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“To Err Is Human ...”

An investigation of grammatical errors in Swedish
16-year-old learners' written production in English.

Pia Köhlmyr



ACTA UNIVERSITATIS GOTHOBURGENSIS
GÖTEBORG SWEDEN

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Abstract

This study is a broad investigation of grammatical errors in compositions written by 16-year-old learners of English in Sweden. It combines two areas within second language acquisition; error analysis and contrastive analysis. Approximately 400 compositions from two national assessment programmes carried out throughout Sweden in 1992 and 1995 are investigated. The material is randomly selected and, thus, can be regarded as approximately representative of the age cohort in the compulsory school. The grammatical errors are classified according to a system mainly based on a word class framework with the addition of two separate areas involving concord and word order errors. The intention for using this system has been for it to correspond to the categories used in school grammars and textbooks.

The aims of the study are (a) to investigate what grammatical errors Swedish learners make in English production, (b) to establish the frequency of different error types, (c) to analyse the causes of the errors made, and (d) to discuss possible pedagogical implications. The errors are discussed at two levels: as functional errors and executional errors, i.e. according to whether the intended grammatical category was chosen, and the correct form was chosen to realise that grammatical category. Failures of the former type are referred to as category errors and failures of the latter type are called realisation errors.

The results show that the same error types occur in compositions regardless of grades and that most errors involve what may be regarded as frequently practised grammatical features. An overwhelming majority of all the errors are category errors, implying that the actual mastering of grammatical structures is more difficult than the correct realisation of them. The results of the analysis of the errors confirm that transfer from the L1 is a very significant factor in learner errors, although overgeneralisation dominates on the whole. The results give rise to a discussion of actual performance vs. goals set in the curriculum, correctness vs. communicative competence, the role of instruction and feedback, as well as other pedagogical implications including the importance of language awareness and learners' L1 competence in relation to second/foreign language learning.

Keywords: second language acquisition (SLA), contrastive analysis (CA), error analysis (EA), category errors, realisation errors, transfer, overgeneralisation, simplification, markedness, feedback, correction, language awareness (LA).

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It seems that once in a blue moon Fate steps in making things take a different direction. This happened to me in 1992 when I was made redundant as a teacher at the upper secondary level. At this point in time two people suggested that I take a look at some really interesting research material that was being collected and investigated at the Language Teaching and Testing Research Unit in Göteborg. I could see the great potential in having the privilege to use such an interesting – and huge – material. Well over 10, 000 compositions were there just waiting to be used for further study. The two people who managed to convince me that this was something for me to turn into a doctoral dissertation were Sölve Ohlander at the English Department, University of Göteborg and Mats Oscarson at the Language Teaching and Testing Research Unit, the Department of Education, University of Göteborg. To these, who became my supervisors, I owe my sincere thanks for their invaluable expert advice, generous support, and inspiration throughout this work.

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Abbreviations and notational conventions

A	adverbial	omiss.	omission
add.	addition	pers	personal
Adj	adjective	pl	plural
Adv	adverb	poss	possessive
aux	auxiliary	PP	prepositional phrase
CA	contrastive analysis	Pr	pronoun
ca	category addition	Prep	preposition
co	category omission	ra	realisation addition
compl	complement	refl	reflexive
conj	conjunction	rel	relative
CR	consciousness-raising	ro	realisation omission
cs	category substitution	rs	realisation substitution
dem	demonstrative	S	subject
det	determiner; determinative	sg	singular
E	end position (of an adverbial)	SLA	second language learning and acquisition
EA	error analysis	subst.	substitution
ESL	English as a Second Language	TL	target language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language	UG95	<i>Utvärdering av grundskolan 1995</i> , test material used for the study
I	initial position (of an adverbial)	V	verb
iE	initial end position (of an adverbial)	v compl	verb complementation
IL	interlanguage	Vpl	verb plural form
iM	initial medial position (of an adverbial)	Vs	verb marked/singular form
indef	indefinite	Vsg	verb singular form
interr	interrogative	Vø	verb unmarked form
LA	language awareness	X	first marker for geographical place
L1	mother-tongue, native language	Y	second marker for geographical place
L2	second/foreign language	*	incorrect word, clause or sentence
M	medial position (of an adverbial)	//	“corrected” item within slashes
MCP	Minimal Correction Principle	[]	correct form given in square brackets
N	noun	(S 123)	number assigned to each sentence in the corpus
NN	encoded name of participant	ø	omitted item or unmarked form
NNS	nonnative speaker	‘...’	gives a Swedish word/form
NP	noun phrase		
NS	native speaker		
num	numeral		
NU92	<i>Nationell utvärdering 1992</i> , test material used for the study		
O	object		

PART ONE: PRELIMINARIES

“The most of my time goes to home works and test (in the area we reads about).” (S 1939)

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Interest in learning English in Sweden began as early as the 17th and 18th centuries when the need to have a command of foreign languages grew with increasing trade and diplomatic contacts between nations. Today, English is *the* world language, a lingua franca, integrated in almost every field of industry, trade and education in society. In those early days the study of modern languages was not of interest to the Swedish compulsory school (Bratt 1977:29).¹

However, during the 19th century English was gradually introduced into the curriculum, initially at university level and, later on, in the state secondary grammar school (Sw. ‘läroverket’). The emphasis was on grammar, mostly because that was how classical languages were taught (see Kelly 1976, Howatt 1984). According to Malmberg (1985:59), one reason for adopting this model for modern language studies was the traditional view that grammatical analysis and translation of foreign texts would develop learners’ logical and intellectual reasoning. In language teaching/education this method is known as “the grammar-translation method”. It was dominated by translation exercises from L1 to L2 English, mainly for the purpose of grammar practice. Within this method there was no room for free written or spoken language (Ericsson 1989:155). However, from the mid 19th century, protests against what was seen as a too theoretical and abstract method of foreign language teaching grew considerably. In 1906, it was officially declared that spoken language should be practised in class and that translation tests in grammar school finals could be replaced by “written reproduction” or even a “free essay” (Ericsson 1989:71). However, the grammar-translation method was, in reality, the predominant language teaching method in Sweden until the 1960s when it was officially replaced by the “direct method” and the “audio-lingual method” (Malmberg 1985). During the 1970s other

¹ See Bratt (1977, 1984) for further discussion and a historical perspective on English as a subject in the Swedish school system.

approaches to language studies were also discussed, and the ground-breaking concept of “communicative competence” (Hymes 1979) gained ground in Sweden and elsewhere.² This new approach emphasised the ability to making oneself understood with less demand for grammatical accuracy.³ The focus shifted from form to function, and so, semantics and pragmatics became more important factors in language teaching. Thus, grammar was gradually being devalued, but still important. Still, it is important to stress that Hymes’s (1979) notion of “communicative competence” included not only appropriateness and (accepted) usage, but also competence in a Chomskyan sense, where grammar plays a dominant role.

In the national curriculum of 1980, *Lgr80*⁴, the reasons given for why learners should study English are to make them “aware that language is a manifestation of differences in living conditions, cultures and notions in different countries”, and that it is necessary to know English when going on to further studies and choosing a future career. According to the curriculum, the study of grammar is important in order for learners to be able to express themselves “in a simple way” but they should also have a passive knowledge of grammatical patterns in order to understand English as spoken, for instance, in the media (Skolöverstyrelsen 1980: 78).⁵ The main focus of the teaching of English is on oral proficiency, and so listening comprehension and oral exercises are considered the most important areas. The purpose of grammar studies is mainly practical, guiding pupils towards comprehensible and correct English. It is pointed out, however, that the requirements concerning written proficiency will have to be modest. At the senior level (16-year-olds) in the comprehensive school the goal with regard to written English is for learners to develop such knowledge that they can use the language in “simple forms of writing”. According to *Lgr80*, this will be achieved by working with:

- written exercises mainly to consolidate material already practiced orally;
- the writing of messages, letters, and summaries;
- free written composition, where learners can write stories etc.;
- continuous copying in order to practise spelling.

² For further discussion on this, see e.g. Malmberg (1985), Ericsson (1989), Tornberg (1997).

³ The notion of accuracy is further discussed in Chapter 20.

⁴ *Lgr80* is an abbreviation for *Läroplan för grundskolan 1980* (*The 1980 national curriculum for the Swedish comprehensive school*) from the Swedish Ministry of Education and Science.

⁵ All the English passages from the national curricula *Lgr80* and *Lpo94* are my own translations of the Swedish original text.

Have the reasons for teaching and learning English changed since *Lgr80* was written? As stated in the national curriculum of 1994, *Lpo94*⁶, “[i]n a world characterized by international contacts it is desirable that all Swedes know English well enough to understand and use it *in speech as well as in writing*. Since English today has a very dominant position in society, it functions as a global language” (Skolöverstyrelsen 1994:16, emphasis added). According to *Lpo94* the stipulated goals for written proficiency teaching are again for learners to be able to use simple forms of writing, e.g. “in messages and letters”, and to be familiar with the use of dictionaries and grammar books. This can be compared with the revised version of the curriculum (Skolverket 2000), where the formulation of these goals are to be able to “ask for and provide information in writing, as well as relate and describe something”. The means of achieving these goals are not presented or even suggested in the national curriculum or in the national syllabus, which is a new approach compared to the previous ones.⁷

So, how good at grammar are these learners actually? Grammatical competence is important in that it forms the basis for the other three factors — acceptability, appropriateness and grammaticality — in Hymes’s (1979) model of language competence. It is in relation to this model that the study of errors is interesting. By identifying, analysing and evaluating errors it is possible to find out how errors affect communication. This knowledge, in turn, gives teachers and writers of pedagogical materials an idea of what is most useful to learn in order to avoid, or at least minimize, the risk of communication breakdowns. The identification and evaluation of errors have always been closely connected with foreign language teaching as a basis for grading and assessing written production by language learners. However, in order to improve learners’ language proficiency, as well as teaching methods and materials, it is important to link this search for errors to an analysis of why certain errors occur. According to Svartvik (1973:9), “errors constitute a valuable feedback in the teaching process. We might say that it is, at least partly, by locating errors that pupils learn to learn and teachers learn to teach”. Within the field of applied linguistics there are several methods of achieving this. One well-established field is error analysis (EA), which deals

⁶ Abbreviation for *1994 års Läroplan för det obligatoriska skolväsendet* (*The 1994 curriculum for the compulsory school system*) from the Swedish Ministry of Education and Science.

⁷ Whenever curricula are mentioned in the discussion in this study, reference will be made to the ones from 1980 and/or 1994, unless otherwise stated. This is because *Lgr80* was the curriculum in use at the time of the National Assessment Programmes which provide the basis for this work. *Lpo94* is also referred to as a comparison to this, although it was only gradually introduced from the lower grades and up from 1994. See the descriptions in section 1.3 and Appendix 1.

with the systematic description of errors followed by an analysis of the causes of errors found. This approach is summed up by Ringbom (1987:71):

“[It] is not sufficient on its own, but it may yield a better understanding of what is going on in the learner's mind, especially if it is combined with other types of investigation, such as frequency counts, contrastive analysis, studies of inferencing procedures and reaction time tests.”

The basic question, then, is what learners' actual and active command of English grammar really is in free writing. What errors do they make?

1.2 Aims

The principal aims of this study are:

- to investigate what grammatical errors Swedish 16-year-old learners⁸ of English make in English written production, here a composition task,
- to establish the frequency of different grammatical error types, and
- to analyse the causes of the errors made

Further aims include a discussion of pedagogical implications in relation to the relevant curriculum. The investigation is based on material from the National Assessment Programmes carried out in Sweden in 1992 and 1995 (section 1.3).

The scope of this study is restricted to grammatical errors, i.e. lexical, spelling and stylistic errors are excluded. In borderline cases, exclusion or inclusion will be discussed and exemplified. It is a cross-sectional study, mainly a traditional error analysis⁹ based on a large authentic material. In this material a wide variety of errors have been identified and classified in a largely word-class based framework in order to find out how frequent different error types are.¹⁰

Both absolute and relative figures are used to illustrate the frequencies of grammatical errors found in the material. However, it is important to

⁸ Learners in the final year of the Swedish nine-year comprehensive school.

⁹ Error analysis here does not imply the theory called Error Analysis (EA) which is denoted by using capital initial letters throughout this study. See also section 2.2 for a discussion of this.

¹⁰ Throughout the study all examples from the corpus investigated are numbered chronologically and the error discussed is underlined (there may be several different types of error in the same sentence). After each given example the correct form is given in square brackets and the sentence number from the main corpus is given as an identification within 'ordinary' brackets. Examples are also given with authentic spelling as they are found in the compositions (cf. 1.3).

remember that high numbers in error frequency must also be seen in the light of total numbers of occurrences, correct and incorrect, in order to give a complete picture of learner performance. Some grammatical items may be more likely to occur simply because they are more frequent in the data on the whole. This could be due to the composition topic itself requiring a certain choice as regards tense, style, etc. (section 1.3). A full investigation of such matters is beyond the scope of this study which is not a performance analysis, but in order to find out if this is a possible explanation in some cases, rough estimates have occasionally been included in the discussion. Such figures are based on the errors found in relation to grammatically correct instances. When this type of analysis has been carried out, only correctly spelt instances have been used, since it is impossible to cover all likely (and sometimes unlikely) alternative spellings appearing in the material.

What could explain the errors found? The most frequently used explanations of errors are transfer from L1 (e.g. **at home are we happy*), overgeneralisation (e.g. **The car who...*) and simplification (e.g. **I going to...*) of constructions and forms.¹¹

To summarise, the aim of this study is to provide an overview of the grammatical errors found in free compositions written by 16-year-olds in the Swedish comprehensive school and, through classification and analysis of these errors, to discuss their possible causes and pedagogical implications, not only in relation to teaching and teaching materials, but also in relation to the goals set out in the curriculum (cf. section 1.1). By studying free compositions it is possible to form a general idea of learners' actual and active knowledge of English grammar after six years' comprehensive school studies. The focus of the study is limited to grammatical errors, grammar being a fundamental part of linguistic competence, and thus also of communicative competence.

1.3 Material

The present study is based on a corpus of 383 randomly selected written compositions from the Swedish National Assessment Programmes carried out in 1992 and 1995, henceforth referred to as NU92 and UG95¹², respectively.

¹¹ See e.g. discussion in Richards (1984), Littlewood (1984), McLaughlin (1987), Ellis (1994) and James (1998).

¹² NU stands for *Nationell utvärdering av grundskolan 1992 (National Evaluation of the comprehensive school)* and UG means *Utvärdering av grundskoleelevers kunskaper, färdigheter, attityder och kompetenser 1995 (Evaluation of comprehensive school pupils' knowledge, proficiency, attitudes and competences)*. For further details concerning these tests, see Appendix 1.

The purpose of the assessments was to find out how well the actual performance of these learners matches the stipulated goals of the national curricula of 1980 and 1994. Most school subjects in the national curriculum were covered in the assessments (see Appendix 1).¹³ In this study one part of the English test has been examined, namely the free written compositions described in Appendices 1 and 2.

After a pilot study (unpublished) involving a sample of 97 compositions from the NU92 data had been carried out by the present author, material from the follow-up assessment, UG95, became available. The question was whether to use material from one or both of these batches. One of the differences between the two tests was the information given to learners as to whether results on the test were to be included as a basis for the final school grades. In NU92 the testees were told that the results of the test would not affect the final grades. It was only to be used for statistical evaluation by the test organizers. In UG95 the information was different. In view of this, it is easy to assume, as a teacher, that the results from UG95 would turn out to be better than in NU92. This feeling turned out to be correct which is also discernible in the compositions. For instance, in NU92 6.5% of the testees handed in blank papers whereas no blank compositions were found in the UG95 sample. Furthermore, twice as many NU as UG test takers wrote less than 100 words (see Table 1.3b below). This improved performance is one reason for including material from both tests in this study since it gives an interesting opportunity to see whether results differ in other ways between the two test batches. Also, the difference in topics — competing for a trip to Britain (NU92) or participation in a youth conference (UG95) — may increase the linguistic variation (see the descriptions below). After this decision was made, an additional 101 NU compositions and 185 UG compositions, all randomly selected, were added to the initial material making up a total of 383 compositions.

In the corpus there are 198 compositions from 1992 and 185 from 1995. The difference in figures is due to the random selection procedure. This is also the reason for the slight difference in numbers of male and female learners in the study. The intention was never to make a strategic or specific selection based on gender or elective course, etc., but a random selection of compositions. Table 1.3a shows the total number of learners investigated, distributed by gender and elective course.

¹³ The parts testing English were collected and analysed at the Language Teaching and Testing Research Unit at the Department of Education, Göteborg University, Sweden. For a more detailed description of these tests and procedures, see Oscarson (1993), Miliander (1995) and Dahlgren & Leoj (1997).

Table 1.3a Number of learners investigated distributed over gender and elective courses.

Test batch	male learners/ course type*				total	female learners/ course type*				total	sub-total
	gen.	unstr.	adv.	unkn.		gen.	unstr.	adv.	unkn.		
NU92	36	0	65	1	102	18	3	70	5	96	198
UG95	26	7	63	3	99	13	12	58	3	86	185
total					201					182	383

*gen.=general, unstr.=unstreamed, adv.=advanced, unkn.=unknown elective course

The material from NU92 and UG95 offers an excellent opportunity to examine the linguistic ability of the testees. There were a large number of participants (approximately 14 000 learners¹⁴) and the random sample used in this study is large enough to mirror this and the wide geographical spread. The learners are of the same age and they are all in the final year of comprehensive school, which means they are supposed to have had six years of English. In order to verify this assumption, the number of years of prior English studies for each NU92 testee¹⁵ was checked. The majority of the participants in this test batch (85%) began their studies in the fourth year and only a small proportion (10%) in the third year. The remaining 5% either claimed to have begun their English studies in the 1st, 2nd, 6th, 7th or 9th form (2.5%) or gave no answer at all (2.5%).

The gender¹⁶ of learners, their choice between a “general”, “advanced” and, in some schools, “unstreamed” course and grades from the autumn term (only available from NU92) were also recorded. In this study the terms “general” (Sw. ‘allmän’) and “advanced” (Sw. ‘särskild’) course will be used to refer to the two elective courses in the Swedish comprehensive school system. The difference between the two courses is generally to be found in the level of teaching materials and the way in which the teaching is carried

¹⁴ About 10,000 + 4,000 pupils participated in NU92 and UG95, respectively.

¹⁵ In NU92 a questionnaire accompanied the test. It consisted of questions on attitudes to studies in English and facts about each learner’s studies (see Appendix 1). In this questionnaire each learner was asked about the number of years of previous English studies. This was not so with the UG95 material, which explains why there are no such data from that test batch. However, a similar result would be likely with the UG material, had this information been asked for, since the policy for when English studies should begin was still, at the time, the same for most schools.

¹⁶ Henceforth, I will use the terms male/female (abbreviated m/f) throughout the study.

out.¹⁷ The expression “unstreamed” course denotes a group of learners that consists of both “general” and “advanced” learners, for various reasons.¹⁸ This group also includes any learner that answered “don't know” for this question, partly because s/he was obviously not aware of any existing different courses in that school; possibly there were none, or the learners simply did not know.

