

TEACHING GRAMMAR IN (CON)TEXT¹

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RESUMEN

Este artículo presenta los resultados de un proyecto sobre la enseñanza de la gramática en una clase de inglés como lengua extranjera. El objetivo principal consistió en investigar si la presentación de evidencia positiva a través de textos auténticos facilita la adquisición del paradigma verbal del inglés. El proyecto se realizó con un grupo de alumnos de décimo año en un colegio privado en San José. La metodología que se utilizó consistió principalmente en proporcionar textos a los estudiantes, en su mayoría auténticos, que presentaran ejemplos del uso de los tiempos verbales, específicamente del pasado. La lectura se complementó con una serie de ejercicios de observación basados en los textos, y actividades de comunicación que le permitieran a los estudiantes aplicar lo observado.

ABSTRACT

This article reports the results of a research study on the teaching of grammar in an English as a foreign language class. Its main objective was to investigate whether the presentation of positive evidence facilitated the acquisition of the tense and aspect system of the English language. A group of tenth-grade students enrolled in a private high school in San José participated in the study. The methodology used consisted of exposing the students to authentic texts to teach the tense and aspect system of the English language, followed by noticing exercises based on the texts and communication activities which provided the student with the opportunity to use what was observed in the texts.

1. Introduction

The teaching of grammar has undergone many changes throughout time. The pendulum has often shifted from methods which favor structural syllabi such as the Grammar-Translation Method and the Audio-Lingual Approach to others which emphasize the communicative purpose of language. Such is the case of Community Language Learning, Suggestopedia, and the Communicative Approach. Some approaches go even further. The advocates of the Natural Approach, for example, claim that the only conditions necessary for successful second language learning are providing the students with comprehensible input which is somewhat beyond their current stage of development and creating an appropriate classroom atmosphere that will make the learners receptive to that input. The teaching of grammar, if it occurs at all in this approach, is relegated to homework assignments (Krashen & Terrel, 1983, in Larsen-Freeman, 1991). The problem is that neither of these extreme positions has produced the desired results. Teaching students the grammatical system of a

language has not automatically made them communicatively competent. On the other hand, teaching students to communicate without any instruction of syntax has not guaranteed accuracy of production; on the contrary, Pienemann (1984 in Larsen-Freeman, 1991) has suggested that such an approach allows for the fossilization of interlanguage (the type of language produced by second- and foreign- language learners who are in the process of learning a language).

Fortunately, even though communicative approaches are still in vogue, the teaching of grammar is once again receiving due attention. More and more teachers have realized that the teaching of grammar is necessary and that a balance must be reached for the benefit of language learners. Our students should become not only fluent but also accurate speakers of the language.

Several research studies have been conducted on the effects of instruction in the acquisition of the grammar system of a second language. Not all researchers agree on the procedure to follow, but many of them believe that instruction is beneficial as long as the input provided is in accordance with the developmental stage of the students at the time of instruction. Thus, Bardovi-Harlig (1995) suggests the use of authentic texts as the right input to teach the tense and aspect system² of a second language. Such texts, she claims, provide positive evidence while allowing students of different proficiency levels, working in the same class, to benefit in a variety of ways. Other researchers claim that positive evidence is not enough; they assert it has to be accompanied by oral production tasks because students only acquire the language when they feel a need to communicate.

For the purpose of this study, supplementary units have been designed which include activities endorsed by the above-mentioned points of view; that is, a group of students has been presented with positive evidence in the form of authentic texts, followed by noticing exercises and oral production activities.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the study are the following:

- a) To determine if pedagogical instruction has any effect on the acquisition of the tense and aspect system of a foreign language regardless of the students' stage of development.
- b) To determine if the presentation of positive evidence in the form of reasonably authentic texts followed by noticing exercises and oral production tasks constitutes an appropriate type of input to acquire the past tense of the English language.
- c) To determine the specific developmental sequence that characterizes native speakers of Spanish in their acquisition of the past tense frame and the aspect system of English as a foreign language.

3. Theoretical Framework

There is considerable evidence that specific sequences or stages of development characterize second language learners' progress. Learners acquire features in a predictable

sequence regardless of how they are exposed to the second language. As this evidence has grown, some researchers have suggested that grammar instruction is not likely to have any significant impact if the students are at a developmental stage that is much earlier in the sequence than the focus of instruction. That is, in order for students to benefit from instruction, it should focus on linguistic features characteristic of the next developmental stage. Instruction that targets too high or too low a developmental level will be either confusing or irrelevant (Pienemann 1989 in Lightbown 1998).

Krashen and Pienemann have provided important pedagogical recommendations deriving from their research on developmental sequences (Lightbown 1998). Even though both base their recommendations on the discovery that learners proceed through predictable stages as they acquire a second language, their proposals are very different. Krashen is against timing instruction to match the students' developmental level. He favors methods which emphasize the value of providing enough comprehensible input which is one step beyond the students' present stage of development (which he calls *i + 1*). He claims that focused instruction will neither aid nor alter language acquisition. Pienemann, on the other hand, considers it appropriate to identify the developmental stage at which learners are functioning and to target the next stage when creating or selecting instructional materials. He does not give recommendations on *how* to teach, but emphasizes *what* to teach (the linguistic feature that is likely to be affected by instruction) and *when* to teach it (in developmental terms). A series of experimental studies in Australia with young and adult second language (SL) and foreign language (FL) learners of German support his recommendations. The results showed that students "benefited differentially from instructional intervention according to the stage of readiness they had reached when the intervention took place" (Pienemann 1989 in Lightbown 1998:178).

Lightbown (1989) expresses some concern about the implementation of teaching procedures based on Pienemann's recommendations. First of all, the developmental stages that have been identified cover only a fraction of the structural features of English. What is available now is not enough to create a syllabus that would cover what learners need to learn. Second, the heterogeneity of classes makes developmentally targeted teaching very difficult to organize. Third, research has shown that people go through similar developmental stages regardless of the way they acquire the second language. The fact that people who learn a second language outside the classroom are exposed to a wider variety of linguistic features in no particular order and yet acquire the features in the same order as students in the classroom, confirms that the sequences are the result of mechanisms or processes internal to the learners rather than to any consistency in the input to which they are exposed. Finally, such a proposal could lead teachers and material designers to treat developmental sequences as a new basis for syllabus or materials design, taking us back to the teaching of language features in isolation, something that no research in second language acquisition (SLA) or language teaching currently supports (Long 1985; Long & Robinson 1998 in Lightbown 1998). To summarize, although Krashen and Lightbown disagree with Pienemann's pedagogical recommendation, the three of them seem to agree that learners will process and use for acquisition only that which is developmentally appropriate.

