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# The incremental processing of grammatical aspect in French: A visual-world study

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## Abstract

This paper explores the time-course of aspectual interpretations in French. In two visual-world eye-tracking experiments, listeners heard sentences in the *passé composé* (perfective) and the *imparfait* (imperfective) while looking at pictures of a complete and an incomplete event. The results showed that listeners incrementally derive the non-culmination inference associated with *imparfait*, but not the culmination inference associated with *passé composé*. We conjecture that French *passé composé* encodes weak perfectivity: it merely implicates culmination rather than entails it. The results reported here inform the semantic debate on the strength of (im)perfective markers across languages and their role in deriving (non)-culmination inferences.

**Keywords:** incremental processing, eyetracking, grammatical aspect, (non) culmination

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