Figure 1.3.i illustrates the percentage of learners with regard to gender and choice of course in the material, compared to figures from the National Statistics Office of Sweden from 1992 and 1995.¹⁹

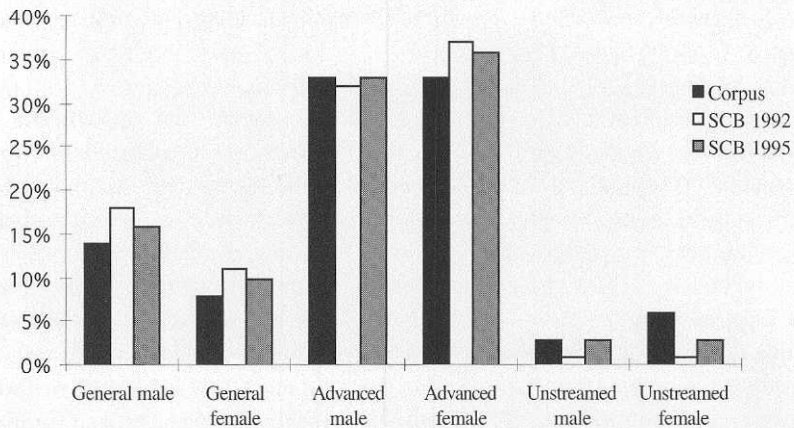


Figure 1.3.i Percentage of learners from the NU/UG corpus as distributed over gender and elective course compared to Swedish national statistics for the spring terms 1992/1995

The figure shows that the material investigated is at least an approximately representative sample of the population regarding distribution by gender and elective course separately, as well as choice of elective course by gender.

¹⁷ In accordance with the national curriculum for the comprehensive school system, *Lgr80*, pupils could choose between “general” and “advanced” courses in English and mathematics. In the “general” course, Sw. ‘allmän kurs’, there was a tendency to use less advanced text books and special emphasis is put on oral proficiency. Elective courses were abandoned in the curriculum of 1994, *Lpo94*.

¹⁸ One reason for this mix could be that there were too few learners to form one of the groups and so they have all been put into one integrated or combined group. There is no established Swedish term for this.

¹⁹ The figures from the National Statistics Office of Sweden showing choice of course for pupils in the Swedish comprehensive school autumn terms 1992 and 1995 are taken from *Statistisk årsbok 1994* and *Statistisk årsbok 1997* (*Statistical Yearbook of Sweden 1994* and *1997*).

Twelve participants (i.e. 3%) did not answer the questions concerning gender and course given in the test questionnaire, and so they have not been included in the comparison. In the national statistics data there was a category called “no English studies”, showing that 1% of the total population did not study English at all. However, this figure is not included in the present study since all participants in the evaluation tests have had English as a compulsory subject.

Another advantage of the material is the relative uniformity in the assignments given. A more detailed description of these assignments is found in Appendix 2. The part concerning written English in NU92 was designed as a mock competition called “Win-a-Dream”. The testees were given the task of writing a letter to a fictitious “Youth Contact Foundation” in order to win a trip to Britain. They were asked to describe themselves and what they would like to do in Britain if they were chosen as one of the winners, and to explain why the jury should select them rather than someone else. As a source of inspiration, the testees were given a page with made-up tickets to different events (see Appendix 2). The letter was to be between 150 and 250 words long. The composition was the final part of the larger test battery and the testees had 50 minutes at their disposal.

In UG95 the written task was called “Join us in July”, requiring learners to write a letter to UNICEF in order to obtain a free ticket to an imaginary international conference for teenagers in Denmark. The testees were to write about themselves, why they wanted to go, what two or three topics they would like to talk about at the conference and why, and, finally, what other young people might think about one of the subjects chosen. Some help was given in the page attached to the pre-printed “letter body” handed out to the testees, where a few important points to be included in the letter were given together with some keywords (see Appendix 2). No minimum or maximum length was stated and the time allowed was 40 minutes.

As is readily seen, the two topics are very similar. The learners were expected to write more or less about the same things and, more importantly, most likely in the same tense/s, since we are dealing with letters in which we expect to find a personal description (the present tense) and wishes/thoughts about what the learner wants or intends to do in certain circumstances (the future or the conditional). However, it is also necessary to consider whether the topics may actually induce certain ways of writing rather than others. Is it possible that some grammatical structures might not be used at all? In the material investigated there seems to be less use of expressions of future time,

the progressive form and the third person singular than one would have expected considering the given topics.²⁰

Furthermore, it is important to remember that the style used in these compositions displays subjective rather than expository writing. What we are dealing with here is written material reflecting spoken language, i.e. more "written spoken language" than written language proper, e.g. the use of *gonna* for *going to*.²¹ However, the topics are similar enough to yield written material within the same basic framework (a letter, a personal description, arguments in favour of the writer) and within the same tense format/s, but different enough to give a representative picture of learners' productive linguistic ability. This is another reason why compositions from both tests are included in the investigation.

As already noted, one difference between the material from NU92 and that from UG95 concerns the instructions given as to the length of the compositions, 150 to 250 words for NU92 but no stipulated length for UG95. The material was checked for length by computer counting in order to establish its representativeness in this respect. Table 1.3b accounts for the length of the compositions:

Table 1.3b Length of compositions divided into groups by number of words

No. of words	A no data	B 1- 49	C 50- 99	D 100- 149	E 150- 199	F 200- 249	G 250- 299	H 300- 349	I 350- 399	J 400+	Total
Learners NU92	13*	5	11	23	69	46	19	11	1	0	198
Learners UG95	0	4	7	40	65	39	18	8	1	3	185
Total	13	9	18	63	134	85	37	19	2	3	383

*No data available for 13 learners, male and female, because blank compositions were handed in.

²⁰ These areas are further discussed in sections 5.2.3 (future time), 5.3 (the progressive), and 11.2 (subject-verb concord), respectively.

²¹ Differences between spoken and written grammar and style have been extensively dealt with in many works but are not further discussed here. See e.g. Halliday (1989), Carter & McCarthy (1995) and Lehmann (1999).

The length varies from a few simple sentences to well-written compositions of several hundred words containing rich and varied language.²² Examples of this are found in Appendix 4. The figures within the bold frame in Table 1.3b show that approximately 70% of the learners had written more than 150 words (groups E and F), counting both test batches,²³ a figure indicating that the compositions are long enough to exemplify learners' linguistic ability in written production. On average the compositions were approximately 185 words long.²⁴ The average length of compositions in each course distributed over gender is illustrated in Table 1.3c below:

Table 1.3c Average length of compositions distributed over gender and course.

Gender/elective course	Female: words/learners	Male: words/learners	Average/course, f+m
general	5,117 / 31 = 165	8,035 / 62 = 129	13,152 / 93 = 141
unstreamed	2,851 / 15 = 190	1,340 / 7 = 191	4,191 / 22 = 191
advanced	28,546 / 128 = 223	23,076 / 128 = 180	51,622 / 256 = 202
unknown	1,485 / 8 = 185	453 / 4 = 113	1,938 / 12 = 162
Total average	37,999 / 182 = 208	32,904 / 201 = 163	70,903 / 383 = 185

Pupils attending the general course generally wrote shorter compositions (141 words per composition) compared to the total average as well as compared to the "advanced" learners (202 words). This lends further support to the view that the material is truly representative. There are also differences related to gender to take into consideration. On average, female learners wrote longer compositions: on the whole 208 words to male learners' 163 words, a relatively important difference that might have a bearing on the results (Ch. 19).

As regards length of sentences, there is no general notable difference except, perhaps, in a few grade intervals.²⁵ On the whole, sentences are approximately 12 words long (m=11.8, f=11.6). However, in the general

²² In a few compositions the writer has not followed the instructions and not kept to the topic given. Nevertheless, these have been treated like the others, i.e. they were checked for length and errors since it is irrelevant to this study how well they followed and carried out the instructions of the task. See Oscarson (1993), Miliander (1995) and Dahlgren & Leoj (1997) for a discussion of this.

²³ This is strengthened by adding group D in the table, bearing in mind that the UG95 test did not stipulate a certain length. The result, then, is a total of 77% of compositions between 100 and 249 words.

²⁴ In all 383 compositions there is a total of 70,903 words.

²⁵ The grading system in the Swedish compulsory school at this time used a scale from 1 to 5 where mark 1 was the poorest and mark 5 the highest grade.

course, grade 1 female learners on average produce sentences 4.3 words longer than their male fellow students ($m=9.1$, $f=13.4$). In the same course type, grade 4 learners show completely reversed figures: male learners write 3.3 more words per sentence ($m=12.9$, $f=9.6$). The same grade intervals are also involved in the most significant results in the advanced course, although in inverted figures. Here, in grade 1, male learners on average produce approximately 2 words more ($m=13.1$, $f=10.9$) and in grade 4, the reverse occurs, female learners write sentences about 3 words longer ($m=8.8$, $f=11.9$). Thus, without making a deeper analysis of gender differences, female learners in this material write longer compositions as a whole, but there is not much difference in male/female sentence length. In any case, the gender aspect will be taken into consideration only when there are features that are particularly striking or interesting from a teaching point of view to be included in the discussion. However, it is beyond the scope of this study to make a thorough investigation of possible gender differences.

The final grades for English as a school subject, as given in the questionnaires (section 1.3 and App. 1) are used in the discussion of results as a way of comparing learners at different levels within the elective courses (Ch. 19). For information about the grades for each composition, teachers' grading is available in Oscarson (1993) and Dahlgren & Leoj (1997). Such evaluation, however, has not been part of the present study.

In short, in the random selection of compositions for the corpus, distribution according to gender and choice of course level proves to be well represented compared to national statistics, as well as the compositions being long enough to be useful for an analysis based on frequencies. It may thus be concluded that the material is in fact representative of learners in the 9th form.

1.4 Procedural and methodological framework

As noted earlier, the work began with a pilot study, using a small but representative sample of compositions. The idea was to continue with a much larger material for investigation. The procedure of working with the material can be summarised as follows:

- random selection of compositions
- identification of errors
- grammatical classification and tagging of errors
- computer processing of the data
- analysis of errors and their causes

The errors are primarily divided into categories according to word class membership and the classification used is mainly modelled on that employed in Quirk *et al* (1985) complemented by a grammar for Swedish learners, Ljung & Ohlander (1992). Bearing in mind that one of the aims of this investigation is that the results might have implications for the future teaching of English, the choice of an easily accessible and clear classification system is important. The decision to use a classification system based mainly on a word class framework was made with this accessibility in mind. The intention is for it to harmonise with the categories used in most school grammars and textbooks. The grammatical classification system used in this study is further described and discussed in Chapter 3.

Part II, dealing with the grammatical classification of errors, is divided according to this word class framework with more detailed subcategories discussed in separate sections. A separate chapter on concord errors (Ch. 11) and another on word-order errors (Ch. 12), two very frequent error types, have been added to the word class framework. Errors of these two types naturally fall into several of the word-class based categories, and thus it seems reasonable to treat them separately, rather than using subcategories in several sections, which would make the presentation less accessible. This approach also facilitates the comparison of errors of the same basic category.

The errors are classified as deviations from the expected correct form represented in standard English (BrE and AmE) as given in grammars, dictionaries and native speakers' assessments. In the study it is the expected correct form that functions as the 'heading', under which all deviant forms/renderings of the particular item are discussed. This seemed to be the simplest way to avoid having too many subcategories, which would be the case using categories that are based on the many various deviant forms²⁶ found in the compositions.

A "minimal correction principle" (MCP) is used in order to keep as much as possible of the original sentences without violating grammatical rules or forms. Sometimes there are several possible errors in one sentence and if one of them is corrected, the others need not be changed to understand the sentence. Examples of this are given where relevant. As much as possible, I have tried to follow each sentence from the beginning up to the point where a correction is absolutely necessary before classifying anything as an error.

Unless otherwise stated, examples illustrating one particular type of error are taken from different writers, and all examples are quoted exactly according to the original, including spelling; nothing has been changed or

²⁶ In Stendahl (1970) and Svartvik *et al* (1973), for instance, the incorrect forms are the basis for classification.

added. In cases where the full example is not necessary in order to illustrate the error, only the relevant part is given and only the error discussed is underlined in the example.²⁷

The material investigated is confidential. Therefore, wherever a proper name could possibly reveal the identity of the writer, it has been replaced by capital NN (personal name) and X and/or Y (geographical name).

Throughout the study the notions “omission”, “addition”, and “substitution” are used to denote the main types of “operation” involved in the errors found.²⁸ It is important to point out that these notions are merely descriptive, psychologically neutral devices. Thus, they do not refer to any psycholinguistic processes. The three error “operations” are exemplified in the following sentences:

- (1) ... it ø more fun to see a tennismatch... [it is more] (S 782)
- (2) We have a very boring weather... [have very boring weather] (S 379)
- (3) I likes to go to Motorshow, becaus i'm very good on cars. [good at] (S 4)

In (1) there is omission of the verb. In (2) there is an example of addition where the indefinite article is incorrectly added, and in (3) there is a substitution error: one preposition has been replaced by another.

My interpretation of these error types coincides with Lennon's description (1991:189) where “omission” means that “...a linguistic unit or units would have to be supplied in order to eradicate the error...”, “addition” means that “...a linguistic unit or units would have to be deleted...”, and, finally, “substitution” — which, incidentally, is a combination of the first two types — means that “...a linguistic unit or units would have to be deleted and another or others supplied to eradicate the error”. However, Lennon also points out that this model is not enough to identify and count errors since “most ‘erroneous’ forms are, in fact, in themselves not erroneous at all, but become erroneous only in the context of the larger linguistic unit in which they occur”. It should be noted that he refers only to investigated spoken material, here. Obviously, context is of importance in all types of communication. Sometimes the grammatical structure/form may be all right in isolation but not in the relevant context. However, in a written corpus, such as the one used in this study, the context is there and will certainly facilitate

²⁷ In some cases, for the sake of clarity, a suggested “correction” of the error discussed is given within square brackets after the example. Other incorrect items, pre- or postposed to the error discussed, creating problems of understanding are occasionally also corrected as in **It's mutch things we can talk about [there are/ many]*. In this example, the error discussed is the incorrect use of **much*, but the incorrect **it's* is also corrected and given within slants.

²⁸ See e.g. Lennon (1991:189), Dulay, Burt & Krashen (1982:154-160), Ellis (1994:56) and James (1998:106-113)

the identification of errors. Nonetheless problems arise, as in the following example:

- (4) I want to meat a new frends from another countrys. (S 4742)

How are the errors in this sentence classified in this study? In the first part, is it supposed to be *a new friend* or *new friends*? And, in the second part, should it be *another country* or *other countries*? This leads on to the next section on problems and delimitations.

1.5 Problems and delimitations

Problems inevitably arise when investigating errors made by learners of a foreign language. Working with a material of the kind used here entails making some overall decisions with regard to the following questions:

- how to handle sentences which are difficult or impossible to interpret
- how to define the notion of “error”: correct or incorrect language
- how to define grammatical versus lexical, orthographic and stylistic errors
- how to classify errors grammatically
- how to analyse and explain causes of grammatical errors

In this section questions will be asked and illustrative examples will be given but only briefly discussed. Further authentic cases from the corpus are discussed in detail in each section in Part II.

The first step is to decide how sentences which are impossible or difficult to interpret should be treated. This raises the question of how to determine what the writer really intended to communicate. There are at least three stages to be considered.

First, there is the decision regarding where to draw the line for inclusion or exclusion of a sentence in the study. Exclusion would certainly be the simplest and most natural solution with sentences like the following:

- (5) I wate fore at trawling to Britain and sie watt Britain look like and trawlin owl over Britain. (S 603)
And pardy on dudes. (S 604)
- (6) Iw got a moped is a Hond MT 50. it’s not so fast. but i vant my dravin-licens i time. (S 672) If the boys i köping going kopt. (S 673)
- (7) It’s a little sit old school. (S 1168)

- (8) I should like it was fanny to leart know new people, so live in a British family for a week should be perfect. (S 1385)

Examples above show some problematic cases. What is meant by the underlined words and phrases? How do we classify them? Should they be left out completely or should the investigator determine, with the help of context, topic and native speakers (NS) what is most likely? And what if the full sentence does not provide sufficient context to help us? Johansson (1975b:25) argues that “[i]f there is any doubt about the acceptability of a word or construction, it should not be marked as an error”. This is applicable in the above cases, too. Thus, if an entire sentence is incomprehensible, it is not included in the corpus of errors.

Another difficult, though not unintelligible, example is (9), where the underlined part could be an attempt at either *I am like them*, *I will like them*, *I am liked by them*, or *I will be liked by them*:

- (9) But it would be great to just see them, talk to them and maby I am liked them. (S 1877)

There could be other interpretations, as well, so what is the proper reading? Here there are so many possible interpretations that it becomes impossible to classify the error.

The problem of difficult sentences is further illustrated in the following examples:

- (10) I will see hole Britain and go to Cinema, disco and visit a school for a day .
And I will meet someone who I can talk to. (S 178 - S 179)
- (11) They sent me a paper every month. And I pay. (S 181- S 182)

How should *will* in (10) be interpreted? Are we dealing with the future *will* or *will* incorrectly used instead of the more polite *would like to*? In these examples it is more likely to be a contrastive error, i.e *will* is treated as if it was interchangeable with Swedish ‘vill’ (Engl. *want to*).²⁹ The context might help in similar cases, but not always. Should such cases be treated, counted and discussed as errors or simply be disregarded? Example (11) also deals with the writer’s intentions. If *sent* is the intended choice of tense, then the present tense form of *pay* is wrong, and vice versa. Again context is

²⁹ Throughout this study, in running text, single inverted commas are used to give Swedish examples of words and phrases, whereas the corresponding English expressions are given in italics.

important. Depending on the interpretation in view of the context, cases like these are classified according to what form is seen as the “incorrect” one.

In this study, all the compositions are handwritten and in some cases the problem of legibility turned up. A few examples of this can be found in Appendix 3. Sometimes it has been difficult to figure out what the learner has actually written. Maybe one can read parts of the text and then perhaps guess what the writer intended to say and choose an interpretation that fits the context in the original, but should this be done? In the end, only sentences where the topic itself in connection with context could help interpretation have been included in the corpus of errors.

The next step is to define the notion of error. What is an “error” as opposed to a “mistake” (sections 2.2 and 14.2-3)? Corder (1967) introduced the idea that “errors” are due to defects in linguistic competence, whereas “mistakes” are errors in performance, i.e. they are simply non-systematic errors.³⁰ In the present study the term “error” denotes all grammatically incorrect renderings that supposedly reveal the learner’s lack of knowledge of a certain grammatical or lexical construction. A brief outline of the notion of “error” is given in section 2.2 and further discussions as to what is considered an error in this study are found in each chapter in Part II and in Chapter 14. However, no distinction between “error” and “mistake” is made here, mainly because it is impossible to determine if an incorrect written form or structure is simply a mistake that would have been self-corrected had it been noticed. “Error”, then, stands for a form that is regarded as incorrect in relation to standard English grammar.

In view of this, should it be considered an error to use expressions that could be said to belong more to spoken than written language (cf. Horowitz & Samuels 1987)? And what about non-standard and sub-standard forms? Consider the following examples from the corpus:

- (12) I know that i gonna enjoy the trip to England. (S 551)
 (13) I ain't interessted in sport so... (S 140)

These two examples contain non-standard forms. Are we to consider them as correct or not? Is it acceptable to use the non-standard forms for *going to* and *am not* in writing? And what about BrE and AmE differences as in *in/at school* or *wait for/on* (cf. Quirk *et al.* 1985:677). In the curricula no mention is made of different ways of writing depending on whether you use British or American English, for instance, nor whether forms which are considered

³⁰ Compare the discussion in 14.2 and 14.3. See also Corder (1967), Duskova (1969), and Carlbom (1973).

spoken language should be accepted in written language (not only in dialogue). In this study, forms like *gonna* and *ain't* are considered correct as long as the grammatical construction is correct, i.e. example (12) is considered erroneous since the auxiliary verb is missing [*I am gonna*], whereas example (13) is regarded as grammatically correct. It should also be remembered that writers at this stage are seldom aware of differences in syntax between spoken and written language. Their compositions contain numerous examples of “sloppy writing”. In this study this is referred to as “written spoken language”. Thus, in this sense, written or spoken style is irrelevant here.

