](#)) which assumes that features (interpretable and uninterpretable alike) that do not form part of the L1 can be acquired by adult L2 learners. Under this hypothesis, learners in the process of acquiring an L2 (or *Ln*) use the full grammar of their L1, transferred into the interlanguage, which they then gradually restructure by means of access to UG. Thus, L1 transfer is the main

source of the L1/L2 developmental sequence and ultimate attainment differences, and a core process that significantly (and variably – depending on the L1/L2 pairing) influences the L2 learning task.

Meanwhile, the Interpretability Hypothesis (henceforth, IH) (Hawkins and Hattori, 2006; Tsimpli and Dimitrakopoulou, 2007) digresses somewhat from the Full Access proposal; the IH states that only L1 interpretable feature values can be learnt and (re)set. More specifically, only those features instantiated within the L1 and, at most, new interpretable features remain available in SLA. Uninterpretable features, which have strictly syntactic effects, are contended to only be acquirable only during the sensitive periods for language in childhood. This would explain an L2 adult's inability to reset parameters, at least when they are contingent on the acquisition of new uninterpretable features. The IH contends that the underlying syntax of L2 grammars is destined to remain like that of the L1 grammar with localized (or surface) adjustments.

The mapping challenges that learners with different L1 backgrounds may face have been the topic of intense debate. In particular, SLA researchers have investigated whether L2 learners are able to recognize the different behaviour and nature of syntactic features, and explored whether the difficulties in attaining them are due to any specific underlying syntactic deficit. In this respect, the Feature Reassembly Hypothesis (FRH, Lardiere, 2008, 2009) argues that L2 learners can acquire subtle features by way of a process where learners reassemble the sets of lexical features of the native language into feature bundles appropriate to the L2. The FRH can be summed up in that the process of acquiring L2 grammatical features consists of the learner initially identifying relevant features in the L2 grammar, which may be present, but differently arranged in mappings onto lexical items, in the L1. Next, this hypothesis proposes that the learner gradually identifies the mappings of these features in the L2; in this part of the acquisition process, grammatically encoded information may be expressed lexically at first, using expressions whose meaning is similar to that encoded in functional categories. Finally, the learner will identify the appropriate L2 mapping of the features and thereby be able to reassemble them and use the corresponding L2 functional categories appropriately.

However, interpreting utterances is not only a matter of morphosyntactic decoding. Recognizing a conjectural use of FUT involves relating the linguistic expressions to contextual information and linking it to the intention of the speaker. In this sense, it requires processing that integrates syntax and discourse, as well as semantics. These are the kinds of interpretation processes considered in the Interface Hypothesis (Sorace, 2011, 2012) as the ones that tend to be especially challenging for SLA. From this perspective, among the factors that make acquisition more challenging and lead to greater variability in the L2, the requirement of processing features at the interfaces is especially relevant. Evidence in favour of this assumption is available, for instance, in a range of studies (Sorace and Serratrice, 2009, White, 2011, Benmamoun et al., 2013, Ahern et al., 2020, 2023 and references therein) on challenges related to interface processing in the acquisition of L2 features that are present in learners' L1s. Thus, other hypotheses have

purported that L2 variability does not point to deficits with uninterpretable features, but emerges from interface vulnerabilities, claiming that interpretable features relevant to the syntax–semantics or the syntax–discourse interfaces are challenging. These kinds of proposals seem to take into account that influence from L1 on the L2 alone cannot account for all L2 variability (see Sorace, 2011, 2012 for a review of interface vulnerability in L2 theorizing).

In standpoints which consider L1 transfer and/or inaccessibility to features as the primary source of L2 variability, it is predicted that L2 learners whose L1 instantiates similar features for a given property should not display significant variation for those features in the L2. However, it has often been shown in the literature that L2 variability is not exclusively selective on a continuum of grammatical representations that can be directly applied to the L2 from the L1 (see Ahern et al., 2020, 2023, and references therein). That is, L2 learners whose L1s should supply them with features that are the same in both languages also reveal different degrees of variability in applying properties connected with those very same features; mainly when such features involve interfaces. On the contrary, if interface properties are simply more difficult for all L2 learners, then this fact can account for much L2 variability, even when it is seemingly unexpected given L1 transfer and similarities in the two languages.

On the other hand, previous research on transfer from L2s in the acquisition of an L3, as well as on the distribution of the type of influence of L1 and L2 on the acquisition of an L3, are also relevant to our investigation, as Spanish is the second foreign language learnt by many of the participants in the present study. Puig-Mayenco et al. (2020) conducted a systematic review of 71 studies on the interaction among languages in L3 acquisition processes. The review covers different language combinations, and observes a strong effect of research methodology, as well as of the genetic and typological relationship among the languages, on the results obtained. In the studies based on free production tasks, the influence of the L2 on the L3 tends to be particularly noticeable, whereas in studies based on comprehension tasks, a stronger influence of the L1 is often seen. Also, the influence of the language –either L1 or L2– closest (that is, with a higher degree of linguistic proximity) to the L3 is often detected, especially if it shares the target feature with the L3.

In sum, the different hypotheses mentioned so far – Full Access/Full Transfer, the Interpretability Hypothesis, the FRH and the Interface Hypothesis – all share the common goal of explaining the ways that native languages play a role in the acquisition and development of additional ones. However, each hypothesis highlights or delves more deeply into different aspects, such as the nature of the morphosyntactic features of the language being acquired, the functions and the interaction of linguistic modules in the acquisition processes or the degree of typological (dis)similarity across the L1 and the target language. In particular, we consider the FRH to offer potential in the objectives of the present study due to the similarity of the languages under consideration and the interest, therefore, of

shedding light on the processes involved in reconfiguring and mapping features from the L1 to the target language, where the features under consideration are mapped –partially– differently across the languages.

The focus of the present study is on genetically and typologically close languages, which share the target feature: a morphological FUT amenable to conjectural interpretations. Our analysis will be centred on the potential interactions of these L1s and Spanish during the acquisition process. To this end, the research design does not include a free production task, thereby reducing to some degree the likelihood of observing influences from other non-native languages known by most participants (mainly English). In addition, in the interest of simplicity and our of focus on the influence of the L1s on Spanish as the target language, the term L2 will be used hereon to refer to Spanish as the target language of our participants.

Our study presents a good opportunity to distinguish between the types of L1/L2 cross-linguistic influence, describable as positive, which may facilitate the attainment of an L2 grammar system; or negative, reflecting the underproduction or overproduction of a particular structure, production errors such as substitutions, calques and alterations of a target language item, misinterpretations during comprehension, and so on (Odlin, 1989). Comparing these kinds of patterns in different learner groups can reveal whether and how L1 features influence patterns of transfer and, ultimately, contribute to elucidating whether such transfer patterns are specific to each language pairing.

The paper is structured as follows. In section 2 we inform about future tense in the three languages involved. Section 3 provides an overview of previous studies on the acquisition of conjectural and concessive FUT uses and introduces our research questions and hypotheses. Section 4 presents our investigation on the acquisition of FUT in Spanish. Discussion and conclusions will be presented in section 5.