Bardovi-Harlig (1995) has conducted studies to investigate the influence of pedagogical instruction in SLA. Her studies, however, have mainly focused on the acquisition

of the tense and aspect system. The results of these studies have shown that instruction seems to increase the rate of acquisition, and that the most important factor in that respect seems to be the timing of instruction relative to interlanguage development. This explains why instruction appears to have an influence on the acquisition of tense/aspect in some cases and not in others. Students who receive the same instruction may get different instructional effects because they are at different stages of linguistic development. This is also in accordance with Ellis' conclusion (1985) that instruction can change the rate but not the route of acquisition.

Research studies conducted by Bardovi-Harlig (1995) have also shown that learners master tense/aspect forms relatively quickly, but that they have much greater difficulty in establishing targetlike form-meaning-use association. This gap between high accuracy of form and low appropriate use might be attributed to lack of attention to meaning and function in the classroom or to lack of relevant comprehensible input. In order to solve this problem, Bardovi-Harlig (1995) proposes the use of authentic texts for the study of tense and aspect because they offer students (and teachers) the opportunity to discover form-meaning-use associations that are not always apparent in traditional presentations. Moreover, studies of acquisition of tense and aspect "...suggest that the use of texts as input is not only methodologically desirable, but acquisitionally necessary" (Bardovi-Harlig 1996:186). By texts she means "reasonably authentic connected discourse of any type (narrative, expository, conversational) and any source (radio, television, film, newspapers, novels, stories, reports of various types, and texts for children as well as adults)" (Bardovi-Harlig 1996:186).

She gives the following reasons to support her claim: First, authentic texts constitute a good source of what second language acquisition researchers call "positive evidence" since they provide examples of actual language use. Sharwood Smith; White, Spada, Lightbown, and Ranta (Bardovi-Harlig 1995:121) define positive evidence as "any input that shows a learner what sentences, constructions, or combinations are possible in a language." According to Bardovi-Harlig (1995:121) "when the learner grammar forms a subset of the target grammar, learners are thought to revise their grammars on the basis of positive evidence." Related specifically to the teaching and learning of tense and aspect, the use of authentic texts presents a realistic portrait of the distribution of tense/aspect forms. Second, using texts presents tenses used in meaningful communication. Third, the use of authentic texts shows how tenses contribute to the building of discourse, including where certain tenses are located, and how they function in different genres. Fourth, authentic texts demonstrate the relationships of tense/aspect forms to each other and the contrast between them. In addition, the use of authentic texts makes any lesson more accessible to all the students in a classroom by offering something for everyone. For example, in a decontextualized grammar lesson, the learners focus on a single structural point. If a student is not ready to acquire that particular structure, s/he cannot benefit from the lesson of the day. In contrast, when using authentic texts, all students can benefit to some degree from the experience. Fast learners can go beyond the target structure envisioned by the teacher at the moment. Slow learners, even if they are not ready to master that specific target point, can understand the text at their own level, may benefit from vocabulary and any number of other linguistic features. An additional advantage of using authentic texts is that this technique is compatible with a variety of contemporary language teaching methods. The use of authentic texts only requires teachers to select suitable input, but it leaves wide open the type of approach they bring to language teaching.

Bardovi-Harlig (1996:188) also recommends using complete texts: "This maximizes the context for meaning and use, respects the text as a communicative unit, and brings other advantages of comprehensible input. To this end, the first activities with a text should relate to its meaning."

Based on the above, Bardovi-Harlig proposes the following pedagogical treatment to teach the tense and aspect system. The first very important and necessary step in instruction should be the presentation of positive evidence in the form of authentic texts. This should be followed by exercises which will help the learners notice the differences between their own grammars and the target grammar. Bardovi-Harlig and Reynolds (1995 in Doughty and Williams 1998) propose a technique to encourage learners to notice such a difference which consists of providing students with a great deal of carefully chosen positive evidence combined with focused noticing exercises to increase learners' awareness of target language use. In addition to using authentic texts to present positive evidence and focused noticing exercises, Bardovi-Harlig (1995) suggests the use of other production tasks to give learners an opportunity to use their knowledge in appropriate contexts, for example, summaries of the readings, topically appropriate essays, and cloze exercises based on the original text, among others. Once learners have identified the form in the input, and perhaps have begun attempting production, it is important for the teacher to provide activities in the classroom to help them recognize how their production may differ from the target language, a process known as "noticing the gap."

Another possible way of getting learners to notice the disparity between the target and their own production involves providing negative evidence in the form of corrective feedback (Doughty and Williams 1998; L. White, 1991 in Doughty & Williams, 1998; Mackey & Philp 1998; Oliver 1995; Ortega & Long 1997; Carroll & Swain 1993; Tomasello & Herron 1988, 1989). However, in order for feedback to be beneficial, a long-term approach to feedback must be taken. In addition, learners should have a fairly firm knowledge, implicit or explicit, of the form in question and when one form is in focus, others should not. Therefore, teachers have to determine when learners are ready to take responsibility for accuracy on a given form so they can move on to another. A second source of negative evidence can be explicit grammar teaching, since while doing this, teachers very often provide information about what structures are unacceptable in the language being learned. In other words, students start with overgeneral or incorrect rules, but revise their incorrect structures on the basis of correction and explicit grammar teaching (White, 1989).