A further problem involves cases like (14), involving one type of concord:

- (14) One of my other interesst is dancing and singing. (S 472)

Should the two nouns be treated as co-ordinate nouns or as two separate items? Can they be compared to concepts like “rhythm and blues” and “bed and breakfast”? The answer determines what form the verb should take and whether the initial *one* is correct or not (*Some of my other interests are...*). In cases like this, reactions from native informants are vital, and after consultations such instances have been considered to be correct or at least acceptable.³¹

Throughout the work with the classification, native and non-native English teachers and corpora (Cobuild Direct, the British National Corpus) have been consulted in difficult borderline cases concerning grammatical correctness. The use of native informants is obvious and some non-native teachers have also been included because of the contrastive angle of many of the errors.

Another decision deals with what is to be regarded as a grammatical or lexical error. Typical examples of lexical errors are e.g. the use of *job* for *work* and *nature* for *scenery* or *landscape*. The use of a Swedish word instead of the English equivalent (e.g. Sw. ‘ö’ for *island*), or incorrect translation such as **groundschool* for the compulsory school (Sw. ‘grundskola’), is also regarded as a lexical error. But consider also the following examples:

- (15) I like animals and I don't like people who test cosmetica on animals. [but] (S 778)
(16) My hobby is to swim, and I like to walk in the nature. [woods, country/side etc] (S 96)
(17) have easy to get new friends. [find it easy] (S 867)

³¹ However, the noun *interest* is wrong in either interpretation.

- (18) When he is three years old i will learn him how to snowboard. [teach] (S48)
 (19) And I want to lern me more and better english than.... [learn] (S 522)

In (15) *but* is perhaps the more natural choice of conjunction and consequently this is considered a grammatical error. Therefore it is discussed in Chapter 10 on conjunctions. The next three, (16), (17) and (18), involve the wrong choice of word, i.e. they are regarded as lexical errors and are not included in this study. However, in comparison with (18), in sentences with constructions of the type found in (19), the error is considered grammatical because *learn* is not a reflexive verb in English. Thus the error is regarded as grammatical, involving “addition of pronoun”.

Sometimes addition or omission of one or several linguistic elements results in unidiomatic constructions. For instance, the doubling of verbs in (20) or the omission of *get* in (21)

- (20) I want want to England becorse i will see... (S 1986)
 (21) I can take photos and ø a autographe from her. (S 933)

The addition of the second verb in (20) is regarded as a mere slip and this type of mistake is excluded from the study. In (21), both Swedish and English require two different verbs, *take* and *get*, in order to complete the sentence. However, this is considered a lexical error rather than a grammatical one and this and similar errors are excluded from the error corpus. However, there are also cases where addition or omission reveals a lack of grammatical knowledge. For instance, when talking about people’s age there are two possible correct grammatical constructions: *be+number*, as in *I’m 15*, or *be+number+years old*, as in *I’m 15 years old* (see Swan 1995:30). In the material, there are many instances where either the noun *years* or the structure *years old* is added to the correct simple structure *I’m a boy of 15*, resulting in sentences like the following:

- (22) I’m a boy of 15 years, ... (S 4130)
 (23) I’m a boy of 17 years old. (S 3138)

These are here regarded as an addition of a grammatical category. A similar type of problem occurs with NPs like *the young people*, frequently used by the writers. This could be classified as an incorrect addition of either the definite article, or of *people*. The problem of interpretation is apparent in sentences like (24), where English requires the definite article only if the nominalized construction *the young* is used. Because of the ambivalence as to what was the intended form such instances are excluded from the corpus of errors.

- (24) ...more jobs to the young people in the future. [/for/ the young or young people]

Cases where, for instance, an adjective is incorrectly used for an adverb as in **I can write rather good* (S 707), or a noun instead of an adjective, as in **...and see the beauty country...* (S 1861), are included as grammatical errors (category substitution) since word class is regarded as a grammatical category in this study.³²

Then there is the problem of orthographic errors. Are instances where **ho* or **how* are used for *who* simply misspellings or should they be regarded as grammatical errors? Is it possible to consider *ho* non-grammatical and *how* grammatical because the latter already exists as an interrogative? Furthermore, how do we know that the learner cannot make a distinction between *who* and *how*, that s/he believes that *how* is equivalent to Swedish ‘vem’, Engl. *who*, because s/he pronounces *ho*, *how* and *who* in the same way: /hu:/. Here, the case of **how* for *who* is included as a substitution error; otherwise the distinction between *How are you?* and *Who are you?* is impossible to deal with.

Another question is whether there is a grammatical error involved when a plural form is used but certain spelling rules are “forgotten”? In cases like **journeys* and **minuts* the context requires a plural form which is clearly indicated by the writer but the spelling is wrong. Cases like these are treated as examples of spelling mistakes. In a case like **festival’s* used for *festivals* or vice versa (using *-s* for ‘*s*’) or **parents* for *parents’*, it could perhaps be argued that the learner does not know the distinction between plural formation and the genitive, and that therefore this should be considered a grammatical error. On the other hand, this is a kind of “grammatical spelling” and it is very likely that the writer, having used the *-s*, believes s/he has in fact applied the correct genitive form. This view is further supported by examples occurring with proper nouns, as in **We live in X Swedens fourth city* (S 281), where it is safe to assume that the writer does not regard the *-s* in *Swedens* as a plural marker. Furthermore the pronunciation of the plural and genitive forms are the same. The conclusion, then, is that omission of the apostrophe in the genitive forms should be seen as equal to the “forgotten” plural variant spellings *-es* and *-ies* discussed above. Consequently, problems of these kinds are excluded from the study.

Sometimes it is difficult to decide how to classify an error grammatically. Consider the following cases:

³² Compare Mukattash (1978) where erroneous choice of word class is regarded as a lexical error.

- (25) My interest is sports, cars, motorcycles, music ... (S 994)
(26) If we dono't do anything soon whole the world will tear apart. (S 3912)
(27) I live in a small town who's called X. (S 411)

In (25) the subject-verb concord is correct in itself but this part of the phrase does not match the following predicative complement. Where do we put this type of error? Under “Nouns/concord” or “Verb/concord” or in a separate section? And what about (26)? Is this a case of “Nouns/modifiers” or “Word order/modifiers”? Finally, should (27) be classified as “Pronoun/relative” or “Concord/pronominal”? These types of errors make a case for adding special sections on concord and word order errors (see Part II).

The explanation of errors can also create problems. As will be seen in Chapter 14, different error explanations are often closely related and sometimes it is difficult to deduce which is the most likely one. What happens when there is more than one possible explanation as to why an error occurs?

- (28) you see, we have quite mush homeworks. (S 72)
(29) My name is NN and I'm 15 years. (S 2563)
(30) Everyone over ther was comming and touch one. (S 269)

In example (28) above, the learner could be “overgeneralising” the rule for plural formation, but it could just as easily be argued that it is a case of “transfer” from Swedish (*homeworks* = *läxor*). In (29) the error could have occurred either due to “simplification by omission” of *old* or “transfer” from Swedish (‘...jag är femton år’). The use of the progressive form in (30) is likely to be a case of “overgeneralisation”, possibly due to special emphasis in teaching. These problems are discussed in detail in Part III, Chapters 15-18.

Summing up, then, only relatively clear grammatical errors are dealt with in this study. Further discussion of problematic cases of various kinds is to be found in Part II and Part III.

1.6 Plan of study

This first chapter of Part I deals with the background and aims of the present investigation. It also describes the data used and what kinds of problems are involved in an investigation of this type. Chapter 2 starts out with a brief outline of the definition of the concept “error” before moving on to an account of what theories have been used as models when describing, analysing and evaluating learners’ errors in spoken and written L2.

Part II provides a grammatical description of the errors found. Chapter 3 defines the terminology used and gives explanations as to why a certain type of classification of grammatical errors was chosen. The main classification is carried out on a word-class basis and errors are discussed according to what type of “operation” has taken place: an item may have been substituted, added or omitted. These operations are used merely as a descriptive device, i.e. as a means of classifying similar error types into manageable groups in order to facilitate discussion and analysis. Two terms, category and realisation errors, are used to differentiate between different error “levels”. The first deals with the use and application of grammatical categories and the latter with the actual realisation of them. Chapters 4 through 12 present a grammatical description of the errors and illustrate them with examples from the corpus.

In Part III the errors and error types described in Part II are analysed and discussed from several different angles. Chapter 13 concentrates on the more quantitative conclusions that can be drawn from the investigation. There is a discussion of frequency and types of errors as distributed over category and realisation errors, including the types of “operation” that are most common — substitution, addition or omission. This leads on to a more general discussion, in Chapter 14, of possible sources of errors. In Chapters 15 to 18 there is a more detailed discussion of the possible causes of the errors: transfer, overgeneralisation, simplification by omission or blends. Chapter 19 summarizes and discusses the results in these chapters and Chapter 20 discusses errors in relation to second language learning and pedagogical implications. Finally, the concluding chapter summarizes the purpose and the results of the study and the conclusions drawn from the findings are discussed.

The Appendices include descriptions of the National Assessment Programmes 1992 and 1995 (Appendix 1), from which the data used in this study derive. Further, a presentation of the composition assignment is provided (Appendix 2), as well as a few samples of compositions of different quality (Appendices 3–4).

2 Error Analysis: A Brief Overview

2.1 Introductory

L2 acquisition is an enormous field of inquiry with a vast literature. In this study, the focus is on errors as a way of investigating L2 acquisition in a broad perspective. This chapter briefly discusses the concept “error”, both how it is used in the study and the differences in terminology that exist in other works. There is also a section on the background of today’s research in second (and foreign) language learning and acquisition (SLA) with regard to the present study in which both Contrastive Analysis (CA) and Error Analysis (EA) are used.³³ This leads on to a section giving a brief survey of previous studies in the field.

2.2 Errors in L2 learning: some different types

The notion of “error” as used in this study is defined in section 1.5. The terms used when discussing deviations from the norms of standard English as given in grammars are usually “errors” vs. “mistakes”. An “error” is then defined as systematic, reflecting a lack of linguistic competence whereas a “mistake” is described as a random error in performance (e.g. Corder 1967, Duskova 1969). Carlbom (1973:24) discusses a threeway distinction of “deviances” presented as either “slips”, “mistakes” or “errors”, where “slips” are simply regarded as lapses (resembling Duskova’s definition of mistakes as performance errors), and the other two reflect problems in linguistic competence, i.e. “mistakes” occur when the learner hesitates as to which rule should be used (a kind of systematic switching between correct and incorrect rules), whereas “errors” involve a complete lack of knowledge of a certain rule. James (1998:83) adds a fourth concept, “solecisms”, which refers to some deviances from the standard norm as “breaches of the rules of correctness as laid down by purists and usually taught in schools”. The other three error concepts he describes as deviances that “can quickly be detected and self-corrected” (slips), problems that can be corrected only if/when pointed out (mistakes), and those that cannot be self-corrected without more “relevant learning” (errors).

As already noted, in this study the term “error” is used throughout for “mistakes” and “errors” in James’s interpretation (see above). “Slips” or

³³ The capitalized abbreviations CA and EA are used to denote the theories only, not the actual analysis of errors in general. General accounts of SLA research can be found in Ellis (1994), McLaughlin (1987), Odlin (1989) and Selinker (1992), among other works.

“mistakes” (performance errors), if and when they can be identified, are excluded completely, whereas “solecisms” (James 1998:83), are sometimes discussed and mentioned briefly. Examples of “solecisms” in this study, are the distinction *real-really* as in *It’s real nice*, (section 6.2) or the use of *gotta* as in *I gotta go*, which is informal but here regarded as acceptable when correctly used (section 5.5.5). That is, I mainly consider deviations in correctness, but certain cases relating to appropriateness have been included when they display obvious and significant differences in comparison to standard English. It is evident, then, that this demands a certain restraint in the interpretation of the errors, especially with regard to error gravity.

There is also the distinction between “overt” and “covert” errors to be kept in mind. Ellis (1994:52) defines the former as an error “easy to identify because there is a clear deviation in form”, as in **...when the sun shined last...*(S 381). The latter type “occurs in utterances that are superficially well-formed but which do not mean what the learners intended them to mean” (Ellis 1994:52), i.e the sentence appears grammatical until context reveals it is not. This can be exemplified by *They sent me a paper every month* (S 181), which is perfectly grammatical until context shows that it should be in the present tense. Furthermore, EA is often complicated by the fact that an erroneous sentence can be interpreted in several ways, as in **The lady eat*. Here there is a number of possible interpretations, e.g. *the ladies eat, the/a lady eats, the/a lady is eating, the/a lady ate* etc. Often context will help us deduce which is most likely in a certain case, but not always. Thus, when context clearly shows that only one interpretation is possible, the “error” is recorded. In doubtful cases, however, such examples have been excluded.

2.3 Investigating errors: some different approaches

Early research in language acquisition was dominated by structuralism and Skinner’s behaviourist theory. It dealt with first language (L1³⁴) acquisition and its advocates believed that language was learnt through “habit-formation”, which was “brought about by imitation, reinforcement and repetition of behaviour” (Littlewood 1984:17). These theories were later

³⁴ Other terms for first language besides L1, are MT (mother tongue) and NL (native language). See James (1998), Ellis (1985a, 1994) and others. In this study L1 is used to denote “first language”.

extended to cover foreign/second language (L2³⁵) learning as well, mainly by comparing languages, i.e. looking at similarities and, above all, differences or contrasts, between them. Contrastive Analysis, henceforth referred to as CA, involves a systematic comparison of the L1 and L2 in order to be able to predict areas of greatest learning difficulty. In this view, it is the differences between the mother tongue and the foreign language that cause errors. Thus “[t]he strongest motivation for doing CA [...] involves applied work” (Selinker 1992:7), with the main object to “provide a scientific backing for teaching techniques and teaching materials” (Sharwood Smith 1994:22).

According to Spolsky (1979:251), Charles Fries originally developed contrastive analysis in 1945. His approach was expanded by Robert Lado (1957) and later Charles Ferguson edited a series of contrastive studies. Since then, the practical potential of CA for pedagogical purposes has resulted in a wide range of studies and books on the subject, both practical and theoretical. The work done in the 1950s and 1960s is perhaps best referred to as “preventive contrastive analysis” (Lightbown 1985:173), i.e. teaching emphasized predictable error areas.

CA dominated the SLA field from 1945 to 1965 when, according to James (1998:4), it was “the favoured paradigm for studying FL/SL [foreign and second language] learning and organizing its teaching”. However, the attitude towards L2 learners’ speech changed in the late 1960s, from having been generally looked upon as a “faulty version of the target language” (Littlewood 1984:22) to a process in which learners are “actively constructing rules from the data they encounter and gradually adapting these rules in the direction of the target-language system” (Littlewood 1984:22). This implies that there is a transitional stage in L2 acquisition that can be analysed on its own terms. This, then, explains why contrastive analysis was not enough when it came to explaining all the errors that occurred in L2 speech.

In the early 1970s the reliability of CA was severely questioned, mainly on the grounds of its association with “an outdated model of language description (structuralism) and a discredited learning theory (behaviourism)” (James 1998:4). Critics pointed to the fact that, contrary to its claims, CA failed to explain why not all observed errors are due to L1 transfer

³⁵ In this study, L2 denotes the term “second language” used for English taught in Swedish schools although sometimes a distinction is made between L2/SL (second language) and L2/FL (foreign language). The term SL then means that the language is learnt and used in or outside class in a target language (TL) environment, e.g. by immigrants, whereas a FL is learnt and used only in class (James, 1998:xiii; Ellis, 1994:12). However, the use of L2, SL and SLA to cover both types of language learning is in line with common usage (Ellis, 1994:12; Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982:11) and it has been suggested that, instead of a clear dichotomy between the two concepts, there is a cline (Berns, 1990). English in Sweden is likely to be found somewhere in the middle of this continuum.

(interlingual errors), and also why some predicted errors never seem to occur. In fact, many errors could be related to the target language itself (intralingual errors). Furthermore, the criticism “was further motivated by the fact that this approach was felt to be aloof from the classroom situation” (Svartvik 1973:7).

As a consequence of the limitations of CA, Error Analysis (EA) entered the scene and within a few years it more or less replaced CA among researchers. The difference between the two was that the object of EA was to describe the errors found in learner language. Its “pedagogical aim is roughly the same as in CA: to provide feedback about teaching methods and materials” (Asher 1994:740), but there is also a psycholinguistic aim to investigate “how languages are learnt and produced” (Asher 1994:740). In short, EA is “the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes and consequences of unsuccessful language” (James 1998:1). In this way we can say that CA — basically the notion of “transfer” (cf. Odlin 1989) — is included in EA in order to “explain actually observed features of learner language, not to predict what the learner might do” (Asher 1994:740). Fisiak (1981:7) sums it up neatly by saying that:

“Psychological and pedagogical, as well as other extralinguistic factors contribute to the formation of errors; therefore error analysis as part of applied linguistics cannot replace contrastive studies but only supplement them. Contrastive studies predict errors, error analysis verifies contrastive predictions, *a posteriori*, explaining deviations from the predictions.”

However, EA, in turn, was criticised for its focus on describing and analysing only what was wrong with learners’ language, i.e. the errors the learners made. Furthermore, it did not take “learner strategies” into account.³⁶ Yet another problem was the difficulty of reaching a consensus on what was to be regarded as an error.

According to James (1998:18), EA “was earmarked for obsolescence by the mid 1970s, and the theoretical ground was being cleared for the new IL [interlanguage] paradigm”. Criticisms came from all quarters, even from former advocates of EA, such as Corder (1971), who introduced the concept of ID, “idiosyncratic dialect”, resembling Nemser’s (1971) “approximative

³⁶ The term “learner strategies” is not synonymous to “learning strategies”, which denotes strategies the learner uses in order to facilitate the learning of a L2. Instead, “learner strategies” includes “learning strategies” as well as “communication strategies”, i.e. what means the learner uses in order to communicate a certain message. See e.g. Tarone (1980), Ellis (1994:396-403,529-559), Cook (1993:Ch. 6), Larsen-Freeman & Long (1991:199-203,212-215), Yule & Tarone (1997) and Kasper & Kellerman (1997).

systems” and Selinker’s (1972) “interlanguage” (IL). The IL concept is described in Larsen-Freeman & Long (1991:60) as “a continuum between L1 and L2 along which all learners traverse”. However, not all language researchers “converted” to these new ideas. Some, especially in Europe, continued to work within the EA framework (cf. Zydatiss 1974, Abbott 1980). Others suggested extended IL theories, considering both errors and non-errors in L2 learners’ output, so that today there is also performance analysis (PA), transfer analysis (TA), discourse analysis (DA), and studies in learner strategies and other IL areas. As Ringbom (1994:740) puts it :

“In the study of language, the originally contrastive approach to the problems of L2 learning joined forces with SLA research in general, and in the 1990s it is hardly possible to distinguish interlanguage studies from other types of SLA research. The main focus of interlanguage studies has been on the development of learner language, the strategies used by the learner, the systematic variation of learner language, and transfer analysis. Of these, transfer analysis has the closest connection with contrastive studies.”

Today there are thus a wide variety of approaches in L2 research, many of which are combinations of old and new ideas. The important point is that, so far, there is no one universal theory to answer all the questions about learner language. An eclectic approach therefore seems justified, drawing on ideas from different theoretical orientations. This is also the position taken in the present study, where, in particular, both CA and EA are employed.

2.4 Previous studies in relation to errors

A great deal of the previous work done in error analysis seems to have concentrated on oral material and translations, and “many of the early studies deliberately focused on learners in natural settings” (Ellis 1994:2) rather than on formal (instructed) learning. When the focus was extended from mainly covering L1 acquisition to include L2 acquisition, much work was carried out by ESL/EFL³⁷ teachers and the studies often focused on teaching methods and the organization of syllabuses (Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991, James 1998). In the 1960s many researchers’ attention shifted from the teaching process towards the learning process. Larsen-Freeman & Long (1991:5) note that there are very few studies in SLA from the early 1960s but between the

³⁷ These abbreviations stand for English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

mid 1960s and 1978 “scores of studies” appeared, so the shift in interest broadened the scope of research in the field.