2. The semantics of FUT in Romance: a contrastive approach

Modern Romance languages (except for Romanian and some Italian vernaculars) have synthetic, inflectional future forms that stem from the periphrastic Latin obligative construction ‘Infinitive × habere’. Futurity can also be expressed in these languages by other means, in addition to FUT, such as verbs of movement (*go* and *come*), volition, markers of progressive aspect or certain uses of simple present. However, full grammaticalization of these alternative devices is uncommon (Dhal, 2000).

Since the expression of futurity in Romance is etymologically related to modality, it is not surprising that in most Romance languages, FUT forms may receive interpretations not only related to chronology, but also conjectural ones, as in (1) to (3) above. Also, interpreting chronology and conjecture often leads to the identification of additional nuances. For instance, directive and volitional nuances can be identified (as in (4) and (5)). Among the uses of FUT which can be classified as expressing conjecture, i.e., a supposition or inference the speaker makes, not necessarily referring to future time, concessive and mirative uses are included, as in the Spanish examples (6) and (7). Concessive interpretations involve an

implication that given one situation, the situation expressed in the adjacent proposition is unexpected and nonetheless, affirming both situations hold. Mirative uses, on the other hand, lead to recognising the speaker's attitude of surprise with respect to the propositional content expressed.

- (4) **No se lo dirás** a nadie; es una orden (directive)
"You will not tell (S-FUT) anyone; that's an order".
- (5) **Te lo traeré** mañana, no te preocupes (promise)
"I'll bring (S-FUT) it to you tomorrow; don't worry about it".
- (6) **Será** muy guapo, pero es muy antipático (concession)
"He may be (S-FUT) very handsome, but he's very unpleasant".
- (7) ¡**Será** tonto...! (mirativity)
"He's (S-FUT) such a fool!"

Nevertheless, linguistic and discursive restrictions that apply to each of these ways of interpreting S-FUT differ across Romance languages. In Spanish and Italian, conjectural interpretations are frequent, and in Spanish they correspond to a very high percentage of S-FUT usage (Escandell-Vidal, 2010, 2014). Conversely, the mere existence of conjectural interpretations of the S-FUT in present-day spontaneous French is a debated issue (Tasmowsky and Dendale, 1998; De Saussure and Morency, 2012).

Despite the frequency of conjectural S-FUT uses in Spanish and Italian, they are restricted to certain linguistic conditions, mainly related to lexical aspect (Soto, 2008; Baranzini, 2017). For conjectural and, more generally, for non-future interpretations of the S-FUT, it is usually necessary for the verb to have [- telic] and [- dynamic] features (as in examples (6) and (7) above for Spanish, (8) and (9) below for Italian). Therefore, states are naturally compatible with such readings.

- (8) A quest'ora Paolo **sarà già a casa** [- telic] [- dynamic]
"At this hour Paolo will already be (S-FUT) at home".
- (9) **Sarà svizzero**, ma è sempre in ritardo. [- telic] [- dynamic]
"He may be (S-FUT) Swiss, but he is always late".

On the other hand, [+ dynamic] verbs in the S-FUT can only be interpreted as conjectural if their location in the future is contextually ruled out. This generally implies that the events denoted are understood as habitual ((11) and (12)):

- (10) ?? No contesta. **Dormirá** en su habitación. [- telic] [+ dynamic]
??Non risponde. **Dormirà** in camera sua
"S/he's not answering. S/he must be sleeping (S-FUT) in his/her bedroom".
- (11) - ¿A qué se dedica Luis? × No sé, **trabajará** en cosas de informática. [- telic]
[+ dynamic] [+ habitual]

(12) - Cosa fa Luis? × Non lo so, **lavorerà** su materiale informatico.

- “What does Luis do? × I don’t know, **he (probably) works (S-FUT)** in computing”.

This aspectual restriction is related to the fact that states do not have inherent endpoints; it affects the possibility of establishing temporal reference. States in the S-FUT cannot automatically be seen as events located at a specific point in time, so they will only express future reference if an adverbial expression is used. Otherwise, a state in the S-FUT will naturally be understood as expressing conjecture. On the contrary, telic events have inherent endpoints. Therefore, if they are used in the S-FUT, future location is interpreted, even in the absence of an adverbial expression. Activities are more ambiguous, because they are atelic but at the same time (unlike states) they are dynamic; as a result, activities may achieve conjectural and chronological interpretations, depending on the context. More specifically, activities can express conjecture by adding the [+ progressive] feature to the predicate. This can also be done with accomplishments, but not with achievements, because they are [- durative]. Progressive markers (hereafter, PROG) are stativizers, i. e., they express something that is *in the state of happening* (Laca, 2017). In Spanish, progressive aspect is often introduced by means of *estar* × *gerund* (*to be* × *gerund*) (13). In Italian, the use of PROG alternates with other lexical or syntactic devices producing a similar effect, such as the adverb *ancora* (still), as in (14):

(13) No contesta. **Estará durmiendo** en su habitación.

“S/he’s not answering. **S/he must be (S-FUT) sleeping** in his/her bedroom.”

(14) Non risponde. **Dormirà ancora**.

“S/he’s not answering. **S/he must still be (S-FUT) sleeping**”.

The same tendency exists in French, although the use of conjectural FUT is clearly less common. However, examples of conjectural readings of the French S-FUT with states abound in the literature (especially, with the copula *être* ‘to be’). De Saussure and Morency (2012) argue that the conjectural future is alive and well in the Swiss and Central France varieties of French not only with stative verbs, but with activities as well.

Nevertheless, present-day French – in contrast to Spanish and Italian – lacks a fully grammaticalized progressive device. The construction *être en train de* × *infinitive* can be used to express progressivity in the future, but its frequency is much lower than the Spanish *estar* × *gerund* progressive construction (Bertinetto, 2000). This may be related to the oddity of conjectural S-FUT with activities in French, as has often been pointed out in the literature.

As regards conjectural interpretations of the C-FUT, they can be found in Spanish, Italian and French without any lexical aspect restrictions. The C-FUT is unlike the simple form in that it involves the representation of a completed event, or its resulting state, as being previous to a reference point. This facilitates non-future readings regardless of the predicate type, as in utterances (15) to (17), in which achievement predicates express conjectures in Spanish, Italian and French:

- (15) La puerta no ha sido forzada. El ladrón **habrá entrado** por la ventana.
“The door has not been forced. The burglar **must have entered (C-FUT)** through the window”.
- (16) Strano che la luce sia accesa. **Si saranno dimenticati** di spegnerla.
“It is strange that the light is on. **They’ll have forgotten (C-FUT)** to turn it out”.
- (17) Il est midi. **Max aura (déjà) atteint** le sommet.
“It’s midday. **Max will (already) have reached (C-FUT)** the summit”.

Concessive environments (like (3) and (6) above) provide a further difference between French vs. Spanish and Italian. Concessive FUT constructions are widespread in Spanish and Italian, with both the simple and compound tense; but in French, neither the S-FUT nor its compound counterpart can be used to express concession. French concessive constructions include, on the contrary, constructions like those shown in (18) and (19), using specialised connectives or modal auxiliaries:

- (18) **Il a beau être intelligent**, mais il ne le semble pas.
“He **may well be** intelligent, but he does not seem like it.”
- (19) **Il a peut-être été en retard** aujourd’hui, mais il est très ponctuel.
“He **may have been late** today, but he’s very punctual”.