Other researchers have proposed different ways to acquire the grammar system of a second language. The results of several research studies on language acquisition have stressed the importance of production tasks. For example, Swain (1995 in Doughty & Williams, 1998) suggests the use of explicit rule presentation, followed by output activities that require learners to use their output to reflect on their own linguistic inadequacies. Foster and Skehan (1996 in Doughty and Williams, 1998) stress the importance of planned output tasks and add that planning time generally increases learners' accuracy and complexity. Kessler et al's (in Taylor, 1984) findings in their study on the interlanguage of Arabic speakers learning English also support the views that student learning is governed more by communicative needs than by syllabus design, that the need to express meaning is the primary motivating force in language learning, and that form will arise and be acquired out of attempts at communicating. Hatch (1978 in Taylor, 1984) reinforces this view and claims that the acquisition of syntax may arise

out of experiences in oral discourse or experiences in oral communication. Doughty and Williams (1998:219) suggest that one possible reason for the acquisition of certain target forms earlier than others or with greater ease might be communicative function or meaningfulness in the output. They claim that "even if learners notice a form, or if it is pointed out through instruction, without a communicative need, or if language forms fulfill no (unique) function, acquisition may be delayed."

To conclude, many studies have been conducted on the acquisition of the grammar system of a second language. Researchers do not always agree on the best option for teaching grammar. Some believe noticing exercises will aid acquisition; others claim oral production tasks are best. However, many seem to agree that explicit instruction can help learners acquire the grammar system of a language as long as the input provided is appropriate to the developmental stage the students are in at the moment of instruction.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Subjects

A total of twenty-eight tenth-grade students, 13 boys and 15 girls, studying English as a foreign language in a private high school in San José, Costa Rica, during the second and third trimester of 1999 participated in the study. The students were all native speakers of Spanish and their age range was from 14 to 16. They met five school hours per week. The proficiency level of the students was very heterogeneous, ranging from beginners to advanced.

4.2. Instrument

A cloze test (Hartmann and Zarian, 1984:84-85) containing 54 items which contrasted the use of the past tense, the past continuous, the past perfect and the past perfect continuous was administered twice: before and after the experiment. The students were given the base form of the verb and were asked to supply the correct form in the blanks. Some items allowed more than one answer. The tests were graded based on an answer key provided by the book publishers (Hartmann and Zarian 1984). The results of the two tests were compared to find out if the students showed any improvement after the pedagogical treatment.

4.3. Materials

The following texts were used to present positive evidence:

1. "Great-aunt Bertha vs. The City Council"
2. "All Things Considered"
3. "From the Jaws of Death"
4. "Love Is Never Lost"
5. "Starlight, Star Bright"
6. "The Old Man with the Bag"
7. "The Cask of Amontillado"
8. "The Tell-Tale Heart"

4.4. Classroom Procedures

Eight texts were used to provide positive evidence. First, emphasis was given to reading comprehension. The students completed a wide range of reading comprehension exercises followed by focused noticing exercises. Form and meaning³ were explained deductively; that is, the grammar rule was given followed by some examples representative of the rule. However, no explanation and no exercises were given to practice the past perfect progressive form. The students memorized the past and past participle forms of irregular verbs, and they were quizzed afterwards. Two quizzes consisting of a list of 20 verbs in the simple form for the students to provide the past and past participle form were administered to the students. The third was a short passage which contained fifteen test items (Hartman and Zarian, 1984). Learners were given the base form of the verb in parentheses and were asked to supply the correct form in the blanks. The text was checked and feedback was given.

Because of the simplicity of the passage, Text 1 was used to explain the structure of a narrative. This explanation provided the background information the students needed to carry out the next tasks. The students were given the following explanation:

“A narrative is a piece of writing that tells a story or relates an event. In the introduction the writer sets the scene. It tells the reader when, where, and why the action takes place and introduces the character or characters in the story. It provides the background of the story. In the background several tenses can be used and events do not appear in chronological order. Next, the action or story line is presented. It is called the foreground and events appear in simple past tense and in chronological order. Finally, the author brings the narration to a close by giving his/her reason for telling the story. This is also considered background information.”

This explanation was followed by two noticing exercises based on Text 1 (See Appendix).

The next task was based on a text called “All Things Considered.” This text and the noticing exercises were taken from Bardovi-Harlig (1997). The students had previously read an article in their textbook called “Homelessness – What Can Be Done?” (Frankfort 1994:110). This article provided them with the necessary background information to understand the content of Text 2. The glossary in Text 2 and the reading comprehension exercises were provided by the researcher (See Appendix). Negative evidence was provided in the form of corrective feedback.

The third task was based on the text “From the Jaws of Death” taken from the *Readers Digest* (April, 1987). The students first completed the reading exercises and then the noticing exercises (See Appendix).

Texts 4 “Love is Never Lost” and 5 “Starlight, Star Bright” (Candfield, Hansen and Kirberger, 1998) were used only for oral communication practice. Half of the class was given Text 4 and the other half Text 5. The students first worked with a classmate who had the same reading and rehearsed retelling the story. Then the students were regrouped with a partner who had a different text and retold their respective stories.

Text 6 “The Old Man with a Bag” was taken from the *Tico Times* (September, 1999). The purpose of this reading was to learn something about homelessness in Costa Rica. It was mainly used for reading comprehension and discussion. However, one noticing exercise and

items related to other structures studied in class such as embedded questions and conditional sentences, were also included (See Appendix).

Text 7 "The Cask of Amontillado" and Text 8 "The Tell-Tale Heart" (Poe, 1988) were chosen because the students were studying Edgar Allan Poe in their Spanish class and the teacher wanted them to read some of his short stories in English. They were used to practice the past tense frame in oral communication. A procedure similar to the one used with Texts 4 and 5 was followed, but reading comprehension exercises were completed before the listening and oral communication tasks. Half of the class was given the "Tell-Tale Heart" and the other "The Cask of Amontillado." The students read the stories and completed the exercises. Then they listened to only the story they had read. The objective of this last activity was two-fold: first, to listen to an excellent narration of the story by well-trained actors and next, to learn the pronunciation of the words in order to retell their classmates the story. No noticing exercises were included in the exercises, but the students had to use the past tense to retell the stories.

Finally, the students were asked to prepare their own exercises to practice verb tenses.

They worked in groups of four and the following alternatives were given to achieve the objective: a song, a game, a reading, a video, or a dramatization. All the assignments were checked by the teacher before they were shared in class (See Appendix).