EA studies generally focus on one or a few features, e.g. negation and interrogatives (e.g. Ravem 1968, Cancino *et al.* 1978), word order (e.g. Carlbom 1973, Dorgeloh 1997) or articles (e.g. Sajavaara 1983a). Many of the early studies were carried out in a host environment, e.g. English as a L2 was studied from an immigrant perspective in the USA which is completely different to the present study. Many of the early studies are longitudinal, following one or two children and their language development, while others are cross-sectional, like the present one, with larger groups of subjects. In general, however, they are all concerned with speech and communicative functions from various aspects rather than with written proficiency in compositions and essays.

In the 1970s several studies of learner language focused on Swedish (L1) – English (L2) were carried out in Sweden. Most of these, too, concentrated on one specific grammatical feature, such as word order (Carlbom 1973), passive verb formation (Olsson 1974), or tense, aspect and modality (Edström 1973). The former two used translations or cloze tests to elicit the data, whereas the latter used both translations and compositions. Stenström (1975) analysed and explained errors in Swedish teacher trainees’ English written material. Some researchers used native speakers to test the intelligibility and error gravity of both oral and written material (Olsson 1977, Johansson 1978), whereas others, looked at the overall types and frequency of errors in free compositions (Hermerén 1979). In the 1980s, studies in more specific grammatical areas include, e.g., Thagg-Fisher (1985) investigating concord errors, and Bergström’s (1987) study on grammatical correctness of the verb phrase. More recently, Ruin (1996) investigated adult advanced learners’ grammar in compositions and translations to find out whether grammar instruction is useful or not. In Källkvist (1999) “lexical infelicities” and errors involving nouns, verbs and adjectives in written material are investigated. These studies are all based on subjects generally older than the ones in the present study.

Outside Sweden there is a wealth of studies over the years, on L2 acquisition. Only a small selection, relevant to the present work, will be mentioned here. The late 1960s and the early 1970s offer studies on written material e.g. by Arabski (1968), Duskova (1969), Grauberg (1971), George (1972), Bhatia (1974), Taylor (1975), Tran-Chi-Chau (1975) and Palmberg (1977). In these, the L1 varies from Polish and Czech to Hindi, Finnish (and Finnish-Swedish) and Spanish and Portuguese in Latin-America to a mixed bag of languages in George (1972). However, in all of them the L2 is English. In Grauberg (1971) and Tran-Chi-Chau (1975), on the other hand,

the L1 is English and the L2 is German and Spanish, respectively. They all investigate errors in written material, both compositions and translations. Studies based on oral material from this period include, e.g., Politzer & Ramirez (1973) and Dulay & Burt (1973). During the late 1970s studies by, e.g., LoCoco (1975), Granfors & Palmberg (1976), Palmberg (1977), Mukattash (1978) and Arabski (1979) were carried out, all looking at error types in general. These studies are mainly based on adult learners of English. Some interesting works from the 1980s comparable to the present study are Steinbach's (1981) and Lott's (1983) studies on written translations and exams. Flick (1980) and Sheen (1988), although based on oral data, may also be mentioned. All of them have English as L2.

Over the years several large-scale projects have been carried out in order to study language proficiency of young L2 learners in Swedish comprehensive schools. The aim of one of these, the GUME project introduced in the 1970s (Balke-Aurell & Lindblad 1980), was to investigate "the increase in command of vocabulary and of basic grammatical structures in English" from grade 5 (11-year-olds) to the third year of the upper secondary level (older than 18) by means of vocabulary tests and a grammar test.

The NORDWRITE project started in 1986 and is a joint venture between four Nordic countries. This project deals with written interlanguage, and the aim is "to describe developing coherence in English FL essays from grade 8 to university level and ultimately to suggest strategies for the teaching of writing in English as a foreign language" (Albrechtsen *et al.* 1991:79-80). In 1989, national assessment programmes were launched in Sweden. As pointed out earlier, NU92 and UG95, both parts of such programmes, and from which the corpus used in this study was sampled, cover both oral and written material. Reports from these programmes have appeared in Oscarson (1993, 1995), Miliander (1995) and Dahlgren & Leoj (1997). There is also the so-called STRIMS³⁸ report (Ahlström *et al.* 1997, Malmberg *et al.* 2000), dealing with learning strategies when learning English, French, German or Spanish in the Swedish comprehensive school. The part dealing with English covers grades 4-9 and it concentrates on oral competence and listening comprehension, which corresponds well with the emphasis put on oral proficiency in Swedish comprehensive school L2 teaching.³⁹

³⁸ STRIMS stands for "Strategier vid inläring av moderna språk" (Strategies used in learning modern languages).

³⁹ See *Lgr80*, Malmberg (1985), Lindblad (1982)

“To Err Is Human”

Many investigations mentioned above will be referred to in Part II and also in Part III, where a comparison with the present material is given in Chapter 19. However, the results in these and other studies have not given any clear-cut answers as to how languages are really learnt or why errors occur. This points to the intricacies of language learning and it also indicates the importance of further research in the field. This study is another step on the way to examining the linguistic ability in L2 learners.

PART TWO: GRAMMATICAL DESCRIPTION OF ERRORS

“My grams is very so good, so if I win a trip to Britian, maybe I stay in Britian and go to school there.” (S 1393)

3 Descriptive framework

3.1 Terminology

As mentioned in section 1.4, the errors are classified into grammatical categories on a word class basis, with the addition of separate chapters on word order and concord errors. The chapters are then divided into sections and subsections depending on what errors have actually been found in the material, i.e. the errors are further classified.

Errors are discussed at two levels: as functional errors at the “category” level, and as executional errors at the “realisation” level. Thus, the categorisation of errors is carried out in two steps according to whether (1) the correct grammatical category was chosen, and, (2) the correct form was chosen to realise that category. Failure in the first step results in *category errors* (e.g. using the simple past tense for the present perfect, *saw* for *have seen*), and failure in the second step gives rise to *realisation errors* (e.g. erroneous realisation of the present perfect, **have seed* for *have seen*).

As is evident from all grammatical descriptions, whether scholarly or pedagogical, grammatical categories appear at many different levels. A “main category” such as Noun or Verb has several “subcategories”, e.g. number, genitive, tense, aspect and transitivity. The rendering of these grammatical categories can result in realisation errors due to there being a choice between e.g. regular and irregular forms (plural of nouns; past tense of verbs) or several allomorphs for one category (indefinite article *a/an*), or when two (or more) parts forming complex structures, such as the perfect tenses or the progressive aspect, i.e. combinations of auxiliary+main verb, are involved.

Before a classification can be made, several steps have to be gone through. The procedure consists in making several choices by asking a number of questions, as illustrated in Figure 3.1.i. As indicated in the figure, both category and realisation errors can be of three different types of operation: substitution (s), addition (a) and omission (o). These are briefly exemplified below.

Category substitution (cs), means that an item representing a certain grammatical category, required in a specific context, is replaced by an item representing another category which is wrong in that given context. Using the simple past tense instead of the simple present, as in **Now I lived* in X [live] is a typical example of this error category. Furthermore, instances like **She sings beautiful*. [beautifully] and *... in *an age of*... [/at/ the age of] are also examples of substitution where an adjective replaces an adverb and the indefinite article appears instead of the definite article.

Category addition (ca), means that a linguistic element representing a specific grammatical category is erroneously added to a correct grammatical category, very often resulting in a “doublet”, as in **I don’t can*..., where the *do*-construction, which is regarded as a grammatical category, is incorrectly added to a negated auxiliary, or in **I could might go*..., where two modals are used. Another clear example of category addition is exemplified by **I want to learn me*... [I want to learn], where the personal object is incorrectly added to a non-reflexive verb. Since there are reflexive verbs that do require a pronoun and this is considered a grammatical category, the example given is regarded as a category error. The error is categorised as an incorrect addition to the correct structure, i.e. instances like **I don’t can*... are found under modal structures, with an added auxiliary *do*.

In the third type, *category omission (co)*, a necessary grammatical category is omitted from a construction or phrase which does not clearly indicate what form is intended. This can be omission of prop *it*, as in **I take ø that you* .. [take it that], or of the singular genitive marker, as in **My Grandmother famely*... and it also includes leaving out a necessary adjective as in **I am 16 years ø* [old]. Note that cases where, e.g., a noun or a verb is omitted, as in **My ø is blue* [car] and **I ø to Britain every year*[go], are not included. This also holds for omission of pronouns as in *...*it would be great if ø could live together with*... [I].⁴⁰ These and similar cases are debatable but it is likely that they are mere slips. However, in cases where L1 (Swedish) and L2 (English) usage and grammar differ, the cases of omission are included as possible examples of linguistic errors. When there are special problems, as with the copula *be*, these are discussed in the introductory sections to each chapter in Part II.

With *realisation substitution (rs)*, the correct category is chosen and somehow indicated, but it is erroneously rendered. In such cases, the writer shows that s/he knows what grammatical category to use but is not capable of

⁴⁰ In some languages this is a possible structure, but not in English or Swedish. In doubtful cases I have checked the corpus to see whether the underlying L1 is Swedish or another language since this could help in deciding whether or not to regard an example as an error or a possible slip.

using the correct form. The correct grammatical forms — e.g. the future *will* construction, the past tense or the comparative form — are indicated but parts of them have been replaced by another, incorrect form. Examples of this error type are e.g. **I will drove...*, where the infinitive *drive* in the “future tense” construction is replaced by a past form; the use of a regular past form, as in **geted*, for the irregular form *got*; the regular comparative form instead of the irregular one in a case like **gooder*; or the wrong allomorph of the indefinite article, as in **a older sister*. In all of these examples the forms are regarded and classified as incorrect realisations of correctly chosen grammatical categories.

In cases of *realisation addition (ra)*, an unnecessary linguistic element is added to an indicated and otherwise correct category, sometimes creating “double forms”, as in **childrens* or **I was borned...* (addition of regular *-ed* to an irregular verb form). Another example is **more gooder*, where two comparative forms appear together. In cases like these, the correct grammatical form is indicated — the plural, the participle and the comparative — but a second variant form is added to it. In this study, this is not regarded as doubling of grammatical categories since regular and irregular variants are here regarded as different ways of realising the same grammatical category.

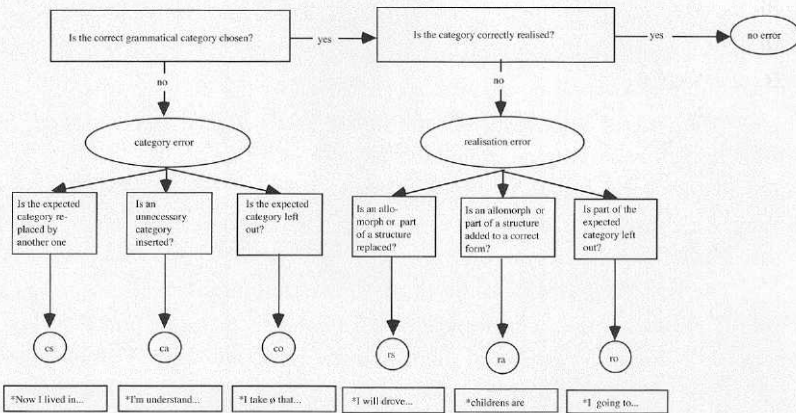


Figure 3.1.i The procedure of classification

The third type is *realisation omission (ro)*, where a necessary linguistic element is omitted from an otherwise (partly) correct form. This applies particularly to complex constructions, e.g., the progressive form and the perfective aspect, as in **I \emptyset going to X* and **I have \emptyset to London*. In such

examples, the intended correct category is indicated by *going* (the marker of the progressive) and *have* (the present perfective marker).

The difference between these types of error operation in category and realisation errors is that, with realisation errors, a marker of a certain required grammatical category is present but the correct realisation of the whole form fails.

3.2 Basic classification problems

Naturally it is sometimes difficult to decide whether an error should be seen as a case of substitution or addition/omission. However, this classification of error types is used more for practical descriptive purposes than to indicate theoretically subtle differences. Cases where there may be alternative ways of categorising a specific error are discussed in the introductions to each chapter, where further examples are also given. The distinction between category and realisation errors is more interesting, in that it shows whether the writer has actually grasped the underlying grammar or not. This is further discussed in section 13.1.

It may also be that certain error types can never occur with certain categories. A typical example of this is the zero article, which, in this study, is considered to be a grammatical category in itself, contrasting with the use of the definite and the indefinite articles. Thus, it is natural to categorise errors where another category is used instead of the zero form as a case of substitution rather than addition. An example of this is **...what I like to do in the life* [in life] where the zero article is replaced by the definite article.

Problems of classification can occur at all levels. For instance, how should errors involving nominalized adjectives be treated? Are they to be referred to as adjectival or nominal errors? Using nouns as an example, Figure 3.2.i illustrates different categories where problems can occur in the classification of errors in this study.

The first three boxes in the figure illustrate grammatical categories and possible subcategories, and they lead on to the error types and the type of operation involved. Very often there is more than one way of classifying an error, depending on whether a form is seen as a grammatical category or simply a variant way of realising such a category. There are some distinctions which are not clear-cut. For example, it is debatable how to regard the regular plural *-s* in a case like **I have a cars*. Is it an addition to the singular form or is it better seen as a case of substitution, where the singular is replaced by the plural? Choosing the latter type is more consistent with the idea that some zero forms are also categories, not merely empty spaces, to be filled or not.

Errors do not necessarily follow this pattern in all word classes but this gives a general picture of how the classification works. In some sections, where relevant, the classification hierarchy and, especially, the distinction between grammatical category and realisation of forms are illustrated in more detail for clarity.

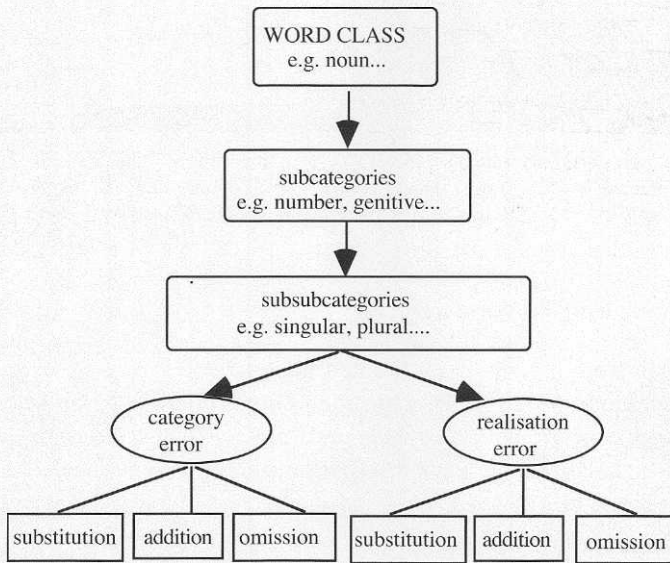


Figure 3.2.i Example of a classification hierarchy leading on to error types.

3.3 Brief overview of main results

On the basis of the classification described above the remainder of Part II describes the results of the study in detail. However, for the reader's benefit I will here include a brief overview of the main error areas according to the word class based system.

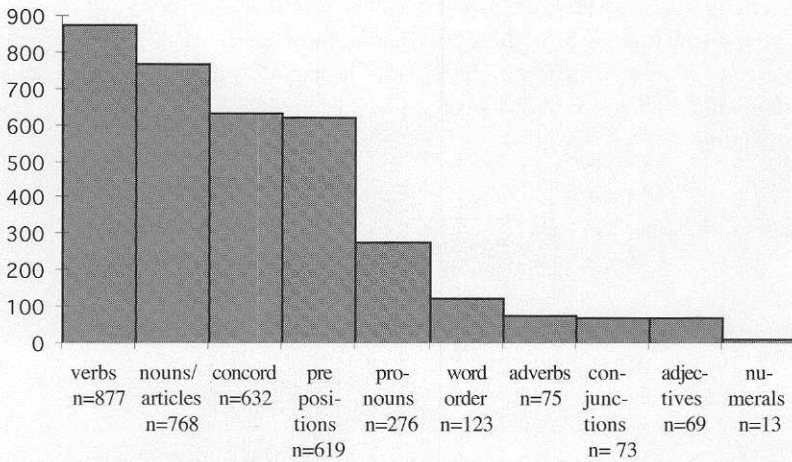


Figure 3.3.i Overview of the main error areas.

As is readily seen from Figure 3.3.i, verb and noun related errors are in an overwhelming majority, followed by preposition errors. Interrelated to these areas is, of course, concord, which, as mentioned previously, has been given a separate chapter. Each chapter has a brief introduction giving an overview of the type of errors to be discussed. This is also where problematic cases and exclusions, if any, are pointed out.

4 Nouns and articles

4.1 Introductory

In this chapter, a total of 768 errors are presented involving number, the articles and the genitive. The articles are included here since they are part of the noun phrase. There is also a section dealing with other errors concerning nouns, e.g. substitution or omission of a required noun as in **he is of average high or *the most important ø is to...* The count noun versus noncount noun distinction is not used as a major dividing line in the presentation of errors, nor is the distinction between common and proper nouns. However, reference to these subcategories is made wherever relevant.

Sometimes there are problems in the classification of noun errors. For instance, the use of the genitive -'s instead of the appropriate plural -s, as in **I've got two father's...* and **My hobbies are party's* is disregarded in this study. Such cases are seen as spelling errors and therefore, are not included (sections 1.5 and 4.4). Generally, as pointed out earlier, cases of omission of a noun, as in (31), are also excluded from the study, since this is considered to represent non-systematic and non-grammatical slip-ups (section 1.5), even though it may have a grammatical effect, i.e. the sentence becomes ungrammatical:

(31) My friends in ø are also very good. (S 5872)

Cases with unnecessary, and incorrect, repetition of a noun, as in (32), are also excluded.⁴¹

(32) ...and i Live in X and go in the school Y-skolan (S 3794)

However, cases like **The most important ø is to...[thing]* and **let the best ø win [man]* are included in the study. They are discussed in this chapter, because the noun is required, functioning as head of the adjective, is omitted. In the instances of this type included in this study, the noun cannot be left out.⁴²

⁴¹ Such errors occur with verbs, adjectives and the other word classes and are also considered slip-ups.

⁴² In Swedish grammars this is usually referred to as 'substantiverade adjektiv' ("nominalised adjectives") and they are generally placed in the adjective section. In this study, however, these cases are treated as noun errors since the noun that is omitted in the instances found is the obligatory head of the NP in English. Compare for instance Quirk *et al* (1985:424), Huddleston (1984:325ff), Ljung & Ohlander (1992:171) and Svartvik & Sager (1977:286ff).

Although some concord errors might involve incorrect forms of nouns, as in **I have many car*⁴³, such errors are discussed in Chapter 11 as problems in agreement between determiner and noun.

Word-formation is “an area in which grammar and lexicology share a common ground...” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:1517) and it is generally treated as a separate area in most school grammars. In this study, I have decided to exclude problems in the realisation of compounds (e.g. **ladyteam* for *ladies team/ladies’ team*), whereas errors leading to change of word classes (e.g. using **high* for *height* or *violent* for *violence*) are included.

There are some special noun-error problems that need to be discussed. First, a case like **I would like to go to museum* shows two possible error interpretations: *the /a museum* (article error) or *museums* (number error). In cases like this context and background knowledge of the instructions given are vital, but also native informants’ views on what is the most natural choice of “correction” (section 1.5).

4.2 Number

In Quirk *et al.* (1985:297) nouns are divided into three main number classes: (a) singular invariable nouns, (b) plural invariable nouns, and (c) variable nouns. In class (a) we find noncount nouns (*music, gold*), most proper nouns (*Thomas, the Thames*), some special singular nouns ending in *-s* (*news, aerobics, darts*), and, finally, “abstract adjective heads” (*the mystical*). Only the first type in class (a) is represented in my data. The second class, (b), includes nouns that occur only in the plural and “personal adjective heads” (*the rich*). Here, too, only the first type appears. In the third class, (c), we find nouns that occur in either the singular or the plural form (*dog/ dogs*). Most errors involving nouns are found in this group.