A thorough description of further uses of FUT is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the previous paragraphs clearly show that, despite its common origin, the S-FUT tense has developed divergent tendencies in French vs. Spanish and Italian, particularly in terms of its potential for expressing conjecture and concession. Comparing French and Italian, [Baranzini and De Saussure \(2017\)](#) conclude that, in French, conjectural uses of S-FUT are only acceptable if they represent an event that is verifiable in the future. This prevents the tense from expressing purely epistemological, non-future uses; and is a requisite that is absent from the Italian S-FUT, leading to more widespread use for conveying conjectural meaning.

This line of thought is fully compatible with [Escandell-Vidal’s \(2021\)](#) cross-linguistic analysis of the Romance S-FUT. Escandell-Vidal’s hypotheses underlie our study because they provide explicit, falsifiable linguistic criteria for the commonalities and distinctions of the uses of S-FUT in Romance. They also offer a basis for conceptualizing the learning task of the L2 learners, which we regard as feature reassembly ([Lardiere, 2008, 2009](#)).

Escandell-Vidal describes the semantics of S-FUT in terms of features; the core features of S-FUT are common to all Romance varieties, while other features differ. On her view, the core meaning of the Romance S-FUT “encodes an instruction [for the hearer] to build the eventuality described by the sentence radical, or preajacent proposition p, as the representation of a situation (the evaluation situation, ES) that cannot be accessed from an information acquisition situation (IS), in which the discourse situation (DS) is included”.

The core semantic features do not specifically relate to time, nor to conjecture, but to the information source: the situation described is (at the IS) only available as an inference of the speaker. This implies that the S-FUT has an inherent evidential meaning.

Despite the existence of common Romance features, the ultimate materializations of the S-FUT tense in the different languages will vary depending on the values that other crosslinguistically shared features have taken in each of them. These features and their variation in French, Italian and Spanish are represented below in Table 1:

Table 1. The semantics of the S-FUT in French, Italian and Spanish (Escandell-Vidal, 2021, p. 23).

CORE MEANING	IS ES DS ⊂ IS		
	FRENCH	ITALIAN	SPANISH
ES [± Factual]	-	-	-
IS [± Deictic]	+	+	+
IS ES [± Forward]	+	-	-

Following Escandell-Vidal’s proposal, the Romance S-FUT is always non-factual. In the Romance languages compared here, it is also [+deictic]; this means that (in these languages) the IS is related to the speaker’s perceptual field. As a result, conjectural readings are possible. However, the French S-FUT imposes a [+ Forward] relation between the information acquisition situation, IS and the evaluation situation, ES: thus, all eventualities in the French S-FUT call for a future verification. This is not required in Italian and Spanish and, as a result, conjectural uses of the S-FUT may be more pervasive in these two languages.

In line with the FRH, the following processes can be expected to form part of the acquisition of the full range of uses of the Spanish S-FUT, and more specifically, the non-chronological ones that we propose to study.

- a. L1 French speakers must reassemble the [± Forward] feature.
- b. L1 Italian speakers can take advantage of the very similar mapping of the [- Forward] of S-FUT across the L1 and L2 forms. This claim has a direct connection with current L2 acquisition theory and will be addressed in Section 3.

3. Empirical research on FUT in L2 Spanish and research questions

3.1 Previous studies

Adopting a formal framework, Bruhn de Garavito and Valenzuela (2007) have argued that chronological and conjectural interpretations of the S-FUT cause dissimilar acquisitional problems. These researchers offer the results of an empirical task on the ambiguities involved in the interpretation of the Spanish S-FUT. Since the tense has two types of interpretation, context is necessary to decode adequately for disambiguation. This study deals with interface problems found in simultaneous bilingualism and adult L2 acquisition

which may involve delay in acquisition, fossilization, attrition, or incomplete acquisition according to the Interface Hypothesis. A group of 13 English learners of L2 Spanish were compared to a native control group made up of 13 speakers. Participants were given an oral sentence conjunction task and were asked to rate their logic on an acceptability scale (where 1=totally unacceptable and 5=totally acceptable). Task results show that it was difficult for L2 learners of Spanish, but they were able to overcome the complexity of the input, the comprehension of which was reliant on contextual cues. More importantly, learners performed in a way that is consistent with knowledge of the conjectural interpretation of the S-FUT in spite of ambiguity in the input, and demonstrate having acquired this interpretation in Spanish. However, the specific aspectual restrictions operating in the conjectural cases are not clearly operationalised in their study; only the [\pm telic] variable is considered. Therefore, no direct comparisons can be made between our study and Bruhn de Garavito and Valenzuela's.

Goundareva (2014), on the other hand, seeks to investigate how the acquisition of the conjectural S-FUT in Spanish by speakers of L1 French can be facilitated through classroom instruction. Like Bruhn de Garavito and Valenzuela, Goundareva takes into account the [\pm telic] variable, but no distinction is made between states and activities regarding their compatibility with conjectural readings. An experiment which measured different outcomes of form focused and meaning based instructional methods was designed, which included a grammaticality judgement and a limited written production task. Long-term effects of the instruction were also considered based on the results of a delayed post-test. Results from both tasks indicated advantages of meaning-based instruction over form-focused instruction. At the same time, both instructional methods had a more positive effect on learner acquisition, in both explicit and implicit knowledge, compared to the results of the control group. As expected, French L1 learners showed a slight benefit over English L1 learners due to the positive cross-linguistic influence of their L1.

In a study whose aims were closer to those of the present one, Ahern et al. (2020) explored the acquisition of a range of Spanish FUT interpretations by French-speaking learners; overall, learners were able to distinguish chronological from conjectural and concessive interpretations of FUT. Findings show that despite the dissimilarity in production of conjectural and concessive FUT uses (compared to the L1 control group), L2 learners' understanding of the chronological, conjectural and concessive use of FUT was shown to be similar to that of L1 speakers. However, the L2 learners were not fully aware of the linguistic restrictions operating in Spanish: in particular, they did not differentiate between the dissimilar acceptability of the conjectural FUT with states and activities.

3.2 Research questions and hypotheses

The present study is an exploration of the specific issue of language transfer at intermediate and advanced levels of L2 Spanish, assumed to take place according to the FRH. Although the conjectural FUT has been explored in previous studies, the distinction between states and activities, and the concessive uses of FUT, have generally been omitted. Our study

is twofold: by focusing on the uses of FUT in interlanguage grammars and questioning some of the standardly accepted assumptions for the interlinguistic commonalities of the semantics of the Romance FUT, it aims to generally reflect on the concepts of language transfer and grammaticality in SLA bearing in mind the theoretical hypotheses that hinge on them. This study seeks to respond to the following research questions:

- RQ1. Can the transfer of L1 interpretable features into their L2 target language be confirmed for the two learner groups?
- RQ2. Will L2 learners be able to judge FUT uses appropriately in their second language by rejecting the ones that are not possible in the target system (but possible in their L1 system) and accepting uses possible in the target system (as opposed to in their L1 system)?

It is important to highlight that our study focuses on intermediate and advanced learners. Finding a strong L1 influence among these learners would not be a trivial fact. That the L1 system may be to a large extent the starting point for L2 learners should not be surprising, and even less so in the case of closely related languages. However, at more advanced levels, the persistence of the transfer effect would reveal a durable difficulty in detecting and readjusting L2 features whose organization differs from those of the L1. This effect would be clearly observed if the L1 French participants in our research show a clear tendency to use and assess the possibilities of using S-FUT and C-FUT according to the limits and tendencies of their L1. If, on the contrary, the L1 French speakers can go beyond these tendencies (and thus, understand and produce FUT uses possible in the L2, but not in the L1), this would be a strong indication that a feature re-assembly has occurred and that L1 cross-linguistic effects are not so consistent at intermediate and advanced L2 proficiency levels.