5. Analysis of Results

The results of the tests were analyzed taking into consideration the objectives of the study.

5.1. To determine if pedagogical instruction has any effect on the acquisition of the tense and aspect system of a foreign language regardless of the students' stage of development.

Researchers have studied the effects of pedagogical instruction on the acquisition of a second language, and they all seem to agree that learners will only process or use for acquisition what is developmentally appropriate. Bardovi-Harlig, for example, has conducted studies on the effects of pedagogical instruction on the acquisition of the tense and aspect system of a second language, and the results have shown that instruction increases the rate of acquisition in some cases but not in others. She also agrees that students may get different instructional effects because they are at different stages of linguistic development. The results of this study seem to confirm her findings.

Table 1 summarizes the results of the pre and post-tests.

Table 1

Name	Pre-test % of correct items	Post-test % of correct items	Difference
Andrea	70	87	17
Rebecca	61	89	28
José Nicolás	56	61	5
Marcela	54	72	18
Erika	52	69	17
Omar	50	72	22
Alfonso	48	83	35
Giulio	48	72	24
Juan Gabriel	48	50	18
Tatiana	44	70	26
Sergio	44	57	13
Silvia	43	56	13
Irella	43	35	-8
Fernando	41	54	13
Daniel	39	59	20
Maria Cristina	38	76	38
Sofia	37	61	24
Johanna	35	37	2
Esteban	31	31	0
61	41	41	10
Andrea	30	56	26
Mauricio	28	59	31
Marcela	22	28	6
Caleb	22	54	32
Edgardo	20		
Fabiola	20	61	41
Adriana	20	41	21
Luis Danny	15	48	33

When we examine this table, we see that the majority of the students (92.6%) showed gains in the acquisition of the tense and aspect system of the English language. One student (3.57%) got a lower percentage in the post-test than in the pre-test. A possible explanation for this behavior is that she might have cheated on the pre-test. One student (3.57%) did not show any improvement at all. This student was new to the school system, and he might not have been developmentally ready for the past tense. The highest percentage of gains appeared in

two of the low achievers, probably because of the frequency of appearance of the simple past tense forms in the test.

Table 2, 3, 4 and 5 show the results of the pre and post-tests of three high achievers (group 1), three intermediate achievers (group 2) and four low achievers (group 3).

Table 2
Simple Past Tense

No.	Verb	Group 1				Group 2				Group 3												
		Andrea	Rebecca	Jose	Daniel	Maria	Sofia	Adriana	Fabiola	Luis	Edgardo											
1	Begin	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-			
2	Be	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓		
5	Join	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	
6	Be	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	
8	Run	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	
9	Swim	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	
10	Took	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	
11	Sweat	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓
12	Think	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	-
14	Dream	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	-
18	Come	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
19	Tell	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓
21	Be	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-
22	Say	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
23	Tell	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	-
25	Go	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	✓
26	Walk	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-
28	Point	pc	pc	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	pc	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	pc
30	Sink	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
31	See	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
32	Say	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
35	Tell	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	✓
37	Start	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
38	Be	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓
39	Swear	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
40	Be	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-
41	Eat	✓	✓	pc	pc	pc	pc	-	pc	-	pc	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	pc	✓	pc	-	pc	pc
42	Think	✓	pc	pc	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-	pc	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
49	drink	pc	pc	pc	pc	pc	pc	-	✓	pc	pc	-	✓	pc	✓	-	pc	-	pc	-	pc	pc
50	Remember	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	✓
53	prefer	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓

Pc — past continuous

Table 3
Past Continuous

No.	Verb	Group 1						Group 2						Group 3								
		Andrea	Rebecca	Jose		Daniel	Maria	Sofia		Adriana	Fabiola	Luis	Edgardo									
13	Sweat	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓
16	Change	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	-	-
17	Think	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	✓
27	Give	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
28	Point	✓	✓	sp	sp	sp	sp	sp	sp	✓	sp	sp	sp	-	sp	sp	sp	-	sp	-	✓	
41	Eat	sp	sp	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	sp	sp	-	sp	sp	✓	-	sp	-	✓	
42	Think	sp	✓	-	sp	sp	sp	-	sp	-	✓	sp	sp	-	sp	-	sp	-	sp	sp	sp	
43	Change	pp	pp	pp	pp	pp	pp	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	pp	-	
44	Become	-	pp	pp	pp	pp	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
49	Drink	pp	pc	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	sp	✓	✓	-	sp	✓	sp	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	

Sp — simple past

pc — past continuous

pp — past perfect

Table 4
Past Perfect

No.	Verb	Group 1						Group 2						Group 3							
		Andrea	Rebecca	Jose		Daniel	Maria	Sofia		Adriana	Fabiola	Luis	Edgardo								
3	Go	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	-
4	Eat	-	ppp	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	-
7	Worry	ppp	ppp	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
15	Tell	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓
20	Begin	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	✓
24	Mention	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
29	Put	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
36	Weigh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
43	Change	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	pc	-	-	-	-	-	✓
44	Become	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-
45	Eat	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-
46	Exercise	-	ppp	ppp	ppp	ppp	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	ppp	-	-	-	-	-	✓
47	Think	-	ppp	ppp	ppp	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-
48	Try	-	✓	ppp	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
51	Leave	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓
52	Become	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
53	Prefer	sp	sp	sp	sp	-	sp	sp	sp	sp	sp	-	sp	sp	-	sp	sp	-	sp	sp	sp
54	Trade in	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Sp — simple present pc — past continuous pp — present perfect PPP — past perfect progressive

Table 5
Past Perfect Progressive

No.	Verb	Group 1						Group 2						Group 3					
		Andrea	Rebecca	Jose	Daniel	Maria	Sofia	Adriana	Fabiola	Luis	Edgardo								
4	Try	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	pp	-	pp	-	pp	-	-	-	-
7	Worry	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	pp	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
33	Come	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	pp	-	-	-
46	Exercise	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	pp	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	✓
47	Think	-	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	pp	-	-	-	-	pp	-	-	-

Pp – past perfect

If we observe these tables, we can conclude that, even though all the students received the same kind and amount of instruction, not all of them acquired the features at the same time or at the same rate. In the post-test we can observe that all the low achievers were quite successful in the acquisition of the simple past tense; three showed improvement in the use of the past continuous and two in the past perfect form; none showed gains in the use of the past perfect progressive form. In group 2, two students showed gains in the use of the past continuous, and one showed important gains in the use of the past perfect form; another student showed no gains at all, except that in the post-test she used the simple past in an item where both tenses were acceptable. None of the students in this group used the past perfect progressive form correctly. The three high achievers, on the other hand, improved their use of the past continuous tense, and two showed the greatest gain in the past perfect progressive tense.