The singular and the plural are both grammatical categories realised in various ways, the former by count nouns having no marked form and by noncounts being invariable singular. Therefore, errors like **I have a cars* or **I have two car* are category errors (the plural used instead of the singular and vice versa), whereas **two mans* shows that the correct category, plural, was chosen but not the correct realisation. Although, in **I have a cars* the category plural (indicated by *-s*) has replaced the category singular this is an

⁴³ Here, the numeral does not agree with the singular form of the noun. When the noun form is determined by a preceding word/phrase, e.g. numeral+noun (*15 years*), non-agreement between these two items is categorised as a concord error rather than an error in number only (**15 year*). A typical example of number errors is **I like cars and motorcycle* whereas **I have two car* is a concord error. See chapter 10.

error in agreement between the determiner and the noun, whereas in **two mans* the wrong plural realisation has been chosen, i.e. a ‘proper’ number error.

The error pattern is illustrated in Table 4.2a (cf. also Figure 3.1.i) relating to how an error is classified into type of “operation”, i.e. substitution, addition or omission of items:

Table 4.2a Classification of number errors.

Error	Correct form	Error type	classification
<i>*homeworks</i> pl	<i>homework</i> sg	wrong category, pl [sg]	cat. subst.
<i>*peoples</i> pl	<i>people</i> pl	correct category, wrong realisation reg.pl [unmarked pl]	real. subst.
<i>*two sheeps</i> pl	<i>two sheep</i> pl	correct category, wrong realisation reg.pl [zero pl]	real. subst.
<i>*two corses</i> pl	<i>two cars</i> pl	correct category, wrong realisation ‘double pl’	real. add.
<i>*childrens</i> pl	<i>children</i> pl	correct category, wrong realisation ‘double pl’	real. add.

A total of 226 errors have been found involving number, accounted for in two subsections: the singular and the plural.

4.2.1 The singular

Under this heading I deal with errors relating to singular forms of count nouns (*cat*, *night*) and singular invariable nouns, i.e. noncount nouns (*homework*, *progress*). Singular invariable nouns have no plural form, with a few exceptions involving reclassification of concrete noncounts (*butter*) or some abstract noncounts (*regret*) into count nouns (*butters* [kind(s) of butter] and *regrets*) (see Quirk *et al.* 1985:298-299). In the material, the singular form is incorrectly rendered in 87 instances where a plural form occurs:

Table 4.2.1a The singular: category errors.

Category errors:			Realisation errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	substitution	addition	omission	
87 (100%)	0	0	0	0	0	87

As can be seen from Table 4.2.1a, there are only category errors occurring with the singular and all of the instances are cases of substitution. There are thus no realisation errors, due to the fact that normally a grammatical category has to be overtly indicated in some way in order to give rise to realisation problems. This does not apply to the singular, there being no specific singular marker; the singular is the unmarked form.

Out of the 87 errors, 65 (75%) involve count nouns where the singular is replaced by the plural. The remaining 22 instances (25%) relate to noncount nouns.

With the count nouns, a majority (n=50) appear in specific expressions, most of them (n=47) expressing age, as in (33). The remaining three instances involve one case, (34), which is structurally very similar to the type illustrated in (33), and the other two involve *most of the time* and *for example*, in (35) and (36):

- (33) I'm a fifteen years old boy who... [fifteen-year-old] (S 370)
- (34) It's a two doors red car. [two-door] (S 666)
- (35) Most of the times I'm happy, but I have my bad days... [the time] (S 2758)
- (36) ...and to talk about things that are important for young people today and tomorrow, for examples. [for example] (S 4937)

The remaining 15 instances where count nouns have been found occur in ordinary structures like (37) and (38):

- (37) they will have big chane to find jobs after universitues. [university] (S 4272)
- (38) I want go to the Festival of the Arts and Midland Canol tours. [tour] (S 1308)

From the context, and also from the instructions given to the test takers (see Appendix 1 and 2), it is clear that the singular is the required form in all these cases.

There are 22 instances where noncount nouns are replaced by the plural, 17 of them are common words like *homework*, *information* and *knowledge*, as in (39), (40) and (41):

- (39) In our school, we are not so good at homeworks and studing. [homework] (S 5223)
- (40) Also, living with English-talking people for a week, will certainly be a great development for my knowledges in the English language. [knowledge] (S 2897)
- (41) They are both working, my father with diffrent informations for school and my mother makes diving-suites. [information] (S 4081)

There are also six errors concerning nouns that are both noncount and count nouns due to reclassification (cf. above), i.e. they change meaning depending on which form is used, the singular or the plural. Only two nouns occur in this group: *art/s* and *work/s*. In this type of instances, exemplified in (42) and (43), context shows that only the noncount meaning is possible:

- (42) I write in a newspaper about music and arts. [art] (S 698)⁴⁴
- (43) ...is it quite hard to get a work, there are many people without works... [work] (S 5497)

To summarize, with the singular form there are only category errors. All of the errors are cases of substitution: the plural appears instead of the singular. Most problems involve count nouns but there are also errors with noncounts although such nouns are frequently provided in school grammars and, thus, are likely to be frequently practised. The majority of the errors occur with the expression *I'm a/n X-year-old boy/girl*.

4.2.2 The plural

This section deals with errors in regular plurals of all variant forms (cf. Quirk *et al.* 1985:297ff) and all types of irregular plural, except “foreign plurals” (e.g. Latin words) have been found. Only two types of the invariable plural nouns occur: pluralia tantum and the unmarked form. Table 4.2.2a shows the distribution of 139 errors found involving these plural forms:

⁴⁴ *Arts* could be interpreted as the intended form being rendered without the definite article. In that case, it would be classified as an article error. However, in this case the context shows that we are dealing with the noun referring to works of art. Therefore, this is classified as category substitution involving a noncount noun.

Table 4.2.2a The plural: category and realisation errors.

Category errors:			Realisation errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	substitution	addition	omission	
120 (86%)	0	0	13 (10%)	6 (4%)	0	139

There is a notable difference from the singular forms in 4.1: there are both category and realisation errors here, due to plural being a marked category.

A clear majority, 120 instances (86%) are category errors, and they are all cases of substitution. The remaining 14% are realisation errors, most of which are substitution errors (n=13) but also a few (n=6) cases of addition. The category errors consist in the singular form replacing the plural:

Table 4.2.2b Category errors: substitution. Singular form replacing three types of plural formation.

singular form used for:			total
regular plural	irregular plural	invariable plural	
118 (98%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	120

The regular plural is replaced by a singular form in 118 instances (98%). In the case of the irregular and the invariable plurals only one instance each has been found. These errors are all classified as category substitution (the singular used for the plural). All types of regular plural forms are replaced, as shown below:

- (44) My parent are divorst. [parents] (S 4554)
- (45) The spechell thing with me is that I can coock Swedish food for you, like meatballs with potato and bake warm, tasty bread. [potatoes] (S 94)
- (46) The second things are to help the people in other country. [countries] (S 5292)
- (47) I love Americanare most Biuck -58 and Cheva -59. [58's/58s etc] (S 2485)

The two remaining instances, in which an irregular and an invariable plural are replaced involve one case of mutation, in (48), and one case of pluralia tantum, in (49):

- (48) I want the jury to selekt me, becorse I want to go to London and I like English man and wommen wery much. [men] (S 1475)
- (49) I live with my parents and my sister in the outskort of a quite big town called X. [outsskirts] (S 2828)

The realisation errors are mainly cases of substitution. The 13 substitution cases appear with the unmarked plural noun *people*, as in (50) and (51):⁴⁵

- (50) If I can go there to meet peoples... [people] (S 3273)
 (51) The grown up peoples are destroying our future in our world. [people] (S 3917)

Finally, the six instances of realisation addition involve three types of irregular plurals. The regular plural *-s* is added three times to *-en* plurals, as in (52), and once to a mutation plural, in (53). The remaining two instances involve the zero plural, in (54) and (55):

- (52) I wan't to go because I Like to help people and Childrens. [children] (S 4064)
 (53) ... is an old tradision fore the Englishmens. [Englishmen] (S 2084)
 (54) It's blue and yellow and it's 36 horse powers and the top speed is... [horse power] (S 2988)
 (55) For example 2 horses, 2 cats, 5 sheeps and ... [sheep] (S 2515)

The results show that most errors (86%) are category errors involving the regular plural being replaced by the singular. Problems in realisation of the plural (14%) are most frequent with the unmarked noun *people*.

4.3 The articles

The definite and indefinite articles *the* and *a/n* are "the most common and typical central determiners" (Quirk *et al.* 1985:253). In this section, three types of articles are discussed: the definite, indefinite and zero articles. A total of 491 errors involving the articles have been found.

It should be noted that the zero article (as in *Ø Life is great*) is here treated as a grammatical category (cf. Quirk *et al.* 1985, Hasselgård *et al.* 1998). When another grammatical category "replaces" or is "replaced by" the zero article, the terms addition and omission could possibly also be used to describe the errors. In this study, however, in accordance with similar cases involving other error categories, e.g. tense substitution or adjectives replaced

⁴⁵ This is included as a grammatical error since *peoples* in the regular plural carries a different meaning from the one intended in this context. According to Mukattash (1978:264), these are "semantic/lexical rather than grammatical" errors. However, I have chosen to regard them as grammatical errors, not category but realisation errors, for reasons given in the text. It is also interesting to include them from the point of view of L1 transfer: in Swedish there are two separate words 'folk' (*people*, *-s*) and 'människor' in the plural (*people*, plural). See discussion in Chapter 15.

by adverbs, the term substitution is used, even though it is impossible to identify an omitted definite/indefinite article as being a case of deliberate use of the zero article or deliberate omission of the required article. This is further discussed and exemplified in section 4.3.3.

4.3.1 The definite article

The definite article can occur with count nouns in the singular and in the plural, as well as with noncounts in the singular. The main principle governing the use of the definite article is that it is used when it is assumed by the speaker/writer that the information given is already known to the hearer/reader.⁴⁶

A total of 132 errors involving the definite article have been found. Their distribution is shown in Table 4.3.1a.

Table 4.3.1a The definite article: category errors.

Category errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	
132 (100%)	0	0	132

Category errors of the substitution type are the only errors that occur involving the definite article. There are no errors of addition to the definite article in the material investigated, although this error type is theoretically possible (**the a car*, **the my car*, etc). Nor are there, technically, any cases of omission, due to the fact that, as mentioned in section 4.3, the zero article is considered a grammatical category contrasting with the definite and the indefinite articles. Thus, when a required definite article is not used, this not merely regarded as a case of omitting the article, but rather as replacing it (though perhaps not deliberately) with some other existing grammatical category which, in some cases, happens to be the zero article.

Furthermore, there are no realisation errors, since the definite article is not a complex form. Substitution of a part of the correct construction cannot occur because there is only one way of correctly rendering the form *the* in writing, although spelling errors are of course possible. Second, addition is theoretically possible by simply repeating the article, but this would most likely be a slip of the pen and such cases would be excluded from this study accordingly (section 1.5). Third, omission is also impossible since this type of

⁴⁶ For discussion, see e.g. Quirk *et al* (1985:265ff), Ljung & Ohlander (1992:37,44) and Svartvik & Sager (1996:159ff).

error automatically implies category substitution, because the definite article would then be replaced by the zero article, as already explained.

The definite article is replaced either by the zero article or the indefinite article. The proportional distribution of these two is illustrated in Table 4.3.1b.

Table 4.3.1b Category substitution. Other categories used to replace the definite article.

zero article	indefinite article	total
130 (99%)	2 (1%)	132

In the vast majority of category errors concerning substitution of the definite article the zero article is used instead. These cases can be divided into three types according to whether the following noun (or NP) has specific or generic reference, or is a proper name (or an abbreviation⁴⁷), as shown in Table 4.3.1c.

Table 4.3.1c Types of noun phrases in which the definite article is replaced by the zero article.

(a) NPs with specific reference	(b) proper names and abbreviations	(c) NPs with generic reference	Total
78 (58%)	33 (24%)	19 (18%)	130

As seen from Table 4.3.1c, most of the errors occur with nouns having *specific reference*, i.e. type (a) in Table 4.3.1c. In 31 of these 78 instances, the noun in question has either been given previously in the context, as in (56), or the element that follows the head determines the definite form, as in (57):

- (56) I likes to go to øMotorshow, becaus i'm very good on cars. [the] (S 4)
 (57) If I get the chance to go to Britian I would like to go on the festival of the arts and look at øWimbledon tennis finals. [the] (S 2497)

There are 20 cases similar to (56), where there is a singular head. In these the information is known due to it having been given already in the instruction to the assignment and/or through context provided earlier in the compositions. In (57) the specific tennis finals referred to are defined through premodification and this is the case for all of the 11 instances where there is a

⁴⁷ The term "abbreviation" includes what Crystal (1997:1) defines as "initialisms" (e.g. *TV, COD*) and "acronyms" (*NATO*).

plural head. “Fixed” constructions, account for another 26 instances of specific reference, comprising nouns postmodified by *of*-phrases, as in (58), expressions of the type “preposition + a season” as in (59), and noun phrases preceded by *all* as in (60):

- (58) Ø Festival of the arts seems to be fun to. [the Festival of] (S 1543)
(59) You see, in Ø autumn I will enter a special way of Senior High School - an Englishspeaking International three-year-studying branch,... [in the autumn] (S 244)
(60) We can not let older people make all Ø decisions for our future! [all the] (S 3898)

There are also 13 examples involving sporadic reference denoting “institutions” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:277), e.g. *I missed the bus this morning* and well-known social phenomena etc., as in (61) and (62). In this group, one instance with a noncount noun, *the cooking...*, is included (63):

- (61) ...we often go to Ø cinema, disco and some times we go... [the cinema] (S 1940)
(62) Either from peer pressure, films, Ø home, or even bullying. [the home] (S 4303)
(63) ...take care of my self and help with Ø cooking and things like that. [the cooking] (S 768)

The remaining eight errors occur with adjectives in combination with a noun, as in (64) and with superlatives, as in (65):

- (64) ...and that is Ø only time I have been in England to. [the only] (S 78)
(65) They are older than me so I’m Ø youngest in the family. [the youngest] (S 5105)

Group (b), displayed in Table 4.3.1c, consists of *proper names and abbreviations*. Out of the 33 instances found, 20 occur with non-personal proper names (including the Cup Final) and 13 involve abbreviations, as in the following examples:

- (66) ...and when I’m old enough I’m going to move to Ø USA. [the USA] (S 2619)
(67) I have already bin in Britain with a British family, on Ø Isle of Wight, the island was so beautiful. [the Isle of Wight] (S 1856)
(68) ...because I think that Ø UN is the best all over the world organisation. [the UN] (S 4083)

Substitution of the definite article having *generic reference*, type (c) in Table 4.3.1c, occurs in 19 instances. The majority of these instances (n=18) occur with certain nouns such as *future*, *arts*, *environment*, and (*fresh*) *air* in a generic sense.⁴⁸ Most of the instances are of the types found in (69) and (70) but there is also one case, (71), appearing with a nominalised adjective denoting a group of people:

- (69) I want to go to Britian becous I most go to the Festival of ø Arts. [the Arts] (S 953)
- (70) ...the most important subjects are: ø environment and jobs. [the environment] (S 4161)
- (71) An example of this is Greenpeace for ø young. [the young] (S 4306)

In the remaining instance of substitution, the indefinite article is employed instead. This occurs twice with the noncount noun *age*, as in (72):

- (72) In an age of 5 months i was adopted... [/at/ the] (S 2800)

To sum up, the most frequent error type concerning the definite article consists in replacing it with the zero article. A majority of the errors occur with count nouns (n=78) having specific reference.

4.3.2 The indefinite article

The indefinite form is used with count nouns in the singular mainly to introduce new and unfamiliar information⁴⁹ to a listener or reader, i.e. nouns with specific reference, as in the following correct examples from the material: *I am fifteen years old and I live in a suburb to X.* (S 241), and *I have a nice home with my own lovely room.* (S 491). It is also used to indicate generic reference as in "*A tiger can be dangerous*" (Quirk *et al.* 1985:265), or have a descriptive or classifying role: "*Madonna is an artist*".

There are two ways to realise the indefinite article: *a* or *an*. Therefore, errors involving a mix-up between these two allomorphs are classified as

⁴⁸ In this group of generic reference, instances of article omission with musical instruments as object of the verb *play*, as in **I play ø piano ...*(S 1134) are not included on the grounds that the article is sometimes left out in certain contexts, e.g. "*On this record Paul plays bass guitar as usual*" (Ljung & Ohlander 1992:46). Although Quirk *et al.* (1985:282) say that "names of musical instruments and also dances *usually* take the definite article" (emphasis added) and data from the Cobuild corpus show that using the article is three times as common as omitting it in writing and almost twice as common in the (few) instances found in spoken language, there is uncertainty in usage rules here.

⁴⁹ Cf. Quirk *et al.* (1985:272) and Ljung & Ohlander (1992:39).

realisation errors (substitution), not category errors. The grammatical category “indefinite article” is correctly chosen, but erroneously rendered, as in **I have an dog*. Cases where the indefinite article is the required form but is left out are here classified as category substitution involving the zero article (section 4.3.1)

In the material, category and realisation errors concerning the indefinite article are almost equally frequent, as can be seen from Table 4.3.2a:

Table 4.3.2a The indefinite article: category and realisation errors.

Category errors:			Realisation errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	substitution	addition	omission	
58 (48%)	1 (<1%)	0	63 (52%)	0	0	122

Category errors make up about half of the errors involving the indefinite article. Substitution of *a/an* occurs in all but one of these cases. Technically speaking, addition involves adding an item from any other grammatical category (**a the car*, **a one car*, **a my car*). Repeating the indefinite article as in **a a car* is more likely to be a slip than an error. However, there is one case of repetition, **a quite a big*, which is regarded as an error of addition because of the special construction involved. Category omission cannot appear since this is referred to as substitution.

The realisation errors are all substitution errors, consisting of a mix-up between the two forms *a* and *an*. Here, too, addition and omission are impossible. Both would fall into category errors, because adding an item to, or leaving out the indefinite article, creates a different grammatical category.

In most of the cases of category substitution the zero article appears instead, as seen from Table 4.3.2b:

Table 4.3.2b Category errors: substitution. Other categories used to replace the indefinite article.

Zero article for [a/an]	Definite article for [a/an]	Indefinite pronoun for a/an]	Numeral for [a/an]	Total
47 (81%)	5 (9%)	3 (5%)	3 (5%)	58

There are four types of category substitution: the erroneous use of the zero article, the definite article, an indefinite pronoun and the numeral *one* for the indefinite article. The first type is most common. It appears in 81% (n=47) of

the instances found; *a* being replaced in 45 of those cases and *an* twice, as in (73) and (74):

- (73) I live in South of Sweden in ø town called X. [a] (S 191)
 (74) ...and my mother jobs in ø old people school. [an] (S 3658)

Half of the 47 instances (n=23) are of the type where Swedish and English clearly differ, as in (75) and (76), whereas the other 23 instances occur in sentences where the article is required in both languages, as in (77) and (78). This is discussed in more detail in section 15.2.