Contrasting the answers of a group of L1 French speakers (in whose language the non-chronological uses of S-FUT and C-FUT differ from those of Spanish) and a group of L1 Italian speakers (in whose language the two verb tenses have uses similar to those of Spanish) allows us to further refine the interpretation of the results. If the pattern of responses of Italian speakers differs from that of French speakers (but is similar to that of Spanish speakers), this could be seen as a clear effect of L1 influence on the L2. Contrastingly, if Italian speakers show a significantly higher variability than Spanish speakers, and if differences were found between the intermediate and the advanced participants, this would imply that positive cross-linguistic influence has a limited and inconsistent effect from one learning stage to another.

Answering the research questions mentioned above implies paying attention to the learner's awareness of: (a) the aspectual restrictions of the conjectural interpretations of FUT in Spanish, and (b) the fact that the same restrictions operate in conjectural and concessive environments. Variability is a detectable phenomenon in any empirical research on L2 grammar acquisition, as it is, to a lesser extent, in the verbal responses and behaviours of native speakers. The acquisition of a grammatical mechanism in L2 is

never a matter of all or nothing, but of greater or lesser variability. Thus, in our case, as soon as no significant difference is observed between the tendencies of non-native and native speakers in the control group, it can be concluded that acquisition has taken place. Therefore, based on the contrasts and similarities across the participants' L1s and Spanish, as described in Section 2 in light of our research questions focused on these specific areas of tense and aspect that have not been analyzed in any previous studies, we formulate the following hypotheses:

- H1: Assuming the Full Transfer/Full Access Hypothesis, which postulates full transfer of the L1 and full access to UG in L2 acquisition, if the L1 is fully transferred into the L2 grammar and given the similarity between the three languages, we can expect positive transfer for the L1 Italian speakers, in both conjectural and concessive uses of S-FUT. That is, the L1 Italian speakers would be able to apply their full array of S-FUT and C-FUT use in L2 Spanish. We expect some degree of positive transfer for the L1 French speakers, mainly in the conjectural cases, but anticipate that neither the S-FUT nor the C-FUT will be used to express concession.
- H2: However, assuming the Feature Reassembly Hypothesis, we could expect some degree of negative transfer in all the L1 groups, especially at the less advanced stages of development due to the readjustments learners need to make. Likewise, assuming the Interface Hypothesis, we expect variability and interface vulnerabilities in their interlanguage systems owing to the challenging nature of interpretable features relevant to the syntax–semantics or the syntax–discourse interfaces.
- H3: If participants already have some, but not all future tense uses, in their L1, then we will find that certain FUT uses in L2 Spanish will be judged as ungrammatical. Anyhow, we expect participants –both Spanish L1 speakers, and L1 French and Italian learners of Spanish– to show different rates of ability to identify grammaticality depending on the particular feature of the FUT.

In section 4.3, these general hypotheses will be developed into specific expectations related to our research tasks. Before that, however, some background information on the design of the study must be introduced.

4. Empirical study: design and methodology

This section presents the details of the empirical study, designed to explore the understanding of the conjectural and concessive uses of S-FUT and C-FUT in Spanish and the effects of the interaction of this tense with lexical aspect, by native speakers and by L1 speakers of French and Italian learning Spanish as an L2.

4.1 Participants

The participants were all adults and (except for the members of the control group), were all studying Spanish as a foreign language in their home countries (France and Italy). They had been placed in groups according to their proficiency in Spanish, as identified by the standardised placement tests used by their respective institutions, directly linked to descriptions of the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR).¹ Table 2 shows the numbers of Spanish L2 learner participants by proficiency level for each language, totalling 33 native speakers of French and 28 Italian speakers.

Table 2. Number of participants for each L1 and Spanish language proficiency level.

Native language	B2	C1
French	10	23
Italian	20	8
Spanish (control group)	36	

All 36 native speakers of European Spanish in the control group were born and lived in the central regions of Spain; they had knowledge of other languages, mainly English, but none considered themselves bilingual (in the strict sense of having a similar command of two languages). We made sure that no Catalan/Spanish bilinguals participated in the study, since the restrictions on the conjectural interpretations of the Catalan S-FUT crucially differ from those of Spanish (Escandell-Vidal, 2021).

The French-speaking group of L2 adult Spanish learners included 33 members. Only two of the French participants had had Spanish immersion experiences (one in Barcelona, Spain, for 7 years, the other for several brief periods in Bolivia). Some knowledge of English was reported by 30 of them (with varying levels, from elementary to advanced); two participants had an elementary level of Dutch, two had an intermediate level of Italian and one reported an intermediate level of German. Only two participants had learned Spanish as their first foreign language; for the rest of the French participants, English was studied first.

The Italian group comprised 28 informants. Three of them had lived in Spain (for 4 months, 9 months and 1 year, respectively). Some knowledge of English was reported by 26 of them (with levels ranging from elementary to advanced); two participants had an intermediate knowledge of French, two knew German at intermediate level, and one reported an intermediate level of Russian. Spanish was the first foreign language for two of the participants, and the second foreign language for the rest.

¹ All the L1 French participants were learning Spanish at the Instituto Cervantes Centers in Paris, Toulouse and Lyon. The Cervantes Institute is a Spanish public institution, present in 90 cities in 43 countries on six continents. 15 of the Italian participants were also Instituto Cervantes' students (in Rome, Milan, Naples and Palermo); the rest of the Italian participants were learning Spanish at the University of Milan. Their instructors were fully familiar with the Instituto Cervantes levels and placement procedures (internal tests and certificates of proficiency such as DELE and SIELE).

Hence, although most participants in the present study declared some knowledge of foreign languages other than Spanish, the individual profiles were highly heterogeneous regarding language combinations, level of attainment and order of acquisition. Besides, none of the non-Romance languages spoken by our participants has a morphological future tense allowing conjectural interpretations similar to those found in Romance. As for the two L1 French participants having intermediate knowledge of L2 Italian, the possibility of some degree of positive transfer from Italian into Spanish cannot be excluded, though it is unlikely that its effect would significantly alter the overall data. Thus, the hypothetical effects of previous L2 knowledge into L3 Spanish will not be considered here.²

4.2 Experimental tasks

The participants completed two written grammaticality judgement tasks in Spanish, each consisting in a set of multiple-choice items, presented in randomised order within each set, with three possible response options per item, administered online using Google Forms. The response options expressed a metalinguistic judgement on the appropriateness of the FUT verb form use, in the following terms.

- a. *La forma verbal en mayúscula está bien usada.*
The capitalised verb form is right (lit. well used).
- b. *Me suena raro; no estoy seguro/a de si la forma está bien usada.*
It sounds strange to me; I am not sure of whether the form is right (lit. well used).
- c. *La forma verbal está mal usada.*
The verb form is wrong (lit. badly used).