Tables 6, 7, 8, and 9 highlight the use of the different verbs in the pre and post- tests.

Table 6
Simple Past

Item	Verb	Pre-test		Post-test		Difference
		Correct items	Percentage	Correct items	Percentage	
1	Begin	21	75	24	85.7	10.7
2	Be	25	89.3	27	96.4	7.1
5	Join	12	42.9	17	60.1	17.2
6	Be	22	78.6	26	92.9	14.3
8	Run	20	71.4	25	89.3	17.9
9	Swim	18	64.3	24	85.7	21.4
10	take	21	75	27	96.4	21.4
11	Sweat	15	53.6	22	78.6	25
12	Think	11	39.3	22	78.6	39.3
14	Dream	17	60.1	15	53.6	-6.5
18	Come	27	96.4	26	92.9	-3.5
19	Tell	21	75	22	78.6	3.6

Continuación Tabla 6

Item	Verb	Pre-test		Post-test		Difference
		Correct items	Percentage	Correct items	Percentage	
21	Be	20	71.4	23	82	10.6
22	Say	17	60.1	26	92.9	32.8
23	Tell	18	64.3	25	89.3	25
25	Go	19	67.9	23	82.1	14.2
26	Walk	18	64.3	15	53.6	-10.7
28	Point	15	53.6	15	53.6	0
30	Sink	10	35.7	15	53.6	17.9
31	See	27	96.4	24	85.7	-10.7
32	Say	22	78.6	27	96.4	17.8
35	Tell	20	71.4	24	85.7	14.3
37	Start	21	75	25	89.3	14.3
38	Be	24	86	25	89.3	3.3
39	Swear	3	10.7	2	7.1	3.6
40	Be	17	60.1	16	57.1	-3
41	Eat	12	42.9	6	21.4	-21.5
42	Think	16	57.1	16	57.1	0
49	Drink	11	39.3	10	35.7	-3.6
50	Remember	18	64.3	21	75	10.7
53	Prefer	18	64.3	21	75	10.7

Table 7
Past Continuous

Item	Verb	Pre-test		Post-test		Difference
		Correct items	Percentage	Correct items	Percentage	
13	Sweat	5	17.9	21	75	57.1
16	Change	0	0	11	39.3	39.3
17	Think	1	3.6	13	46.4	42.8
27	Give	1	3.6	4	14.2	10.6
28	Point	3	10.7	9	32.1	21.4
41	Eat	3	10.7	17	60.7	50
42	Think	0	0	7	25	25
43	change	0	0	3	10.7	10.7
44	become	0	0	0	0	0
49	drink	4	14.3	15	53.6	38.6

Table 8
Past Perfect

Item	Verb	Pre-test		Post-test		Difference
		Correct items	Percentage	Correct items	Percentage	
3	go	1	3.6	15	53.6	50
4	eat	1	3.6	9	32.1	28.5
7	worry	1	3.6	4	14.2	10.6
15	tell	3	10.7	10	35.7	25
20	begin	1	3.6	8	28.5	24.9
24	mention	2	7.1	10	35.7	28.6
29	put	3	10.7	7	25	35.7
36	weigh	1	3.6	0	0	-3.6
43	change	4	14.3	6	21.4	7.1
44	become	1	3.6	6	21.4	17.8
45	eat	1	3.6	15	53.6	50
46	exercise	1	3.6	5	17.9	14.3
47	think	0	0	3	10.7	10.7
48	try	1		1	3.6	0
51	leave	1	3.6	7	25	21.4
52	become	1	3.6	2	7.1	3.5
53	prefer	0	0	1	3.6	3.6
54	trade in	0	0	9	32.1	32.1

Table 9
Past Perfect Progressive

Item	Verb	Pre-test		Post-test		Difference
		Correct items	Percentage	Correct items	Percentage	
4	try	0	0	2	7.1	7.1
7	worry	1	3.6	3	10.7	7.1
33	come	1	3.6	5	17.9	14.3
46	exercise	2	7.1	2	7.1	0
47	think	1	3.6	2	7.1	3.5

If we analyze the individual items in Table 6, we can see that the verbs *be*, *say* and *take* have the highest percentage of appropriate use. However, the context of the verb *be* in item 40 (This _____(be) all a year ago.) seems to have misled the students to select the past perfect form in some cases. The percentages in items 28 and 42 did not change; however, there was a 21.4% and 25% gain respectively in their use in the past continuous tense. Items 41 and 49 showed a negative difference due to the fact that in the post-test the students chose to use the past continuous tense rather than the simple past, and both alternatives were acceptable (See Table 7).

Items 14, 16 and 18 also showed a slight negative difference. In 14 (-6.5%) and 18 (-3.5) the difference does not seem to be important. If we analyze the students' answers in 16, we could say that the context seemed to have affected the students' choice of tense. The verb appeared in an adverbial clause introduced by *when* (When I 26 (walk) in, a terribly thin young woman 27 (give) a lecture on all the foods we shouldn't eat.") and this might have misled the students to select the past continuous form in item 26 and the past tense in item 27 when the opposite was correct.

To summarize, we can say that the majority of the 10th grade students seemed to have acquired the use of the simple past tense; the students in group 1 began to acquire the use of the past progressive and past perfect tenses, and two students were very successful in the past perfect progressive form. One student in group 2 was quite successful in the use of the past continuous and the past perfect forms; the other two did not make much progress. Two low achievers showed some gains in the use of the past progressive and the past perfect forms. Some verbs showed a higher degree of acquisition than others, and the context in which the items appeared seemed to have affected the selection of correct answers.