- (75) When I grown up I wants to be ø photografe I think. [a] (S 74)
 (76) I like to drive ø tractor and mest of all I like to fix it. [a] (S 2674)
 (77) I would like to go because I'm ø excellent speaker and...[an] (S 4186)
 (78) I'm ø very positive girl... [a] (S 904)

The remaining 11 instances display three different replacements. In five instances (9%), the definite article is used instead of *a*, as in (79), and three times (5%) the cardinal numeral *one* appears, as in (80):

- (79) The krime have grown a lot in the fue yers and i think ...[a] (S 4594)
 (80) I like to drive motorbikes i have one Suzuki X4 125. [a] (S 2531)

In three instances (5%), an indefinite pronoun appears instead. In these cases, either *some*, *any* or *no* appears once each, as in (81), (82) and (83):

- (81) I don't sing or play some instrument. [an] (S 591)
 (82) The most attractive advertment that you're offering is, without no doubt, the Madonna-concert. [without a doubt] (S 2108)
 (83) On the downstaire we have a school for people that don't have any job. [a] (S 5781)

The only category addition case involves a mix of two expressions: *a quite* and *quite a*, in (84). Both positions of the indefinite article are possible, and correct, but one has to be deleted. Following the minimal correction principle (section 1.4), the second article is marked as the erroneous one:

- (84) I live with my mom and stepfather in a quite abig house ... [a quite big] (S 3331)

A total of 63 realisation errors have been found, all of them cases of substitution involving a mix-up between *a* and *an*, as Table 4.3.2c illustrates:

Table 4.3.2c Realisation errors: substitution. Mix-up of the indefinite article forms *a* and *an*.

<i>a</i> for [<i>an</i>]	<i>an</i> for [<i>a</i>]	Total
41 (65%)	22 (35%)	63

In the majority of cases *a* appears instead of *an*, as in (85) and (86), and in the remaining 22 instances *an* is used for *a*, in cases like (87) and (88):

- (85) I play the clarinette in a orchestra... [an orchestra] (S 1569)
(86) ... I m a old student in my school. [an old student] (S 4256)
(87) Bye Bye from an happy teenager. [a happy teenager] (S 1821)
(88) Ps. I will bee very glad if i get an free ticket. [a free ticket] (S 3408)

The incorrect use of *an* occurs mainly with nouns beginning with a consonant, as in (87) and (88) above. However, in two instances, (89) and (90), the following noun begins with a vowel in writing but with a consonant sound, which requires *a*:

- (89) ... best team Glasgoranger has an European cup match to play... [a European] (S 126)
(90) I don't want to work with an usual job like in a shop... [a usual job] (S 1323)

The majority of errors involving the indefinite article (63%) occur when the correct form is *a*. However, there is a difference between category and realisation errors. With the former type, *a* is involved in 96% of the instances recorded, whereas a majority of the realisation errors, 65%, involve *an*.

4.3.3 The zero article

The zero article is used mainly with generic reference with noncount nouns (*Life is short*) and count nouns in the plural (*Guns are dangerous*). It is also used in various special cases, e.g. with expressions concerning times and places (*at night, at school*).

A total of 237 errors have been found in the material concerning the zero article, all tabulated in 4.3.3a:

Table 4.3.3a The zero article: category errors.

Category errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	
237 (100%)	0	0	237

All instances are category errors, of the substitution type. Since, as already pointed out, the zero article is considered a grammatical category in this study, it is felt to be more appropriate to use the term category “substitution” rather than “addition” to describe cases where the zero article is replaced by items from other grammatical categories (e.g. other articles, as in **The life is great*), even though the form is rendered without an overt morphological form. This corresponds with the use of the term “zero article”, which in itself implies that, although there is “nothing” there, it has a grammatical function. Furthermore, for obvious reasons, there are no errors of omission since the zero article cannot be omitted (except psychologically, by “simplification”).

Since there is no overt form for the zero article, and consequently no allomorphs to render the form, no part can indicate the form. Thus, realisation errors cannot occur.

As Table 4.3.3b shows, the category errors are divided into two types of substitution: replacement of the zero article by either the definite or the indefinite article.

Table 4.3.3b Category errors: substitution. Other categories used to replace the zero article.

Definite article	Indefinite article	Total
219 (92%)	18 (8%)	237

An overwhelming majority of the cases involve using the definite article as a replacement. In the remaining cases the indefinite article appears instead.

The areas of noun function in which the zero article is incorrectly replaced by either of these two articles involve nouns with generic reference (e.g. *pollution*), nouns denoting human activity (e.g. *be at school*, *go to church*), proper nouns⁵⁰ (*England*, *Big Ben*), and a miscellaneous group including e.g. prepositional expressions of time, place and means of transport (e.g. *at night*, *in town*, *by bus*). The distribution of the 219 instances of

⁵⁰ This group includes one abbreviation: *the GBR.

incorrect use of the definite article over these types can be seen in Table 4.3.3c:

Table 4.3.3c Categories of nouns where the zero article is replaced by the definite article.

Nouns with generic reference	Nouns denoting human activity	Proper nouns	Miscellaneous expressions	Total
122 (55%)	37 (17%)	30 (14%)	30 (14%)	219

The majority of the errors where the definite article is incorrectly used involve the generic use of the zero article. The zero article can appear with both count nouns in the plural (*Cigarettes* are bad for your health) and noncount nouns (*Hydrogen* is lighter than *oxygen*). Out of the errors found, 3/5 involve noncount nouns, as in (91), (92), and (93). Both types of nouns having generic reference are found in (94):

- (91) I am a glad and positiv girl who loves the life. [life] (S 558)
 (92) I think that the rasism have trapt up. [rasism] (S 3152)
 (93) The unemployment is big in Sweden. [unemployment] (S 3787)
 (94) ...what we can do about the wars and the poverty in the future.
 [wars...poverty] (S 3418)

The second type involves nouns denoting what is referred to as “human activity” in Ljung & Ohlander (1992:48), where examples like *Dolly left school last year* and *Tom never goes to church* are used. In Quirk *et al* (1985:277) this type is discussed under the heading “some ‘institutions’ of human life and society”. This also includes expressions like *(be) at school*, *(go) to college* and *(go) to town*. In the material, 37 instances (17%) of this type have been found, as in (95) and (96):

- (95) I think the school is fun but it is a hard job. [school] (S 775)
 (96) I don’t like the school so very mutch, but we just most go in the school.
 [school] (S 5270)

An additional 30 instances (14%) appear with proper nouns of two kinds, namely geographical names (e.g. *England*, *London*) and names of buildings and institutions (e.g. *Big Ben*), as in (97), (98) and (99):

- (97) Iy tinks the England is wery beatiful. [England] (S 516)
 (98) It should also be interesting to se the Stonehenge. [Stonehenge] (S 1534)
 (99) ... and my sister want to see the Big Ben and the teater. [Big Ben] (S 745)

There are also 30 instances (14%) in a miscellaneous group including the structures *most/half of* (n=13), as in (100), expressions of time and place (n=10), as in (101) and (102), and a few various expressions (n=7), as in (103):

- (100) I have tried on a lot of sports but I have quit the most of them. (S 256)
 (101) About how she/he lives and what they do at the nighs. (S 180)
 (102) If the linkon school is big or smal and if its in the town or not. (S 2688)
 (103) Maybe; if I get the time off, I can go to "The Grand National" to watch horses. (S 228)

Another type of error is found in 18 instances where the indefinite article is employed instead of the zero article. A majority of these errors, 72%, occur with noncount nouns, as shown in Table 4.3.3d:

Table 4.3.3d Category errors: substitution. Categories of nouns where the zero article is replaced by the indefinite article.

Noncount nouns	Expressions	Total
13 (72%)	5 (28%)	18

Among the noncounts we find *weather* and *behaviour*, as in (104) and (105), but also *practice* and *unemployment*:

- (104) We have a very boring weather this time of year... (S 379)
 (105) Because I've got a great behaviour. (S 1901)

The remaining five instances involve the expressions *for example*, *by bus* and *be on holiday*, exemplified by (106):

- (106) I like to do everything watching tennis for an example. [for example] (S 734)

In a vast majority of errors concerning the zero article the definite article appears in its place. Noncounts (n=105) and count nouns (n= 99) are almost equally frequent in the errors, whereas proper nouns account for 30 of the instances. Most of the instances involve nouns with generic reference. This is also the case in the few instances where the zero article is replaced by the indefinite article. Thus, it seems the generic function is the most problematic one.

4.3.4 Summary of the articles

Problems with the articles have been found in 491 instances, mainly involving generic reference. In this study, most of the errors within this area, 49%, appear where the zero article is the required form. In general, it is replaced by the definite article and in a few cases by the indefinite article. The results in Mukattash (1978) show roughly the same figure, 52% involve the zero article, but in Sajavaara (1983a) the corresponding figure is 21%. In Figure 4.3.4.i the results in these three studies are compared:

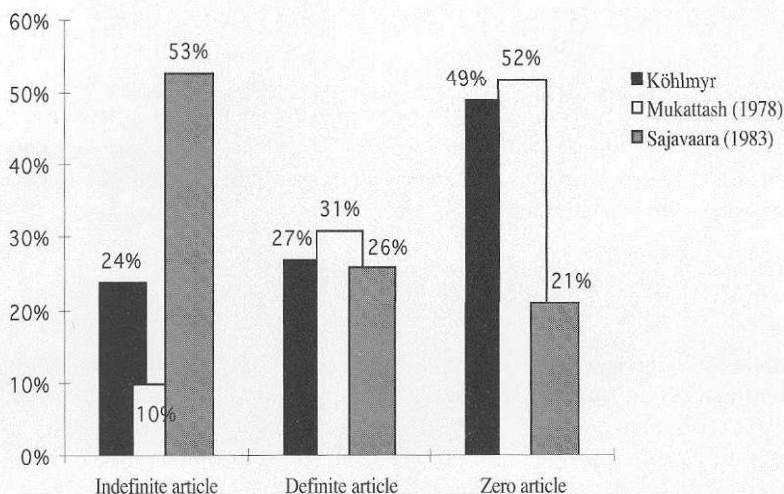


Figure 4.3.4.i Comparison between results involving article usage in Köhlmyr (present study), Mukattash (1978) and Sajavaara (1983a).

Problems with the definite article are almost equally frequent in the three studies. However, the replacements used for the definite article differ. Using the zero article instead of either of the other two accounts for 37% of the article errors in the present study, whereas Sajavaara (1983a:78) found that this type of error (referred to as “omission” of an article) makes up 85% of the instances and in Mukattash (1978:265) the figure is 36%. In both these studies, the zero article was more frequently used for the definite than for the indefinite article, contrary to the results here. The great difference in percentage between Sajavaara (1983) and the present study can probably be explained by two facts. First, Finnish has no articles whereas Swedish does,

and, second, in Sajavaara the participants are 9-year-olds and the author states that “the better pupils had problems with the definite article and the poorer pupils had difficulties in using the indefinite article” (1983a:77-78). The Swedish learners in the present study are seven years older and are thus probably closer to the “better” pupils in Sajavaara’s study.

The overall figures for each type of article show that, in the present study, errors relating to the zero article account for 49% of the instances and problems with the definite and the indefinite articles, 27% and 24%, respectively.

Out of the errors found, 48% occur with singular count nouns. Here the tendency is to use the zero article for the definite article and for the indefinite article rather than the reverse. With plural count nouns, involved in 14% of the errors, the use of the definite article for the zero article is slightly more frequent than vice versa, and with noncounts, making up 25%, the definite article generally replaces the zero article. Errors involving proper nouns (names and abbreviations) account for 13% of the problems and they consist in using the zero article instead of the correct definite article (*the USA, the UN, etc.*).

4.4 The genitive

In this study the traditional terms “genitive ‘s” and “*of*-construction” are used when discussing the genitive. This terminology is also used by Quirk *et al.* (1985:318ff) and Ljung & Ohlander (1992:62ff).⁵¹ The genitive can have several different functions, the most common being the possessive (*Jane’s car, the girl’s hair*), where it expresses “possession”.⁵²

This section consists only of errors involving the genitive singular realised by ‘s or (in one case) the *of*-construction. Cases like **It’s my sisters birthday...*(S 748) and *My parents names are N and N* (S 18) are excluded, since omission of the apostrophe is considered an orthographic rather than a strictly grammatical error in this study. This is in accordance with the

⁵¹ Some grammarians prefer the term “possessive ‘s” to “genitive ‘s” or “genitive case”. Quirk *et al.* are aware of problems with the case distinction in present-day English, but nevertheless use the latter terms. partly because ‘possessive’ “does not adequately apply to all uses” (p. 319) of the genitive form/s. In Crystal (1997) there is no mention of “possessive ‘s”. Instead we find the genitive case discussed under ‘genitive’ (p. 167). Cf. also Huddleston (1984:46, 268), Hurford (1994:82) and Swan (1995:440).

⁵² There are eight different functions/meanings including the “possessive genitive” discussed in Quirk *et al.* (1985:321-322): subjective and objective genitive, genitive of origin, descriptive genitive, genitive of measure and of attribute, and partitive genitive. These are collapsed into five functions in Ljung & Ohlander (1992:64-65).

“written speech” perspective noted earlier (section 1.5). Obviously, omission of the apostrophe would not be noted in the spoken language.

There is no separate subsection on the *of*-construction since, in the few incorrect cases found, both constructions are possible.⁵³ Only one case occurs in which the *of*-construction is clearly intended. This is seen as a case of realisation substitution and it is dealt with in that category.

Four genitive functions have been found concerning the genitive singular: the possessive (*John’s house*), the local (*the dentist’s*) and the descriptive genitive (*a woman’s dress*), as well as the genitive of measure (*an hour’s leave*).⁵⁴ Table 4.4a gives the distribution of the 24 errors found in category and realisation errors:

Table 4.4a The genitive singular: category and realisation errors.

Category errors:			Realisation errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	substitution	addition	omission	
0	0	23 (96%)	1 (4%)	0	0	24

The majority of errors are category errors, all of them cases of omission. No category substitution or addition occurs. In principle, a case of category substitution would appear as **my mothers name*, which is identical to misspelling since the ‘s genitive is regarded as grammatical spelling (section 4.4). Category addition could be any grammatical category added to the genitive form. Only one case of realisation substitution has been found.

The 23 category errors can be referred to four types of genitive functions, the most prominent of them being the possessive genitive (n=14), as in (107), (108) and (109):

- (107) My Grandmother famely commes from there... [grandmother’s] (S 123)
 (108) I whod like to go on Madonna consert and the festival of the arts.
 [Madonna’s] (S 3106)
 (109) My father name is N and he Jobs in a bank. [father’s] (S 6006)

In (108) the correct form could also be /*go to/ the Madonna concert*, whereas *a Madonna concert* is less suitable since there is a specific concert mentioned in the instructions. I have chosen to regard the inflectional ‘s genitive as

⁵³ Had there been any cases of the type *the car’s wheels*, where there is an inanimate owner + ‘s genitive, this would have been considered acceptable and thus excluded from the error corpus.

⁵⁴ These terms, all from Quirk *et al* (1985:321-322, 329-330), will be used in descriptions of the genitive functions throughout this section.

easier for learners at this stage, which is the sole reason for including the error here and not among the definite article errors.

The second largest group is the local genitive (n=6), involving “expressions relating to premises or establishments” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:329), as in (110) and (111):

- (110) But wen I am in Britain I like to go to Madame Tusso to. [Tussaud’s]
(S 2142)
- (111) And what you all (,well at least I) have recently about the terrible transports of animals going to the boucher. [butcher’s] (S 4383)

There are also examples of the descriptive genitive (n=2), as in (112) and the genitive of measure (n=1), occurring with a temporal noun, in (113):

- (112) ... and my mother jobs in old people school. [old people’s] (S 3658)
- (113) In this year snowmobile season I has been driving about 500 km. [this year’s]
(S 2989)

The only realisation error appears as a case of substitution found in (114), where the *of*-construction is erroneously realised with *to*:

- (114) ...I have a horse and the brother to my horse... (S 510)

4.5 Miscellaneous errors involving nouns

This subsection deals with cases of substitution and omission of the noun itself (**The most important ø in my life is ...*). Normally, omission of a noun would be considered a slip and therefore not be included in the study. However, these cases involve a specific grammatical context, where the noun is the head of an NP. Furthermore, they are typical examples of differences between Swedish and English usage where the noun is obligatory in English (section 15.10). There are also cases where the noun is replaced by a lexical item from another grammatical category.

In the material, 27 such errors have been found, 18 of which concern omission of the noun. The errors are all category errors, as shown in Table 4.5a:

Table 4.5a Miscellaneous noun errors: category errors.

Category errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	
9 (33%)	0	18 (67%)	27

The majority of the category errors, 67%, occur as omission and the remaining 33% are instances of substitution. Theoretically speaking, addition of a noun could occur, but there are no such cases in the material investigated. Furthermore, no realisation errors have been found.

The 33% (n=9) of the category errors where substitution occurs are all of the same type involving a word-class shift. Instead of the noun an adjective is used. In this study I have chosen not to treat these as lexical errors since the error involves replacing one grammatical category with another. In four of the instances *Swedish* replaces *Swede*, as in (115), and twice the invented form **interestings* (related to the adjective) is used for *interests*, as in (116):

(115) Of course a swedish shall win. (S 2498)

(116) My interestings are football and Tennis. (S 1614)

The remaining three instances include *English* being used for *England*, *high* for *height*, and *violent* for *violence*.

The 18 cases of category omission are more systematic errors than the previous ones. Out of these cases a majority (n=15) are instances where a required noun is omitted after the adjective *important*⁵⁵ in phrases like (117) and (118):

(117) The most important \emptyset to talk about is helping people... (S 4591)

(118) I think the important \emptyset we most speak about is...(S 4706)

The other three cases include one more omission of *thing*, in *the last thing I wrote...* and *man* in the expression *let the best man win*, as well as leaving out the noun when describing what form or year the learner is in, as in (119):

(119) When I quit the 9th \emptyset i go to gynasium here in X. (S 4656)

These errors are closely connected to Swedish usage, where the noun is not required, and they will be further discussed in Chapter 15.

⁵⁵ Similar errors, e.g. omitting *old* (in **I'm 15 years \emptyset .*) or *one* (in *I want to borrow \emptyset and ride on the big hills...*) are discussed in the sections on adjectives (6.1) and pronouns (7.9), respectively.

All of these errors are category errors, mostly cases of omission of the noun. In general they occur in a specific type of construction, mainly *the most important /thing/*.

4.6 Summary of noun and article errors

In this chapter, a total of 768 errors involving nouns and articles have been discussed. The most frequent error type concerns the articles, accounting for 64% of the errors, followed by problems related to number distinction, which make up 29%. The overall results are displayed in Figure 4.6.i:

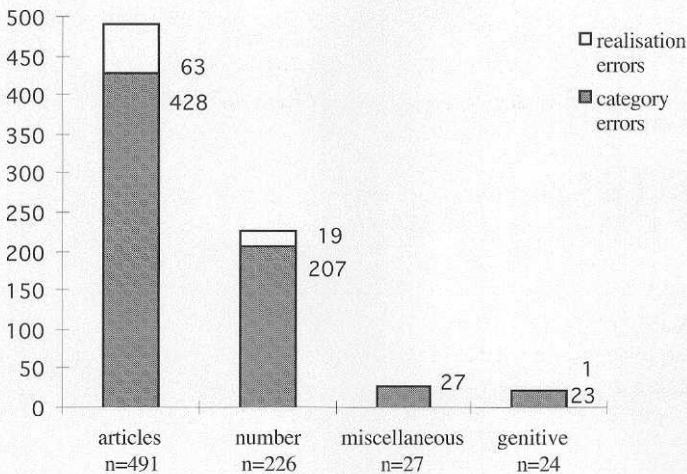


Figure 4.6.i Total number of errors involving nouns and articles as distributed over the main areas and over category and realisation errors.

Clearly, category errors (90%) dominate in all four sections. This is not particularly surprising, considering the relatively few grammatical possibilities for making realisation errors: only the indefinite article has allomorphs, *a/an*, which can cause problems; with the plural there are several ways of rendering the form; using the wrong preposition in an *of*-genitive construction may also be seen as a realisation error.