These three options were presented for every item across the two tasks. As summed up in [Tables 3 and 4](#), the first set of items (hereon, task 1) focused on the effect of lexical aspect on the acceptability of conjectural and concessive interpretations of the simple FUT (which are felicitous only with atelics, particularly with states), while task 2 focused on the differing acceptability of the simple and the compound FUT for conjectural interpretations (for the compound FUT, conjectural interpretations are felicitous with all predicate types).

Task 1 comprised 19 items made up of a brief contextualising text, in parentheses, followed by the target utterance in which the verb in FUT was written in block capitals, under which one of the three response options had to be chosen and marked by selecting the adjacent checkbox. An example of each item condition in the task is provided below (see [Table 3](#)).

The 18 items of the second task (Task 2) focused only on conjectural uses of the FUT. This task displayed items alongside external stimuli, in the form of simple line drawings or a simulation of a newspaper headline. The items consisted in written statements expressing interpretations, or conjectures on the causes, of the situations suggested by

² Future studies would, nevertheless, benefit from including more participants with more homogenous knowledge of other additional languages to test some of the claims about cross-linguistic effects on L3 acquisition stated in [Puig-Mayenco et al. \(2020\)](#) and [Vallerossa et al. \(2021\)](#), for instance.

the news headline or the scenes depicted in the drawings. Each item presented a FUT form in block capitals, half of which were simple FUT and the other half, compound FUT (e.g., *habrá hecho*). Sample items of each condition are provided below (see Table 4).

Besides, 5 filler items were included in the first task, and 4 filler items were included in the second task. Fillers targeted diverse grammatical structures, unrelated to the actual focus of the tasks. They have not been included in Tables 3 and 4. The fact that the tasks included different types of FUT interpretation (i.e., conjectural and concessive interpretations) in two different verb tenses (S-FUT and C-FUT) was also considered a distracting factor. Thus, the participants were exposed to two different interpretations of two tenses, in dissimilar syntactic constructions. This, in addition to the randomised order of the items, limited the (undesired) possibility that participants would respond mechanically, having quickly understood the objective of the tasks.

Table 3. Task 1 item conditions.

Item numbers	Interpretation of FUT		Lexical aspect of predicate containing verb in FUT			Sample items
	Conjecture	Concession	state	activity	Telic	
1 and 2	√		√			No conozco esta palabra, pero, si el diccionario dice que existe, pues EXISTIRÁ, claro.
3–5		√	√			Ana: Yo creo que María tiene sus razones para actuar así... Rosa: TENDRÁ sus razones, pero se equivoca.
6–8	√			√		Según el programa de actos, en este momento los ministros ya NEGOCIARÁN con sus colegas extranjeros.
9–11		√		√		Miguel: Pedro siempre piensa mucho antes de actuar. Por eso siempre toma buenas decisiones. Antonio: PENSARÁ mucho, pero me parece que esta vez se equivoca.
12–15	√				√	Tengo que daros una noticia de gran trascendencia, que alguno de vosotros ya OIRÉIS: el presidente ha dimitido esta mañana. ³
16–19		√			√	Rosa: Le han dado el premio a Luis porque lo ha hecho muy bien. José: Le DARÁN el premio a Luis, pero yo creo que María lo ha hecho mejor.

³ An anonymous reviewer pointed out that this example item might not necessarily be understood as conjectural. However, in the present case, the presence of the adverb *ya* ('already') is hardly compatible with a purely chronological interpretation of the S-FUT, at least in the standard peninsular variety of Spanish, which is the one considered in the study.

Table 4. Task 2 item conditions.

Item numbers	Tense		Interpretation of FUT	Lexical aspect of predicate containing verb in FUT			Sample items
	Simple FUT	Compound FUT		conjecture	state	activity	
25, 33, 41	✓		✓	✓			Es una habitación bastante desordenada. Hay unas botellas de vino con unos vasos. Entonces, supongo que esto SERÁ una fiesta.
26, 34, 42	✓		✓		✓		Yo creo que ROBARÁN la casa... porque veo a un ladrón que se escapa por la ventana.
27, 35, 43	✓		✓			✓	Puede ser un ladrón que ha entrado y que DESCONECTARÁ el teléfono para que el dueño no pueda llamar a la policía...
28, 36, 46		✓	✓			✓	Me imagino que HABRÁN ORGANIZADO una fiesta de cumpleaños...
29, 38, 45		✓	✓		✓		Los vigilantes del parking HABRÁN HABLADO con la policía para que busquen al propietario.
30, 37, 44		✓	✓	✓			Me imagino que el dueño HABRÁ TENIDO algún problema grave...

4.3 Analysis

Considering the hypothesis of an evidentiality-based semantics of Romance FUT (Escandell-Vidal, 2010, 2014 and 2021) presented above in 2.1, the predictions derivable from the value-mapping contrast between French and Spanish shown in Table 1 and the research hypotheses introduced in 3.1, our expectations for each item set were as follows:

1. Stative verbs in S-FUT: Native speakers will accept these uses with ease. If full L1 transfer is operating, L1 Italian speakers will also accept the concessive and conjectural interpretations. French speakers will hesitate to accept items with concessive readings due to its oddity in their L1. They may also face challenges identifying conjectural interpretations, considering that, in everyday French, conjectural uses of S-FUT are infrequent; therefore, for these two learner groups L1 transfer might also limit the acceptability of these items, even with states.

2. Activities in S-FUT: Native speakers will tend to only accept these items when a habitual reading is made accessible in the discourse context (as in items 6 to 9). Due to L1 transfer, our French-speaking participants will tend to reject all the items with this pattern, while the L1 Italian participants might converge with L1 Spanish speakers.
3. Accomplishments and achievements in S-FUT: The telic nature of these lexical aspect classes leads to incongruences with interpretations that differ from that of chronological future. Native speakers are expected to recognize this fact, and consistently reject this set of items. The L2 groups are also expected to reject them, due to L1 transfer.
4. C-FUT forms: considering that for the speakers of Romance languages C-FUT can often express conjecture, it was hypothesized that both native speakers and the French and Italian L1 learner groups would accept telic and atelic verb forms as conjectural.

Thus, in Task 1, items 1 and 2 are expected to be widely accepted in all groups, although more variability is predicted in the L2 groups; items 3 to 5 and 9 to 11 will only be decisively considered grammatical by the L1 Spanish and Italian speakers; items 6 to 8 and 12 to 19 should be rejected by all groups. Regarding Task 2, for the items involving S-FUT forms, those with stative predicates (items number 25, 33 and 41) should be accepted (to dissimilar degrees) by natives and non-natives; whereas all the items with verbs expressing activities, achievements or accomplishments (items 26, 27, 34, 35, 42 and 43) should be rejected by all the participant groups. Finally, the items containing C-FUT forms (items 28 to 30, 36 to 38 and 44 to 46) should be considered to be appropriate by all groups, with less variability than in the S-FUT items.

4.4 Results

Statistical analyses were carried out on the data obtained from the questionnaires, for the group results, based on the variables generated as the mean of each of the items. For each item condition, we compared the answers of each L2 group with those of the control group; inter-group comparisons were also made. For the comparisons, the arithmetic mean of the answers (i.e., the mean in the amount of options a, b or c chosen by the participants) were used.

The variables were shown to deviate from the normal distribution, so each group was analysed descriptively for its mean, minimum and maximum, and the groups were compared with each other using Mann-Whitney (comparing two groups or the two proficiency levels of a group) or Kruskal-Wallis (for more than two groups or L1s). Post-hoc, paired comparisons with Bonferroni correction were applied to any significant results of the Kruskal-Wallis test. The results are summarized below, in [Tables 5 and 6](#).