5.2. To determine if the presentation of positive evidence in the form of reasonably authentic texts followed by noticing exercises and oral production tasks constitutes an appropriate type of input to acquire the past tense frame and the aspect system of the English language.

The results of the study also tend to confirm Bardovi-Harlig's findings that authentic texts constitute appropriate input to teach the tense and aspect system of English. She claims that this is especially true in classes in which the proficiency level of the students varies substantially because they can benefit from the experience in different ways.

It is clear that the majority of the students benefited from the experience. They were able to progress at their own pace and they used what was appropriate to their stage of development for acquisition.

Table 10 summarizes the frequency of appearance of the past tense verbs used in the texts. If we analyze this information, we can conclude that the majority of the students probably were very successful in the acquisition of the simple past tense because of their high frequency of appearance in all the readings.

The student with the lowest gain (2%) has serious learning disabilities, especially motor and memory problems. The second lowest gain appeared in one of the high achievers. This could have been due to the fact that he used the present perfect tense in most of the instances where the past perfect was required, a situation probably due to a confusion in this particular test and not to lack of knowledge. The student with the third lowest gain (6%) has attention deficit disorders and probably the techniques used in class were not the most appropriate for this type of student because of her inability to concentrate and her difficulty to stay on task. The student with no gains is attending this school for the first time this year, and when the study began he was probably at a developmental stage lower than was needed to acquire the past tense frame. As mentioned before, two of the high achievers answered all the past perfect progressive items correctly, a very interesting fact because this tense was not explicitly studied in class. A possible explanation for this could be that they might have

learned this tense in private classes or from other readings, since the texts read in class provided very little input for acquiring this tense. Table 10 shows the frequency of verb tenses in the readings.

Table 10
Frequency of Verb Tenses in Readings

Text	Simple Past	Past Continuous	Past Perfect	Past Perfect Continuous
1	13	-	-	-
2	Aff. 134			
3	Neg. 7 Aff. 111	20	21	-
4	Neg. 2 Aff. 87	7	15	-
5	Neg. 6 Aff. 56	2	6	-
	Neg. 1	1	8	2
6	20	4	-	-
7	Aff. 94			
8	Neg. 2 Aff. 137	8	9	1
	Neg. 4	7	10	-

5.3. To determine the specific developmental sequence that characterizes native speakers of Spanish in their acquisition of the past tense frame and the aspect system of English as a foreign language.

The results of the study tend to confirm the findings of several research studies that learners acquire the features of a language in a predictable sequence. However, the exact sequence that the learners followed in the present study is not very clear. There is not enough evidence, and a more exhaustive study has to be conducted in order to have reliable results. For example, if we look at Tables 2, 3 and 4 we can conclude that only a few students in group 2 and 3 began to acquire the past perfect form and none the past perfect progressive form. Surprisingly, the results of group 1 were quite different. One student used present perfect tense where the past perfect was required. He did not use the past perfect progressive in any of the items. Another chose in most of the past perfect items the correct aspect, but an incorrect past participle form, and the other chose to use the past perfect progressive in the items where both alternatives were acceptable. Two students in this group answered all the past perfect progressive items correctly. Based on the results of the post-test, we could conclude that students acquire the simple past tense first and then the past progressive. The results are confusing, though, in relation to the past perfect and the past perfect progressive forms. While group 2 showed more gains in the use of the past perfect, two students in group 3 were more successful and showed a preference for the use of the past progressive form.

6. Conclusions

Pedagogical instruction seems to increase the rate of acquisition of the tense and aspect system of native speakers of Spanish learning English as a foreign language. However, not all students learn the same features at the same time. Progress follows a particular sequence, but the results of this project did not show a clear path in this respect.

Authentic texts constitute appropriate input to acquire the tense and aspect system of a foreign language. The use of texts is beneficial in classes where the proficiency level of the students varies substantially. They provide the students with the opportunity to progress at their own pace regardless of the stage of development they are in at the time of instruction. Needless to say, in order for the students to benefit from the experience, the teaching of grammar has to go hand in hand with a thorough understanding of the content of the text itself. This objective can only be achieved, if the teaching of grammar is preceded by reading comprehension exercises, writing activities, and oral production tasks.

The vast majority of the students showed gains in the use of the simple past tense. In other tenses improvement was limited. One possible explanation for is the high frequency of the simple past tense in readings and the relatively low frequency of the other tenses. Another possible explanation is that this type of methodology is not very effective with high school students because they need highly motivating activities such as games, songs, and videos to really get interested in the topic. Although the students prepared their own assignments using these kinds of activities, not all the choices of songs and exercises were appropriate for reaching the objectives. An alternative explanation is that the test was too difficult for the students' proficiency level.

One limitation of this project was that the students' ability to communicate orally was not assessed. The students might have improved in this area because many oral activities were carried out in class. Unfortunately, this type of evaluation was not feasible because of the size of the groups and time restrictions.

7. Recommendations for Further Studies

- a) To use an evaluation instrument especially designed for the population and the purposes of the study.
- b) To check the frequency of appearance of the verb tenses to be studied before selecting the readings.
- c) To evaluate the ability of the students to use the past tense frame and aspect in oral communication.
- c) To test this kind of methodology (positive evidence followed by noticing exercises) with university students.

8. Notas

1. The word (Con)Text in the title refers to the term coined by Bardovi-Harlig to indicate that the best context for teaching tense and aspect is text.
2. A grammatical category which deals with how the event described by a verb is viewed, such as whether it is in progress, habitual, repeated, momentary, etc.
3. In this study, Bardovi-Harlig's definition of form and meaning is used. However, there are others. For example, Larsen-Freeman proposes three dimensions of language that must be dealt with when teaching grammar: the forms or structures themselves, the semantics or meaning, and the pragmatic conditions governing their use (Larsen-Freeman, 1991). Bardovi-Harlig's concept of meaning corresponds to this last category.