The majority of article errors involve the zero article. In view of the differences between L1 and L2 in this area, this is largely predictable (Part III). More surprisingly, there are also problems concerning number. Here, using the plural, being the marked form, creates most errors. In particular

regular plurals are most frequently replaced by a singular form, making up 58% of all the errors in this area. Distinctions involving, e.g., regular versus irregular plurals, which would be more obviously confusing, are not as frequent although they do occur. Not using the *-s* genitive is another common error, albeit not nearly as frequent as errors in articles and number.

The remaining noun errors are mainly omissions of a necessary noun head in certain adjectival expressions, again signalling differences between the two languages (Ch. 14.4).

5 Verbs

5.1 Introductory

This chapter covers errors occurring with main verbs as well as auxiliary verbs and errors involving verb complementation and nonfinite constructions, here referred to as VP errors.

As mentioned earlier (Ch. 3), all concord errors are discussed separately in Chapter 11. Furthermore, in accordance with the discussion in section 1.5, spelling mistakes are not counted as grammatical errors. Such misspellings are, for instance, confusion of homophones (*by* for *buy*, *no* for *know*), violations of spelling rules (**tryed* for *tried*, **planed* for *planned*), idiosyncratic interpretations of L2 spelling (*could* for *called*) and 'phonetic' spelling of the past participle (**dreamd* for *dreamed*).

Lexical errors of the type *can* for *know*, as in *I can also finnish* (S 1499) and *will* for *want to* are also excluded from the investigation. However, there are cases where specific problems arise. For example, in instances where *learn* is used for *teach* there is a twofold problem. On the one hand, it is a lexical error, as in examples (120) and (121):

- (120) And of course they can learn me what they think we should do to help. (S 3317)
(121) When he is three years old i will learn him how to snowboard. (S 48)

In both these cases *learn* is used instead of *teach*, seen as a lexical error in this study, most likely due to the Swedish equivalent 'lära' which covers both *learn* and *teach*. On the other hand, errors of the kind shown in (122) are counted as grammatical errors since the verb *learn* takes no pronoun as an object in English:

- (122) And I want to lern me more and better english than I can now. (S 522)

Here, then, *learn* is not a substitution for *teach*. This type of error is discussed in section 5.7 on verb complementation.

Omission of a verb is generally treated as a slip-up, as in **I \emptyset in X* for *I live in X*. Verbs that are incorrectly repeated, as in **I want want to England becorse i will see...* (S 1986) and **The most important thing with this meeting is, I think is to meet ...* (S 4497), are also considered to be mere slip-ups.

However, if the auxiliary in a more complex verb structure, e.g. the perfective or the future constructions, as in **I \emptyset been...* or **Tomorrow, I \emptyset go to...*, is left out, this is considered an error of category substitution. However,

if the auxiliary in the progressive construction is left out, as in **I ø talking*, this is regarded as realisation omission. Cases where the copula is left out, as in **I ø very happy* or **I'd ø very happy* are also included as errors of omission.⁵⁶

Contracted forms are frequently used in the compositions. In this type of written material, and at this level, it is not considered (stylistically and grammatically) wrong to use such forms, especially since contracted forms are generally "favoured in informal style" (Quirk *et al.* 1985:123). Furthermore, these forms are taught to learners of English from a very early stage in Sweden as part of the focus on informal spoken language. However, although there are a striking number of problems with these forms, such errors are not included in the present study.

All in all, 877 errors involving verbs have been found, not counting concord errors. These verb errors have been divided into main sections on time and tense, aspect, auxiliaries, voice, nonfiniteness and transitivity, as follows from Table 5.1a:

Table 5.1a Main types of areas involving verb errors.

Time and tense	Progressive aspect	Auxiliary <i>do</i>	Modal auxiliaries	Passive voice	Non-finiteness	Transitivity	Total
516 (59%)	8 (>1%)	19 (2%)	102 (12%)	14 (2%)	185 (21%)	33 (4%)	877

The order of presentation in Table 5.1a is also the order in which the sections are presented in the study. Most errors concern problems involving time and tense, 59% (n=516), and nonfiniteness, 21% (n=185), followed by modal auxiliaries, 12% (n=102). Aspect, auxiliary *do*, and the passive voice make up the remaining 4% (n=33) of the errors.

5.2 Time and tense

Under this heading, errors involving choice of tense or expression of time in the active voice, as well as the actual realisation of the relevant categories, are discussed. The passive voice is treated separately in section 5.6. The section is divided into three parts, discussing the present as well as different expressions of past and future time, respectively. Here "the present" refers to

⁵⁶ Although there are languages where this structure is grammatically correct (cf. Swan & Smith 1987, Jung & Ohlander 1992), in English it is not.

the simple present tense only, the progressive aspect being dealt with separately in section 5.3. Expressions of past time include the simple past, the present perfect and the past perfect. Several grammarians treat the perfect constructions under the heading “aspect” or “phase” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:189-197, Huddleston 1984:158-164, Palmer 1988:46-53), although they seem to agree that there are close links between tense and aspect (Quirk *et al.* 1985:189-190, Huddleston 1984:143). In Quirk *et al.* (1985:189), it is mentioned that “[b]ecause of the close connection between the perfective construction and time, the perfective is commonly termed the ‘perfective tense’ (or ‘perfect tense’)”. In this study they are simply referred to as the present perfect and the past perfect, respectively.

It is often said that in English, there is no future tense proper, although there are several means of expressing future time, the most frequent being the use of the modal auxiliary construction with *will* — in some dialects, *shall* with a first person subject only (Quirk *et al.* 1985:213) — and the infinitive form, as in *He will be back shortly*. Other ways to express futurity are *be going to* + infinitive, the present progressive form, the simple present, *will/shall* + progressive infinitive, and *be to* + infinitive. In this study, what is regarded as the future is expressed only by the *will/shall* + infinitive and the *be going to* construction. For practical reasons the first of these, the *will/shall* + infinitive construction, is henceforth referred to as the “future tense”.⁵⁷

The distinction between category and realisation errors for verb errors relating to time and tense will be clarified and exemplified in the different sections.

5.2.1 The simple present

There are three main meanings, or functions, of the simple present tense referring to present time: the “state present”, the “habitual present” and the “instantaneous present”.⁵⁸ The first two are the most frequent types found in the corpus used for this study. The simple present can also be used to refer to the past (the so-called “historic present”) and the future. For obvious reasons this is generally the first tense Swedish beginners, as well as others, are taught, and so it is remarkable that there are so many errors concerning the

⁵⁷ Some grammarians prefer the term “expressions of future time” to “future tense” (Quirk *et al.* 1985 and Crystal, 1997). However, I use the term “future tense” to denote the future construction with *will* + infinitive only, and all the other possible forms are simply other ways of “expressing future time”. See Quirk *et al.* (1985:213-219), Leech (1971:51-65), Huddleston (1984 Ch. 4 *passim*), and Palmer (1988:37-38) for a detailed discussion of this.

⁵⁸ See Quirk *et al.* (1985:179-183) for examples and a detailed discussion of the uses of the present tense.

simple present in free production at this level (i.e. not including concord as explained earlier). However, it is also the tense most commonly used, so from this point of view, errors should be expected.

There are 312 errors involving the simple present apart from concord errors. These are distributed between category and realisation errors as follows from Table 5.2.1a:

Table 5.2.1a Simple present tense: category and realisation errors.

Category errors:			Realisation errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	substitution	addition	omission	
221 (71%)	23 (7%)	36 (12%)	0	0	32 (10%)	312

As can be seen, the vast majority of errors concerning the present tense (n=280) are category errors. In sentences where the simple present is the expected correct form, it is replaced by another tense or construction in 71% of the instances, and in 12% of the cases, the verb is omitted altogether. There are also 7% cases of addition. The remaining 10% of the errors are realisation errors of omission.

Grammatical errors in the data dealing with the realisation of the simple present form of the type **I calls* for *I call*, or **he call* for *he calls*, fall under subject-verb concord, and are consequently dealt with in Chapter 11. Mistakes of the type **He calles* are considered mere spelling mistakes. Other errors concerning the spelling rules for the 3rd person singular -s form (**crys* for *cries* and/or **calles* for *calls*) are also considered spelling mistakes, and will not be dealt with in this study.

In the substitution category the simple present is replaced by various other tenses or constructions, as can be seen from Table 5.2.1b:

Table 5.2.1b Category errors: substitution. Other tenses or constructions used to replace the simple present.

Progressive form	Past tense	Future tense	Miscellaneous constructions	Total
139 (63%)	54 (24%)	15 (7%)	13 (6%)	221

The most frequent form of category substitution involving the simple present consists in replacing it with the present progressive. This type of replacement occurs in more than half of the instances. In the majority of these instances, (n=109), the “full” progressive form is employed, as in (123) and (124),

whereas, in the remaining 30 instances, a “reduced” progressive⁵⁹ form appears, resulting in examples like (125) and (126):

- (123) Usually my mother and I are going to Polen but I must work. [go] (S 2029)
 (124) I'm living in X with my family and two dogs. [live] (S 3929)
 (125) I playing fotball. [play] (S 1032)
 (126) I'm 16 years old and I comming from Sweden. [come] (S 3617)

In the second most frequent type of substitution, the simple past is used. This type of replacement appears in 24% (n=54) of the instances, as in examples (127) and (128) below. Most frequently the verb is irregular (n=40), mainly *go*, but also *come*, *send*, *meet* and others appear. In the remaining 14 instances a regular verb is involved, mostly *want* but also common verbs like *ask*, *play* and *live*.

- (127) When I came to Britian I will go to Madonna live in concert. [come] (S 2288)
 (128) My name N, I'm 16 years old and lived in X. [live] (S 5284)

An expression of future time replaces the simple present in 7% (n=15) of the instances. In 14 of these, the future tense (*will* + infinitive) is used, and once the *be going to* construction:

- (129) Now you will know what I want to do in Britain. [want to] (S 2160)
 (130) Finally, I hope I have a chance for this voyage and if I'm going to be the lucky one, I promise to take care of my stay in England and learn as much as possible. [am] (S 2842)

In the remaining instances, 6% (n=13), the expected simple present forms are replaced by four different types of construction. The bare infinitive is employed in five instances with *be*⁶⁰, as in (131), and the present perfect in three, as in (132):

- (131) When I be a little bit older I should buy a nice american car. [am] (S 1054)
 (132) ... couse I've never been i England but I've thing it would be fun go around in London watching big ben and London bridge and a lot more. [think] (S 2595)

⁵⁹ In this study the term “reduced” progressive form denotes cases of the progressive construction where the auxiliary *be* is omitted.

⁶⁰ It is only with *be* that this is clearly a bare infinitive. With other verbs the bare infinitive form is identical to the present tense, e.g. (*to*) *live*, *I live*.

The contracted form of the modal auxiliary *would* appears three times, twice preceding the main verb, as in example (133), and once with *look forward to*, as in (134)⁶¹:

- (133) I want to go to the conference in Denmark because I'd think it would be interesting and I have to practice my English. [I think] (S 5750)
(134) I'd look forward to it a bid deal. [I look forward to] (S 1438)

Finally, the past participle occurs in two instances, both with irregular verbs⁶²:

- (135) When I grown up I wants to be photografe I think. [grow up] (S 74)
(136) When I been older I will help them, went aut in the world and help them. [am] (S 4054)

There are 23 instances of category addition where a form of *be* (n=19) or *do* (n=4) is added to a main verb in the present. In the case of *be*, the first person singular *am* is used 15 times, as in (137) and (138)⁶³:

- (137) I am live in X it is about one mil to the central Y. [live] (S 206)
(138) As I'd said I'm like music. [like] (S 1197)

In all these, the added auxiliary precedes the main verb, but in the four remaining cases, the redundant auxiliary follows it instead.⁶⁴ The latter type comprises two instances with *is* and two with *are*:

- (139) I m is a boy 16 years old. [I am] (S 1031)
(140) Thats are wery fantastic to see how they are bilding in the motor and see cars you never have seen befor. [I/It/ is] (S 2681)

Do is added in four instances, as in (141) and (142):

⁶¹ Compare this with similar cases where an incorrect auxiliary (**I'm understand* and **I'll would like.* etc.) is added. See sections 5.2.2.1, 5.2.3.1 and 5.5.4 and the discussion in section 16.1.

⁶² With regular verbs it could be argued that the *-ed* forms are either past tense forms or past participles, e.g. *talk - talked - talked*.

⁶³ Out of the 19 instances of category addition, 17 appear as contracted forms with or without the apostrophe (*I'm, Im, thats* etc).

⁶⁴ It is very likely that **I'm is a boy* really contains two errors rather than one. If this is so, **I m* equals *I*, as in the case **I'm live* in (S 131). In addition to this mistake, the wrong form of *be* has been chosen. However, the example is treated in accordance with the “minimal correction principle” described in section 1.5.

- (141) I do also have some intressting thoughts about the future of the world. [I also have] (S 5149)
- (142) ...but other things, like "Lincoln School" and "Midland Canal Tours" do I also think is rather fun. [I also think] (S 1787)

Omission of a form of *be* (including the copula function) occurs in 36 instances concerning the simple present. In 28 of these, the third person singular form *is* is omitted, as in (143). The first person singular *am* is omitted six times, as in (144), and *are* is left out twice, as in (145):

- (143) It's verry hard to discribe, but it ø a nice game. [is] (S 584)
- (144) I'm I girl and I ø 15 years old. [am] (S 1379)
- (145) ... and in the evenings we ø in town, meeting people. [are] (S 2453)

The realisation errors involve 32 instances of omission of *have* in the structure *have got* (or simply *have*)⁶⁵, as in (146) and (147). In all these examples *got* is written but *have* is left out:

- (146) I ø got one cat and my mother have a dog that I go out with every day. [have got] (S 415)
- (147) And they ø got alot of big mountainbike races. [have got] (S 2820)

To summarize, most frequently the errors involving the simple present tense consist in the form being replaced by the present progressive. This occurs in 63% of the cases and is not unexpected, bearing in mind that confusion between simple present and progressive forms is fairly common due to L1-L2 differences (Ch. 15). Slightly more surprising is the fact that in 22% of the errors the present is replaced by the simple past instead. Most errors are category errors, and the realisation errors that do occur involve the omission of *have* in the combination *have /got /*.

⁶⁵ Reduction of *have /has/had got* to the contracted equivalents is possible in informal English but, according to Quirk *et al.* (1985:132), further reduction into using only *got* is "very informal", and, "in its written form, this omission of the auxiliary is nonstandard". This type of omission is considered erroneous in the present study, since "errors are classified as deviations from the expected correct form represented in *standard English as given in grammars, dictionaries and native speakers' assessment*"(see section 1.4).

5.2.2 Expressions of past time

5.2.2.1 The simple past

The function of the simple past tense is most commonly to show that an event took place at a specific time in the past. There are three main meanings of the simple past tense which can be contrasted with the three meanings of the simple present tense: an “event past”, a “state past” and a “habitual past” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:186-187, Huddleston 1984:158-164). In the data, 58 instances occur where the past tense is either replaced by another tense or expression of time (category errors), or incorrectly rendered with regard to form (realisation errors). The distribution of errors of these two types is shown in Table 5.2.2.1a:

Table 5.2.2.1a The simple past: category and realisation errors.

Category errors:			Realisation errors:			Total
Substitution	addition	omission	substitution	addition	omission	
53 (93%)	2 (2%)	0	3 (5%)	0	0	58

An overwhelming majority of the errors are category errors: the simple past is replaced in 92% (n=53) of the instances and a category is added to it in 2% (n=2). Very few realisation errors have been found with the simple past tense, 5% (n=3), all of them substitution cases.

Category substitution concerning the simple past appears with four types of substitutes, shown in Table 5.2.2.1b:

Table 5.2.2.1b Category errors: substitution. Other tenses or constructions used for the simple past tense.

Simple present	Present perfect	Modal construction	Progressive form	Total
43 (74%)	6 (10%)	2 (3%)	2 (3%)	53

Simple present forms replace the simple past in 74% (n=43) of the substitution cases. Most of them, 19 instances, are found with irregular verbs such as *think*, *get* and *come* as in (148). Another 14 instances involve the primary verbs *be* and *do* and the modal *can*. With these, the present tense

form of *be* occurs in six instances, all in the construction *to be born*,⁶⁶ as in (149), and in another six instances *can* appears, as in (150). The remaining two instances involve *do*, as in (151):

- (148) So ween I saw this "race" I think that it would be nice to go to England at least 1 week. [thought] (S 2781)
 (149) My name is N N and I'm boarn in X, Sverige. [was born] (S 5315)
 (150) I should be very happy if you can send me a free ticket. [could] (S 5674)
 (151) ... if you picked just my letter among them all and if you do contact NN... [did] (S 2192)

The remaining 10 instances occur with regular verbs like *visit*, *want*, *move* and *live*, as in (152). These are considered to be the simple present rather than the bare infinitive since there is a personal pronoun preceding the verb.

- (152) I have live here one year soon and before I live in Y. [lived] (S 173)

The present perfect is used as a replacement in six instances, as in (153):

- (153) I would really be happy if the jury picked me because I love to travel I have been in Thailand when I was 5 years old. [was] (S 267)

In the four remaining cases of category substitution, two different replacements are used. A modal construction with *would* + infinitive⁶⁷ appears twice, as in (154), and so does the past progressive, as in (155):

- (154) Today we have mutch rasisem in the world, i think that it would stop if we would get to know our different cultures. [got /to know/] (S 5890)
 (155) Everyone over ther was comming and touch one. [came] (S 269)

There are two cases of category addition where the contracted form *I'll* appears in combination with the past tense verb⁶⁸, as in (156):

- (156) I'll payed the half. [paid] (S 1961)

⁶⁶ Other errors occurring with this construction are found in section 5.6 on the passive voice, since I treat the instances included here as tense errors.

⁶⁷ Conditional clauses are included in the discussion on the respective tenses.

⁶⁸ Compare similar cases of realisation errors where an incorrect auxiliary (**I'm understand* and **I'll would like..* etc.) is added. See sections 5.2.1, 5.2.3.1 and 5.5.4 and the discussion in section 16.1.

The realisation errors involving the simple past are three instances of substitution. These cases have to do with realisation of the past form of irregular verbs.⁶⁹ In the instances found, **shined*, *geted* and *sad* appear for *shone*, *got* and *saw*, as in (157):

(157) I can't even remember when the sun shined last. (S 381)

5.2.2.2 The simple present perfect

The function of the simple present perfect in English is to denote something that occurred some time in the past, “with current relevance”, i.e. it is something that “has continued up to the present time (and may also continue into the future)”.⁷⁰

Relatively few instances of errors involving the simple present perfect have been found, e.g. compared to the simple past. This could be because it is not very frequently used at all, or because the learners know quite well how to produce it. Frequencies of the 55 errors found, with regard to category and realisation, are shown in Table 5.2.2.a. However, errors of concord with the auxiliary *have* in the simple present perfect are presented in Chapter 11, and so will not be discussed here.

Table 5.2.2.a The simple present perfect: category and realisation errors.

Category errors:			Realisation errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	substitution	addition	omission	
19 (34%)	1 (2%)	0	35 (64%)	0	0	55

About a third of the instances found (n=20) are category errors. With the simple present perfect, as opposed to the simple present and the simple past, realisation errors are the most frequent error type. In two thirds of the errors, an attempt to use the correct category failed. All of these instances are cases of substitution.

Category errors involve replacing the correct simple present perfect form by using other present and past constructions instead. There are five

⁶⁹ Compare substitution in the present tense above. In the 54 instances found (22%) where the past form was chosen to replace the simple present tense, the form was correct in all but one case, where **haved* was used. Thus it seems the learners knew the past form as such, but, again, not how or when to use it properly.

⁷⁰ See Quirk *et al* (1985:190) for this discussion. Compare also Ljung & Ohlander (1992:77-78) for differences between English and Swedish usage.

different replacements used for these instances of substitution, as can be seen from Table 5.2.2.2b:

Table 5.2.2.2b Category errors: substitution. Other tenses or constructions used to replace the simple present perfect.