Table 5. Means.

Report							
GRUP_L1		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Median	Minimum	Maximum
GRU_1A5	FR	33	0.558	0.311	0.400	0.00	1.00
	CONTROL	36	0.917	0.138	1.000	0.60	1.00
	ITA	28	0.793	0.176	0.800	0.40	1.00
	Total	97	0.756	0.091	0.800	0.00	1.00
GRU_6A11	FR	33	0.232	0.171	0.167	0.00	0.67
	CONTROL	36	0.500	0.178	0.500	0.00	0.83
	ITA	28	0.429	0.205	0.500	0.00	0.83
	Total	97	0.387	0.018	0.500	0.00	0.83
GRU_12A19	FR	33	0.780	0.205	0.875	0.13	1.00
	CONTROL	36	0.663	0.248	0.750	0.13	1.00
	ITA	28	0.701	0.251	0.750	0.13	1.00
	Total	97	0.715	0.026	0.750	0.13	1.00
GRU_25_33_41	FR	33	0.525	0.277	0.667	0.00	1.00
	CONTROL	36	0.824	0.203	1.000	0.33	1.00
	ITA	28	0.560	0.241	0.667	0.00	1.00
	Total	97	0.636	0.037	0.667	0.00	1.00
GRU_26_34_42	FR	33	0.333	0.186	0.333	0.00	0.67
	CONTROL	36	0.491	0.203	0.333	0.33	1.00
	ITA	28	0.417	0.215	0.333	0.00	1.00
	Total	97	0.414	0.014	0.333	0.00	1.00
GRU_27_35_43	FR	33	0.798	0.276	1.000	0.00	1.00
	CONTROL	36	0.852	0.245	1.000	0.33	1.00
	ITA	28	0.869	0.262	1.000	0.00	1.00
	Total	97	0.840	0.015	1.000	0.00	1.00
GRU_28_36_46	FR	33	0.788	0.331	1.000	0.00	1.00
	CONTROL	36	0.917	0.146	1.000	0.67	1.00
	ITA	28	0.845	0.212	1.000	0.33	1.00
	Total	97	0.850	0.094	1.000	0.00	1.00
GRU_29_38_45	FR	33	0.798	0.322	1.000	0.00	1.00
	CONTROL	36	0.815	0.270	1.000	0.00	1.00
	ITA	28	0.798	0.246	1.000	0.33	1.00
	Total	97	0.803	0.039	1.000	0.00	1.00
GRU_30_37_44	FR	33	0.727	0.328	0.667	0.00	1.00
	CONTROL	36	0.750	0.244	0.667	0.00	1.00
	ITA	28	0.833	0.248	1.000	0.33	1.00
	Total	97	0.770	0.047	0.667	0.00	1.00

Table 6. Nonparametric Tests.

Hypothesis Test Summary				
	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig. ^{a,b}	Decision
1	The distribution of GRU_1TO5 is the same across categories of GRUP_L1.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
2	The distribution of GRU_6 TO 11 is the same across categories of GRUP_L1.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
3	The distribution of GRU_12 TO 19 is the same across categories of GRUP_L1.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.230	Retain the null hypothesis.
4	The distribution of GRU_25_33_41 is the same across categories of GRUP_L1.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
5	The distribution of GRU_26_34_42 is the same across categories of GRUP_L1.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.003	Reject the null hypothesis.
6	The distribution of GRU_27_35_43 is the same across categories of GRUP_L1.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.352	Retain the null hypothesis.
7	The distribution of GRU_28_36_46 is the same across categories of GRUP_L1.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.010	Reject the null hypothesis.
8	The distribution of GRU_29_38_45 is the same across categories of GRUP_L1.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.049	Reject the null hypothesis.
9	The distribution of GRU_30_37_44 is the same across categories of GRUP_L1.	Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test	0.171	Retain the null hypothesis.

a. The significance level is ,050.

b. Asymptotic significance is displayed.

The analyses showed that the differences among the groups of participants were significant ($p < .005$) for all of the item groups (shown in Tables 3 and 4 in the previous sections) except for those with concessive uses of S-FUT, following the prediction established above. Thus, all the learner groups managed to successfully identify the ungrammaticality of telic verbs in S-FUT for expressing concession or conjecture, on equal terms with the native speaker group.

Regarding the predictions set forth in section 4.3, Figures 1 and 2 show the percentages of acceptance of each participant group, in relation with lexical aspect (in the graphs, answer option A implies acceptance; option B, doubts; option C, rejection). The exact percentages are shown below each graph. The L1 Spanish speakers accepted the items with concessive uses of the S-FUT of stative and activity verbs, in contrast with telic verbs, which were generally rejected. The Italian speakers behaved similarly (statistically equivalently to the native speaker group, though showing more individual variability); whereas the French groups were statistically different ($p < .005$) from the Italian and Spanish L1 groups in their responses: they often rejected states and activities as ungrammatical, but the rejection of telics was (as in the Italian and control groups) still significantly higher ($p < .005$).

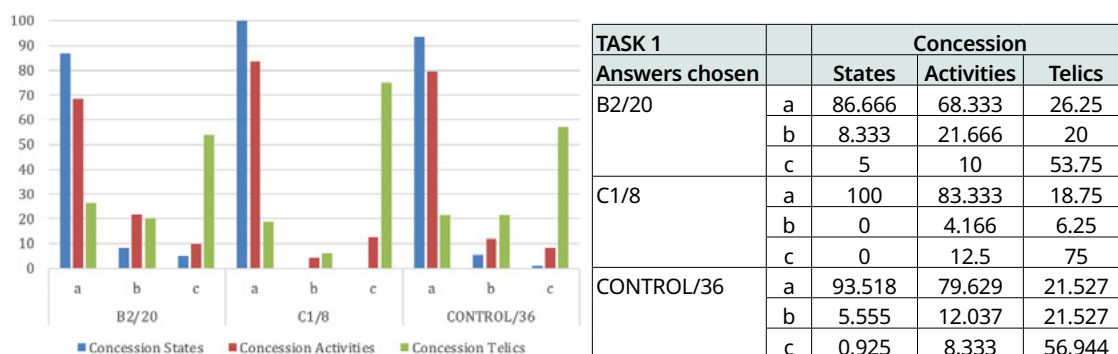


Figure 1. Italian L1 vs. Control: Concession items in Task 1 (mean).

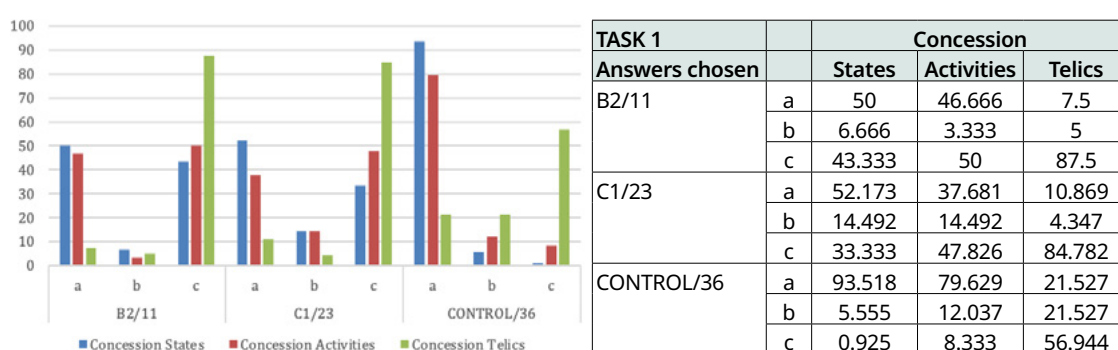


Figure 2. French L1 vs. Control: Concession items in Task 1 (mean).