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APPENDIX

Exercises for Text 1

Exercise 1 - Focus on Form and Contrast

Simple Present

is (line 1)

lives (line 2)

Simple Past

_____ (line 14)

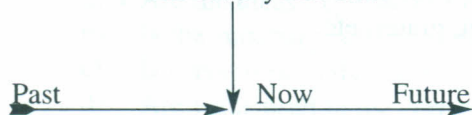
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Present Perfect

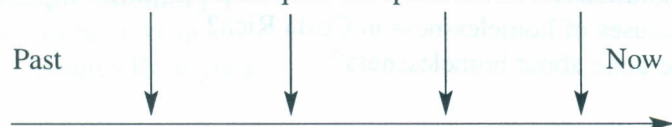
_____ (line 4)

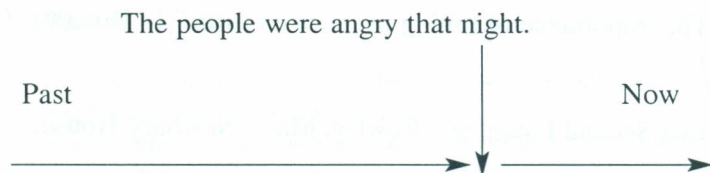
Exercise 2 - Contrast in Meaning

She is 95 years old.



She has been quite independent all her life.





Exercises for Text 2

GLOSSARY

Line 4	vent	an opening, usually small, for gases or liquid to pass through
14	acknowledge	to admit that one has received or is thankful for.
31	jug	a glass; a container having a narrow neck and a handle
40-41	purposefully	intentionally
47	annoyed	irritated
52	allowed	permitted
54	inebriated	drunk
56	(be) aware	realize or know fully
67	grates	a metal framework of crossed or parallel bars placed over a furnace or fireplace
72	wholesome	healthful
75	straightened	properly ordered or arranged
77	endeared	caused to be well liked
80	a void	a gap, an empty condition or feeling
103	dawned	to begin to be clear in the mind
108	get rid of	ask the people to leave

Pre-reading exercise

Procedure

Strategy: Activate students' background knowledge

1. Show the students pictures of homeless people. Ask them to describe them. What do they represent? Supply any words students grope for and write important topic-related words on the board. For example, heating vent, grates, etc.
2. Ask the following questions:
 - According to the UN, how many homeless people are there worldwide?
 - What are some possible causes of homelessness?
 - What are some possible solutions?
 - What are some possible causes of homelessness in Costa Rica?
 - What do you think can be done about homelessness?

While-reading exercise**Exercise 1**

Strategies: Increase the students' reading rate (as suggested by Neil Anderson in *Exploring Second Language Reading: Issues and Strategies*. (1999). USA: Heinle & Heinle Publishers).

Retelling**Procedure**

1. Students are given sixty seconds to read as much material as they can. They should read at a comfortable speed. When the teacher says "Stop," the students place a check mark where they stopped.
2. Students get in pairs and take turns sharing whatever information they learned from the portion they read.
3. The students start again from the beginning of the reading and try to read more material during the second one-minute period. Once again, they share the new information they learned.
4. The drill is repeated a third or fourth time.

Exercise 2**Strategy: Retelling**

Students get in pairs and take turns retelling the story.

Exercise 3

Strategies: Smmarizing
Cooperating
Peer-evaluation

Procedure

1. The students get in pairs and together write a summary of the text.
2. Students get in groups of four. Pairs exchange summaries and provide feedback on content and form to their classmates. Give the students the following questions for peer correction:
 - a) Are the ideas expressed in the summary based on the text?
 - b) Is the summary well organized?
 - c) Is every verb in the correct tense?
 - d) Are verbs used in the correct form of each tense?
 - e) Is every word spelled correctly?

Sample summary 1

By: Rebeca Alemán
Andrea Rodriguez

All Things Considered

The story of Michael Kerwin begins 10 years ago, when homeless person yelled at him while he was walking down the street. He got angry at first, but then he thought of giving him some food, and after this he felt so good of feeding the man that he decided of giving food to all of the homeless persons that were near by. One night one of the homeless told him that he was feeding them like dogs, he was leaving the food on the floor and then leaving. Michael said he was right, so he decided that now on he was going to sit here with them. One day one of the homeless asked him if he could go upstairs to his apartment and shave and shower, Michael had never seen him, but he let him go upstairs anyway. The guy went into the bathroom, he had been there for a long time, so Michael got in the bathroom and found him dead in the tub. He got very scared, he called him mom. She told him to call 911, when the 911 guys arrived the principal of the building found out what Michael was doing and told him that he had to go, so he left and made a big foundation for homeless people in which 30 or 40 persons live now.

Sample summary 2

By:
Alfonso D.G. Hernández
Renato Pfeiffer

Checked by:
Johanna Ospina
Cristina Gonzalez

Kerwin was walking one cold night, in Washington. He loved to walk. There was a man on the heating vent, and *he asked** Kerwin for a buck to buy some food. Kerwin went to his apartment and got him food. That made him feel pretty good. He continued making that every night. But some day a bum was angry because Kerwin treated him like a dog, he said.

After many days *another* bum asked him to lend him his bathroom because he wanted to take a bath and shave. First, Kerwin said “No.” But finally he said “All right.” He also said that the bum had to leave as soon as he had his shower and shave. Then the bum was in the chair fast asleep.

Then the bums began to come and they stayed in Kerwin’s house, but one day a man asked to lend him his bathroom and that man died in Kerwin’s tub, because he took drougs. He called his mother and she suggested to him to call 911. Everyone at the University knew about the bums, now.

Ten years later Kerwin is running a house for homeless people in downtown Washington and a farm outside of the city.

* Italics show peer correction.

For **Exercise 4** – Focus on Form and Contrast, **Exercise 5** – Contrast in Meaning, and **Exercise 6** – Expanding the meaning of the past progressive and **Exercise 7** –Narrative Structure and Tense/Aspect Distinction, see Bardovi-Harlig (1997).

Post-reading activity

As a follow-up, the students looked for more information about homelessness, included the article in their portfolios, and wrote a summary of it.

Exercises for Text 3

Read "From the Jaws of Death" and then do the exercises.