The conjectural item results from Task 1 are displayed below, in Figures 3 and 4. Contrary to our expectations, rejection of conjectural use of the Spanish S-FUT was significantly higher in the non-native groups, compared to the control group. Overall, it is clear that the learner groups were not decisive in identifying stative in S-FUT expressing conjecture as grammatical. In the Italian groups, however, comparing B2 and C1, acceptance is significantly higher at C1, while the French L1 participants show no significant difference across the two proficiency groups. All non-native speaker groups (unlike the Spanish L1 control group) fail to distinguish between states and activities. Still, a clear distinction is seen in all the groups between atelic and telic predicates: telics are generally rejected.

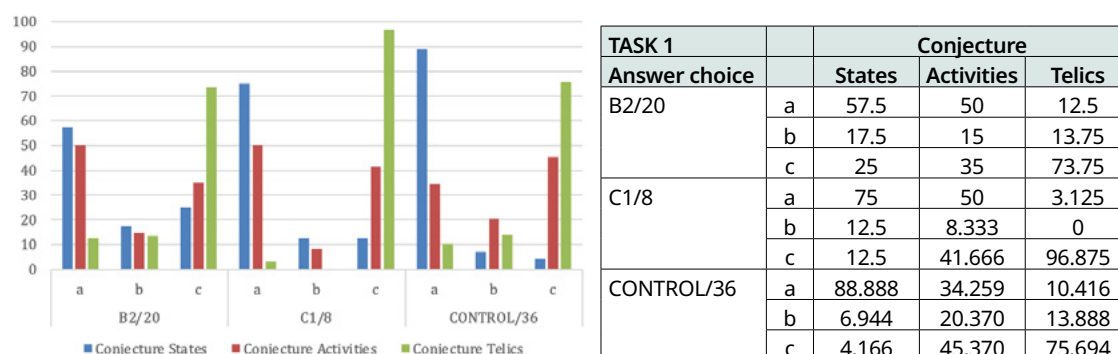


Figure 3. Italian L1 vs. Control: Conjecture items in Task 1 (mean).

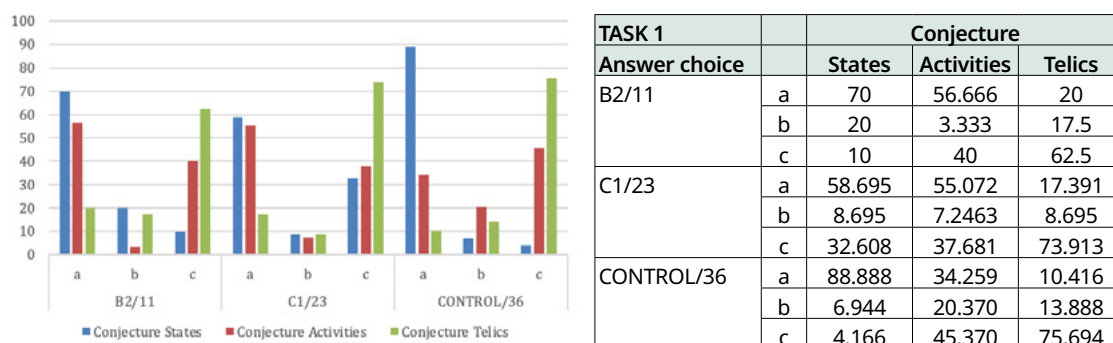
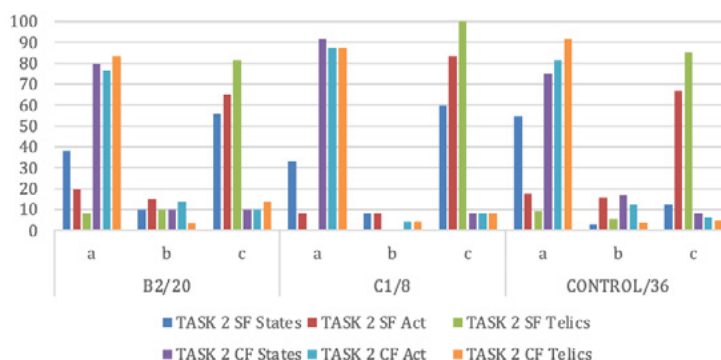


Figure 4. French L1 vs. Control: Conjecture items in Task 1 (mean).

The results of Task 2, contrasting the acceptance of S-FUT and C-FUT to express conjecture in Spanish, are shown below in graphs 5 and 6. It can be seen that, as in the previous task, the items with conjectural uses of stative verbs in S-FUT were generally accepted (answer option a) in the native Spanish speaker group, as opposed to the L2 learner groups. The responses of the L2 learner groups showed similarity to each other and statistically significant differences to those of the control group.

Regarding telic predicates in S-FUT expressing conjecture, all the participant groups strongly tended to reject them. For the items containing C-FUT forms, we had predicted that they would be accepted by all groups, with less variability than in the S-FUT items. The results displayed in Figures 5 and 6 confirm these expectations.



TASK 2		SF States	SF Act	SF Telics	CF States	CF Act	CF Telics
B2/20	a	38.333	20	8.333	80	76.666	83.333
	b	10	15	10	10	13.333	3.333
	c	55.833	65	81.666	10	10	13.333
C1/8	a	33.333	8.333	0	91.666	87.5	87.5
	b	8.333	8.333	0	0	4.1666	4.166
	c	59.722	83.333	100	8.333	8.333	8.333
CONTROL/36	a	54.629	17.592	9.259	75	81.481	91.666
	b	2.777	15.740	5.555	16.666	12.037	3.703
	c	12.037	66.666	85.185	8.333	6.481	4.629

Figure 5. Italian L1 vs. Control: S-FUT vs. C-FUT in Task 2 (mean).

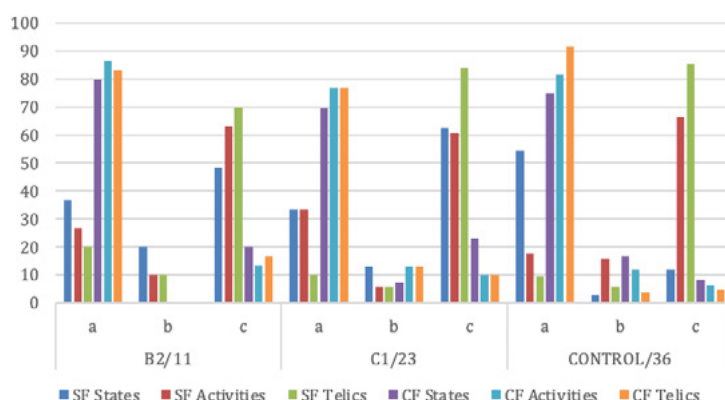


Figure 6. French L1 vs. Control: S-FUT vs. C-FUT in Task 2 (mean).

Across both Task 1 and Task 2, the sensitivity to the incompatibility of telic predicates in S-FUT for conjecture and concession was manifest in the rejection by the learner groups and the control groups of these items. Likewise, the uses of C-FUT, all of which expressed conjecture, were (almost) unanimously accepted across the learner and native speaker groups. On the other hand, a clear contrast between the L1 and the L2 groups was detected, when judging the grammaticality of activity verbs in S-FUT: L1 Spanish speakers tend to reject them, while the percentage of acceptance is noticeably higher in most L2 groups. Thus, the restrictions affecting activities in conjectural and concessive readings in S-FUT are not always clear to the L2 learners.

All the learner groups showed variability in their ability to interpret S-FUT for conjecture and concession, regardless of the lexical aspect of the target verbs. However, the learner groups were successful in showing sensitivity to telicity when it came to rejecting ungrammatical uses of S-FUT of telic verbs for conjectural or concessive expressions. The C1 Italian-speaking learner group was similar, in statistical terms, to the native Spanish group when interpreting concessive S-FUT uses, as opposed to the French learner groups, who showed difficulties with these items.

5. Overall discussion and concluding remarks

Taken together, the results of our study suggest a firm L1 cross-linguistic effect: the results of the L1 Italian group at C1 are the closest to those of the L1 Spanish control group. This is consistent with the fact that the Italian FUT and its Spanish counterpart have similar potentialities in the expression of conjecture and concession. However, the Italian L1 speakers failed to accept conjectural uses of S-FUT at the same rate as Spanish L1 speakers. This casts a doubt on the systematic prevalence of L1 transfer, even though this might be a consequence of the small size of the groups: conclusions can only be tentative at this point.

The use of FUT forms to express concession is ungrammatical in French and, as predicted, this has an effect in the difficulty of French speakers in accepting this use in L2 Spanish. Regarding the conjectural uses of FUT, the L1 French participants at C1 exhibit lower percentages of acceptance than the L1 Italian and Spanish speakers; a finding related to the fact that the use of S-FUT to express conjecture is scarce in French.

However, the patterns found also suggest that, despite the L1 effect just described, the L2 participants do not merely rely on their L1 grammatical representations when judging the grammaticality of tense uses: on the one hand, there is a noticeable degree of variability even in the items whose grammatical and interpretive properties are similar in the L1 and in the L2 (see above the results for stative and activity predicates expressing conjecture); on the other hand, the participants do not systematically reject the choices that do not exist in the L1 (in particular, in their acceptability judgements, regardless of their L1, the participants clearly distinguish atelic vs telic predicates, and simple vs compound FUT forms). This suggests that the L2 speakers are sensitive to Aktionsart differences, and possibly to lexical choices in general. Turning to our research hypotheses, the general tendencies observed suggest the following:

- H1: Cautiously confirmed. L1 feature transfer across the L2 levels analysed (B2 and C1) was observed. This has mixed effects, but a mainly facilitative effect is found in the case of the Italian speakers, especially at C1. This implies a positive answer to the Research Question 1: L2 learners transfer all L1 interpretable features into their L2 target language.
- H2: Cautiously confirmed. The fact that there is variability in items allowing similar tense choices in the L1 and in the L2 suggests that (as predicted in the Feature Reassembly Hypothesis) the learners are not straightforwardly able to map the L1 features onto the L2 forms. Besides (as predicted in the Interface Hypothesis), discourse environment does play a role in the acceptability of the items, for non-natives and (to a lesser degree) for natives: non-chronological uses of FUT found in concessive environments are harder to accept, at least for the L1 French groups. A lower degree of variability also exists in the choices of the L1 Spanish control group: in many cases, the answers of the native Spanish speakers are not unanimous. This suggests an effect of the discourse environment, linked to the interpretation process (possibly related to cognitive-context building). These

facts provide relevant information on our Research Questions: The learners show persistent variability in their L2 judgements, especially in those involving FUT uses that do not exist in their L1. Therefore, the L1 is a crucial ingredient in the interlanguage grammars, but they are also constrained by the syntax-discourse interface. Both factors play a role in the (in)ability to acquire the L2 FUT uses.

H3: Confirmed. Feature reassembly is a durable source of difficulty. In the present case, following Escandell-Vidal's (2021) analysis of the Romance FUT, the feature to be reset for the French Speakers is *IS / ES [± Forward]*, while in the case of the L1 Italian group, no feature resetting is needed. In all groups, the FUT uses that do not exist in the participants' L1 tend to be judged as ungrammatical, but some L2 potentialities are more difficult to acquire than others: in particular, the different degree of acceptability of states and activities when expressing conjecture and concession causes more difficulty than the contrast between atelics and telics. This can be clearly related to Research Question 2.

Having probed the initial difficulties and the subsequent progress of L2 learners in this study has, thus, made it possible to further explore the hypothesised link between the presence of specific features and parameters of the L1 and learners' developing sensitivity to the role of discourse, in combination with aspect, in licensing the modal (conjectural and concessive) uses of FUT in Spanish. In the present study, it has been detected that the L1 French speakers, at upper-intermediate and advanced levels of Spanish, have not acquired the aspectual restrictions of the conjectural FUT regarding the difference between states and activities. This suggests that, by paying attention to contextual cues, and transferring L1 knowledge, the learners can infer that in some environments FUT does not convey future time reference. Still, our participants do not easily interiorize the aspectual configurations that limit the conjectural interpretations of this tense.

In contrast, our study displays a dissimilar tendency for the L1 Italian participants (especially at C1), in convergence with the usage of FUT in their L1. However, comparing the answers of the B2 and the C1 Italian groups, a difference was found in the acceptance of the conjectural items containing atelic predicates. This is not an L1 effect, since the aspectual restrictions for those predicates are similar in Italian and Spanish. Therefore, we hypothesise that an interface effect is in play: at B2, paying attention to lexical aspect while processing the sentences and building an appropriate context of interpretation allowing for a non-chronological use or the FUT is a hard task. At C1, such interface effects are less perceptible, even though the L1 Italian participants do not fully converge with the L1 Spanish control group.

Thus, it may be concluded that, in all cases, when acquiring the uses of FUT in L2 Spanish, our L2 learners tend to operate within the limits the interpretative strategies and routines of their own native language. At all levels, influences from the L1 interact with interface effects, even though the latter tends to be less persistent in our data. Consequently, getting acquainted with an L2 form does not automatically entail acquiring all its semantic features and its discourse potentialities. Mapping L2 forms onto meaning

is a complex and time-consuming task that needs to be distinguished from merely learning the form – even in the deceptively simple case of the Romance FUT. Thus, in acquiring an additional language, the uses of a form in which the L1 and L2 differ are a lasting source of difficulty. This is not only a characteristic of the initial L2 proficiency levels but continues into the advanced levels.

Our research suggests that, in the case of closely related languages such as Spanish, Italian and French, L1 grammar still has a strong influence even at advanced levels of L2 learning. Nevertheless, having similar grammatical usage in the L1 does not automatically guarantee fast, problem-free learning. The progressive incorporation of L2 resources into the learner's linguistic competence is not only related to the possibility of direct transfer: learners tend to construct a simplified, schematic system. Overcoming this tendency requires time, contact with the target language and –possibly– specific attention in the language classroom.

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