- I. Answer the following questions
1. Where does the story take place?
 2. How big was the alligator that attacked the boy?
 3. Why were the hunters sure that the second alligator was the one that attacked Michael?
 4. Give three reasons why alligator attacks have increased in recent years.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 5. Why does Michael have three small scars on the back of his right hand?
- II. Match Column A with B.
- | | |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gary Phelps | 1. Kelly's sister |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kelly Tomas | 2. Michael's sister |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jill | 3. An investigator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jose Fernandez | 4. Michael's cousin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wendie | 5. Michael's mom |
| | 6. a neighbor |
- III. Choose the best alternative.
1. Michael did not hear the people yelling because
 - he didn't want to wash the dishes.
 - his head was underwater.
 - he had a head mask and a snorkeling tube
 - he was far from the shore
 2. Jill tried to help Michael but she returned to the shore because
 - Michael couldn't hear her.
 - she was very scared.
 - Michael was very far from the shore.
 - the alligator was swimming very fast.

3. Jessie thinks that the alligator let Michael go because
- she pulled as hard as she could.
 - the Fernandez family shouted and clapped to distract the creature.
 - the gator didn't like the feel of the rubber flipper.
 - her screams scared the creature.
4. The alligator attacked Michael because
- it was very hungry.
 - Michael invaded his territory.
 - it was afraid of men.
 - alligators have always attacked people.

IV. Decide if the statements are true (T) or false (F). Write the sentence from the story that supports your answer. If the article doesn't give the answer, write it doesn't say.

_____ Michael had never swum in the pond before.

_____ The alligator caused injuries in Michael's head and left leg.

_____ Michael was treated in the hospital by Dr. Fernandez.

_____ Alligators are among the endangered species.

_____ This was the first alligator attack of the year in the State of Florida.

_____ Michael's father is not referred to in the reading.

V. Focus on Form and Contrast

Find in the reading

a) two sentences in the past progressive

b) two sentences in the simple past

c) a sentence in the past perfect

VI. Contrast in meaning.

Complete with sentences from the reading

Before

Past

Michael called out to his cousin

His eyes fell on Michael's and Kelly's sister Jill, 11, snorkeling with him. Suddenly something else caught Fernandez's eyes

Now

The only visible evidence of the attack are three small scars on the back of Michael's right hand.

Future

VII. Fill in the blanks with the correct form of the verb in parenthesis.

One evening in September, Michael, a 12-year-old boy _____ (snorkel) in a pond behind his house – a dream house the family _____ (build) over a period of 6 years. Suddenly, something unexpected _____ (happen). A huge alligator _____ (appear) in the scene. A few minutes earlier, Michael's cousin _____ (call) him out, but the boy still _____ (remain) in the water. The alligator _____ (move very fast toward the boy who _____ (be) completely unaware of the danger. Dr. Fernández who _____ (look) through the window of his house _____ (yell) to his wife and daughter. Then the three of them _____ (try) to call Michael's attention, but the boy couldn't hear them. When Michael's mother _____ (hear the screams, she _____ (run) to the pond to help her son. The alligator _____ (attack) Michael twice, but Michael's mother _____ (pull) Michael's hand and arm as hard as she could until the creature _____ (release) his grip. In spite of the wounds, Michael lived to tell the story.

Exercises for Text 6

Read "The Old Man with The Bag." Then do the exercises.

A. Ask questions and give answers according to the reading. Ask for different information in every question.

1. Who _____?
_____.

2. Find out what _____?
_____.

3. Does it say when _____?
_____.

4. Could you tell me what _____?
_____.

B. Complete the following statements according to the reading.

1. The author thought old people on the streets were bad because

2. Many old people are homeless because their families _____

3. Homeless people in Costa Rica spend the night in _____

4. They look for food in _____

5 – 7. We're fortunate because _____
_____ and _____

9. The responsibility to care for homeless people resides _____

C. Find in the reading a sentence in the:

a) simple past tense _____

b) past progressive _____

- c) present perfect _____
 d) conditional form _____

Sample assignment

Last Kiss

Pearl Jam

**Oh where, oh where can my baby be?
 The Lord _____ her away from me
 She _____ to heaven, so I _____ to be good
 so I can see my baby when I leave this world**

By: Mauricio Fonseca
 Laura Orozco
 Silvia Ríos
 Fabiola Royo
 Andrea Siverio
 10 A

We _____ out on a date in my daddy's car
 We hadn't _____ very far
 There in the road, straight ahead
 A car _____ stalled, the engine was dead

I couldn't stop, so I _____ to the right
 I'll never forget the sound that night
 The screaming tires, the bustin glass
 The painful scream that I _____ last

Oh where, oh where, can my baby be?

When I _____ up the rain was pouring down
 There were people _____ all around
 Something warm flowing through my eyes
 But somehow I _____ my baby that night

I _____ her head, she _____ at me and _____
 "Hold me darling, just a little while."
 I _____ her close, I _____ her our last kiss
 I found the love that I _____ I _____

Well now she _____
 Even though I hold her tight
 I _____ my love, my life, that night.

Oh where, oh where, can my baby be?

Part I. Fill in the blanks with verbs from the list.

were	woke	looked	heard
had missed	was	's gone	lost
found	said	kissed	swerved
standing	knew	took	held
've got	lifted	driven	has gone

Part II. Match the correct past form of the verb with its simple form.

1. see	() woke
2. leave	() had missed
3. get	(✓) forgot
4. be	() took
5. go	() knew
6. take	() hadn't driven
7. lose	() stood
8. hold	() looked
9. find	() said
10. miss	() saw
11. know	() lost
12. stand	() left
13. wake	() lifted
14. hear	() got
15. forget	() has gone
16. drive	() was/were
17. say	() held
18. lift	() heard
19. look	() found

Part III. Complete with the correct past form of the verb as it's found in the song. Put a check if the verb is regular or irregular.

Simple form	Regular	Irregular	Past form
go			
wake			
lift			
miss			
be			
get			
stand			
know			
find			
swerve			
look			
drive			

Part IV. Answer the following questions.

a) What happened in the story that the song tells?

b) Do you know anybody who has suffered something like that? Tell the story.