Past perfect	Past participle	Simple past	Simple present	Present perfect progressive	Total
5 (26%)	5 (26%)	4 (21%)	3 (16%)	2 (11%)	19

Past forms are the most frequent replacements for the simple present perfect. In 26% (n=5) of the instances, a simple past perfect⁷¹ appears instead. These are clear cases, since the form *had* is used, as in (158) and (159):

- (158) We had live in X for over 10 years now, but I was born in Y. [have lived] (S 3191)
- (159) I think the most of the swedish young peoples think that it's hard toget a work when they had finished school. [have finished] (S 3496)

In another five instances, the past participle of *be* is used instead⁷², as in (160) and (161):

- (160) The reason why I am writeing these things is because I never been I Great Brittan. [have...been] (S 435)
- (161) i never been in Britain before so id like to go there. [have...been] (S 2668)

The simple past⁷³ replaces the simple present perfect in 21% (n=4) of the instances. The verbs *hear*, *have*, *tell* and *leave* occurring in these instances are all irregular, as in (162) and (163):

⁷¹ In one of these cases, (163), the participle is incorrectly realised. Nevertheless, it is recorded as being the past perfect. The grammatical category is denoted by *had* + main verb, but the main verb is incorrectly rendered. Thus, here the wrong grammatical category (past perfect) is chosen to represent the present perfect and the fact that it happens to be incorrectly realised is disregarded. In **As I'd said I'm like music* (S 1197), the simple past is also possible, but NSs preferred the perfective construction in this context. However, if this is taken into consideration, this case could also be compared with similar cases of realisation errors where an incorrect auxiliary (**I'm understand* and **I'll would like*.etc.) is added. See sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2.1, 5.2.3.1 and 5.5.4.

⁷² This is classified as substitution, not as omission of *have*, because the correct category (the present perfect) is not here indicated by the required temporal auxiliary (have) which functions a perfective marker.

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- (162) But most i want to go shopping because there are mutch usual clotes In london i herd. [have heard] (S 2464)
(163) Now I told a little about myself. [have told] (3048)

In 16% (n=3) of the instances, the simple present is used as a replacement, and again the context shows what is the required form:

- (164) Ever since I have born i want to go rock climbing. [have wanted] (S 505)
(165) Now I find a reason why you are going to take me. [have found] (S 1132)

Twice, the present perfect progressive is employed as a replacement, making up the final 11%. Out of these two cases, the auxiliary is omitted once, leaving only the past participle+V-*ing* (166), but in the remaining instance the full form is used (167):

- (166) PS. I never been living in an other family except my own, so it would be very, very interesting to do.DS [have never lived] (S 1612)
(167) I have never been seeing a "live" match in tennis. [have never seen] (S 2941)

One case of category addition occurs: a contracted form of *have* is added to the correct simple present perfect form in (168)⁷⁴:

- (168) I we have learn more english of my friends then in school. (S 1650)

There are 35 realisation errors. All of them are category substitution errors of two kinds, as shown in Table 5.2.2.2c:

Table 5.2.2.2c Realisation errors: substitution. Incorrect realisation of the simple present perfect.

<i>have</i> + bare infinitive	<i>have</i> + past form	Total
26 (74%)	9 (26%)	35

⁷³ Since the simple past and the participle forms are identical in the four instances, it could be argued that this is the participle form replacing the present perfect, not the simple past. A case for this view may be made when considering that the Swedish equivalent to the correct grammatical category is a clear participle form, e.g. *har hört/ har berättat* in examples (162) and (163). However, applying the two steps mentioned in section 3.1, the correct grammatical category was not chosen, step (1). The simple past is an existing category and, therefore, these cases are categorised as “category substitution”.

⁷⁴ Compare this with similar cases of realisation errors where an incorrect auxiliary (**I'm understand* and **I'll would like..* etc.) is added. See sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2.1, 5.2.3.1 and 5.5.4 and the discussion in section 16.1.

In 74% (n=26) of the instances, the bare infinitive of the main verb is erroneously used, as in (169) and (170), and in the remaining 26% (n=9) the main verb appears in the past form instead, as in (171) and (172):

- (169) I have just visit her one time, and that is only time I have been in England to.
[have visited] (S 78)
- (170) Aour English tetcher is a very god English tecter and I have learn very match
Englis under 5 years. [have learnt] (S 4260)
- (171) I have only went on a canal ones before. [have gone] (S 2226)
- (172) (I've almost forgot that) [have forgotten] (S 2042)

Problems with the simple present perfect are mainly realisation errors. The grammatical category is there but it is incorrectly rendered. Most frequently it is the *-ed* morpheme that is lost, creating forms like **have visit* etc.

5.2.2.3 The simple past perfect

The simple past perfect is described by Quirk *et al.* (1985:195-196) as a “past-in-the-past”, an “anterior version either of the present perfective or of the simple past”.⁷⁵ In the material, the use of the simple past perfect is very rare⁷⁶, and consequently the frequency of errors is very low. Only two errors have been found. These are of the type category substitution and realisation substitution, respectively. No other types occur, as Table 5.2.2.3a illustrates:

Table 5.2.2.3a The simple past perfect: category errors

Category errors:			Realisation errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	substitution	addition	omission	
1	0	0	1	0	0	2

The simple past perfect tense is replaced once, in (173), where the past perfect progressive is used instead:

- (173) Because they had never been seeing a whit boy in the end of that holiday it was not funny. [had never seen] (S 270)

⁷⁵ Compare also Huddleston (1984:162).

⁷⁶ Compare the previous section 5.2.2.2, where we find four instances in which the past perfect is erroneously used instead of the correct present perfect.

The realisation error consists in replacing the past participle in the construction *had financed* with a bare infinitive form, in (174):

- (174) They had finance their campaign on there own, maybe that’s wy they Yes-side won. [had financed] (S 5483)⁷⁷

5.2.3 Expressions of future time

In order to express future time, which is the natural tense for the topic in the compositions, the two constructions *will/shall* + infinitive and *be going to* are mainly used, but several errors have been made when doing so. The present progressive is also used in a few cases, but since native informants disagree on the unacceptability in some of the examples found, only four instances are included in the study.⁷⁸ Finally, the construction *be to* + the infinitive is the expected correct form in one case only, where it is not used correctly.

Sentences where *shall* is used with 2nd and 3rd person subjects are not discussed, since it is debatable whether it is grammatically wrong not to use *will* in such cases, e.g., *She shall pay for this* (Svartvik & Sager 1996:44).⁷⁹ Another error type which is excluded concerns the use of *will* for *want to* (Sw. ‘vill’). Conditional clauses in which the main clause is expected to be in the future tense (*If I win this competition, I will go to..*), but is incorrectly replaced by other tenses or constructions, are included and counted here as errors in expressing future time. The distribution on error types of the 89 errors occurring with expressions of future time is accounted for in Table 5.2.3a:

⁷⁷ This could be a simple past form *financed* replaced by an incorrect past perfective form. However, since the auxiliary indicates that the past perfective has been chosen, this is a case of using the past participle as a replacement.

⁷⁸ Examples of dubious cases are: **But soon I’m starting on highschool and the real life start.* (S 5538), and **If I’m the one how is comming to you in London, than i want to se everything I can.* (S 1942).

⁷⁹ Quirk *et al.* (1985:213-214) say that *will* is used with all three persons, but *shall* occurs only with a 1st person subject. They claim that *shall* is "a rather rare auxiliary" (p. 229) particularly in AmE. *Shall* in second- and third-person uses express "the speaker's volition, either in granting a favour [...] or giving orders"(p. 230). It can also appear in legal writings, meaning *must*. Palmer (1990:137) states that the " occurrence [of *shall*] with *I* and *we* instead of *will* is partly determined by style and dialect". In Swan (1995:212) we find that *will/shall* are interchangeable for British people "with no difference of meaning in most situations" except when used interpersonally in offers, promises, and orders. In these senses, *shall* expresses obligation, whereas *will* carries the meaning of volition or strong intention. These statements support the decision to consider instances where *shall* appears with a 2nd or 3rd person subject as grammatically correct, and thus exclude them from this study.

Table 5.2.3a Expressions of future time: category and realisation errors.

Type	Category errors:			Realisation errors:			Total
	Substitution	addition	omission	Substitution	addition	omission	
future tense	70	2	0	7	0	1	80
<i>be going to</i>	0	0	0	0	0	9	9
	70 (79%)	2 (2%)	0	7 (8%)	0	10 (10%)	89

The majority of errors with future time expressions, 81% (n=72), are category errors. In this study, these are counted as substitution of the future tense, even though *be going to* is equally possible in all the instances. One reason for this is to avoid counting the errors twice.⁸⁰ The 18% (n=17) realisation errors that have been found are either cases of substitution, occurring when rendering the future tense form, addition of a form of *be*, or omission, occurring with the *be going to* construction.

5.2.3.1 The future tense

As mentioned previously, “future tense” here denotes the form *will/shall* + infinitive (section 5.2). With this form, 80 errors have been found, most of them, 87% (n=70), are category errors involving substitution, whereas 3% (n=2) are cases of category addition. Realisation errors are rather rare, only 10% (n=8) of all errors with the future tense. Most of them are errors of substitution but there is also one case of omission.

The errors of category substitution are divided into six different groups, according to type of replacement, as shown in Table 5.2.3.1a:

Table 5.2.3.1a Category errors: substitution. Other tenses or constructions used to replace the “future tense”.

Simple present	Modal auxiliaries	Progressive	Past	Infinitive	Present perfect	Total
27 (38%)	27 (38%)	6 (8%)	4 (7%)	4 (7%)	2 (3%)	70

⁸⁰ In this study, errors where the “future tense” or the *be going to* construction are equally correct are all counted as errors of substitution of the *will/shall* + infinitive construction, since this is the most frequent expression of futurity. See Quirk *et al.* (1985:213, 217), Leech (1971:51-54), and Nehls (1988:299). Furthermore, *be going to* is sometimes referred to as “rare in formal and written texts” (Palmer, 1990:143-144).

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One of the most frequent constructions used to replace the future tense is the simple present. It occurs in 38% (n=27) of the instances, all of the type found in examples (175) and (176):

- (175) Well, no I think I say something about my self. [will say] (S 476)
(176) In two mounths my last schoolyear in Xskolan is over.[will be] (S 4611)

Another way of trying to express the future is to use other modal auxiliaries than *will/shall* with the infinitive. This occurs in 38% (n=27) of the instances. Instead of *will/shall*, *would* appears 14 times, as in (177), *should* appears 12 times, as in (178), and *could* once in (179):

- (177) soon i would go and bought a new hamster. [will go] (S 2963)
(178) Now I have told about my interests and I really hope you should take me with you to England. [will take] (S 1244)
(179) But I will write somthing more about it so it could be at least 150 words. [will be] (S 2050)

The remaining groups account for approximately 23% (n=16) of the instances. Here four different replacements are used: the simple present progressive (n=6), as in (180), the simple past (n=4), as in (181), the bare infinitive (n=4), as in (182), and, finally, the simple present perfect (n=2), as in (183):

- (180) Soon we are having baby's and I don't want my children to grow up in a world with wars. [soon we will have babies...] (S 3921)
(181) Hope that you understand this letter so i stopped here. [will stop] (S 2974)
(182) But i bee sixteen to the summer. [will be] (S 2461)
(183) Now I've write a little about my self. [will write] (S 1513)

Using the progressive form with a future meaning as in (180) would imply that there is a plan or fixed arrangement, but it is not very plausible that this is what the writer intends here⁸¹. Furthermore, native speakers (NSs) marked all these examples as grammatically unacceptable, especially when considering the context in which they occur. In (181), a simple present could be possible. However, since NSs judged the future form more natural in this context, these instances are recorded in this section. Errors of the type found in (182) are recorded as a replacement, using the bare infinitive for the full

⁸¹ In some course books it is mentioned that the progressive form is "often used in English to express futurity with the verbs *have, go, leave* and *come*". See e.g. Glover *et al.* 1984 (*Faces*), Odeldahl *et al.* 1985 (*Umbrella*), Bermheden *et al.* 1987 (*Team9*), and McClintock & Miller 1990 (*Challenge*).

future construction since the temporal auxiliary indicating the correct choice of category is left out, leaving the bare infinitive. In (183), the context clearly shows that the correct tense is the future *will write* and not the present perfect *have written*.

In two instances category addition occurs. Again we find the combination of *I* + auxiliary⁸² followed by the correct future tense construction. A redundant *am* and *will* is added to the future *will* construction in each example found, as in (184) and (185):

- (184) I am will Journy to Wembley stadium and see to the fotball-match...[I will] (S 1033)
 (185) I'll will talk about how the future will be and ... [I will] (S 4660)

Realisation errors appear in 8 instances. Substitution accounts for seven of them and the remaining one is a case of omission; see Table 5.2.3a.

In six of the substitution cases, the correct infinitive form of the main verb is replaced by the past participle as in (186), and once, in (187), the *-ing* form appears instead:

- (186) I hope Liverpool will qualified themseleves to it.[will qualify] (S 1263)
 (187) I will going to Madechange in to England. [will go] (S 2855)

As regards omission, this type of realisation error occurs only once, in (188). In this case, the copula *be* is omitted from the future construction which is indicated by *will*:

- (188) The teachers are both American and English, so the first will \emptyset tough and without going to you in summer, it will be even tougher or impossible. [will be] (S 247)

5.2.3.2 *be going to*

Of the several other ways of expressing future time, *be going to* is the most common construction according to Quirk *et al.* and other grammarians.⁸³ As mentioned in the previous subsection, the 70 instances of category errors

⁸² Compare similar cases of realisation errors where an incorrect auxiliary (**I'm understand* and **I'll would like*. etc.) is added. See sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2.1 and 5.5.4 and the discussion in section 16.1.

⁸³ In Nehls (1988:299), e.g., we find this construction in second place in his scale of frequency, and the same is true in Leech (1971:54). In Quirk *et al.* (1985:214) it is also pointed out that it is especially frequent in informal speech.

where the future tense is replaced could also be argued to be instances of substitution of the *be going to* construction. However, these errors are discussed in section 52.3.1 and are not counted here. Therefore, no category errors occur with this construction. Instead, with *be going to*, there are problems in realisation of the form in 9% (n=9) of the instances where an expression of future time is required. In these nine instances, the indicator of the structure, the auxiliary, is missing, as in **I gonna enjoy the trip* (S 551) and **I'm the right person the family going to like* (S 1492). The form *gonna* (with various spellings) is accepted as being a correct informal realisation of *going to* and in the example above and others like it, the error is the missing form of *be*.⁸⁴ In a case like **My drem car is a merc 49 custermed, it's gone be lowrider wid a big fat enginer* (S 658), the form *gone* is considered simply a misspelling of *gonna*, possibly due to an error in pronunciation.⁸⁵ So, it is correct in a strictly grammatical sense and this type is therefore not included in this study.

5.2.4 Summary of “Time and tense”

The vast majority of errors accounted for in this section on “time and tense”, occur when learners try to use the simple present, as can be seen from Table 5.2.4a. Out of the 516 errors occurring with the different tenses and expressions of time, 60% appear with the expected simple present tense, 22% with expressions of past time, and 17% with expressions of future time. A likely reason could be that the present tense is the one most frequently used in the compositions, due to the descriptive part of the assignment (see Appendix 2), and thus more prone to errors.

⁸⁴ In Quirk *et al.* (1985:898), the elliptical *Gonna go now*, is given as an example of “familiar style” constructions, having “acquired semi-institutionalized nonstandard spelling”, and, it is also said that “the nonstandard form *I gonna do what I like*” is a possible reflection of “phonological processes of reduction”.

⁸⁵ The pronunciation of the the final *-e* in the misspelt *gone* is probably understood as the */- !/in* the correctly spelt *gonna*.

Table 5.2.4a Total number of errors distributed over expressions of time and tense.

Simple present	Expressions of past time:			Expressions of future time:		Total
	simple past	present perfect	past perfect	future tense	<i>be going to</i>	
312	58	55	2	80	9	
312 (60%)	115 (22%)			89 (17%)		516

Most errors occurring with the simple present, 90% (n=280), are category errors. An overwhelming majority of these consist in using the “full” or the “reduced” progressive form to replace the simple present.⁸⁶ This type of substitution is then followed by cases where the future tense, the simple past or the present perfect is employed. The remaining 10% (n=32) are realisation errors. Most of these are instances of omission, where either *be* or *have* is left out, followed by instances of addition of forms of *be* or *do*.

Errors concerning expressions of past time are evenly distributed on the simple past and the present perfect, whereas errors concerning the past perfect are almost non-existent.

With the simple past, there are hardly any realisation errors, but again the majority of errors, 95% (n=55), are category errors consisting in replacing the correct form with another tense or construction. The simple present is most frequently used to replace the simple past. This is also the main type of substitution in Stenström’s (1975) study.⁸⁷ The few realisation errors are mostly failures in rendering the irregular past form of verbs.

The data on the present perfect show that most errors occur as realisation errors, the majority, 63% (n=35), being realisation substitution. In these cases the auxiliary is present, but the main verb appears in either the infinitive or the past form (irregular verbs) or the past participle (regular verbs). The somewhat less frequent category errors occurring with the present perfect are substitution errors consisting in using either the simple past or the past perfect to replace the correct grammatical category.

Extremely low frequency characterised the past perfect, both from the point of view of errors and the use of the form on the whole. This is hardly surprising, considering the assignment on which the compositions are based (section 1.3 and Appendices 1-2). The two erroneous occurrences appear as a category substitution error, where the past perfect progressive form is used instead and a realisation error with an incomplete participle form.

⁸⁶ This coincides with the results in Stenström (1975:12-13).

⁸⁷ See section 3.2.3 in Stenström (1975) for a detailed account of this type of error.

As with expressions of past time, most errors concerning expressions of future time are category errors, occurring with the future tense construction.

Substitution of this grammatical category involves the use of the simple present in most of the instances found, but *would* and other modal auxiliaries are also frequently employed. With the future tense construction, the realisation errors are also mainly of the substitution type, using the past form of the main verb with the auxiliary *will* instead of the correct bare infinitive form.

No category errors have been found with *be going to*. Only one type of realisation error occurs, namely omission, leaving out the auxiliary in the construction *be going to*.

5.3 The progressive aspect

In English, all tenses can be combined with a progressive aspect.⁸⁸ It is mainly used to "indicate temporariness" (Quirk *et al.* 1985:198), describing a situation as "being in progress" (Huddleston 1984:153), as the term itself implies. For most learners of English the progressive aspect creates problems in how and when to use it, as well as realisation of form. Many other languages do not have this grammatical feature (cf. e.g. Scandinavian languages). Instead, as in Swedish, the corresponding meaning may be expressed by lexical rather than grammatical means, sometimes also representing a different meaning.⁸⁹

In the material, a few category and realisation errors occur where the present progressive is the expected correct form. No errors with other tenses of the progressive form have been found, perhaps not surprising considering the character of the assignment. This is probably also one reason for the low frequency of errors concerning the progressive forms as a whole: less than 1% (n=8) of all verb errors appear here, as illustrated in Table 5.3a below. This is further discussed in Part III, section 16.2.

⁸⁸ Some grammarians call it "durative", "temporary", or "continuous" aspect. For a more detailed discussion, see Quirk *et al.* (1985:197ff) and Leech (1971:14ff). In pedagogical school grammars it is generally referred to as "the progressive form", see e.g. Glover *et al.* 1984 (*Faces*), Odeldahl *et al.* 1985 (*Umbrella*), Bermheden *et al.* 1987 (*Team9*) and McClintock & Miller 1990 (*Challenge*). However, in this study, the term used is "progressive aspect" or simply "the progressive".

⁸⁹ See Swan & Smith (1987) for a contrastive description of learners' problems in this and other areas of second language acquisition.

Table 5.3a The progressive aspect: category and realisation errors.

Category errors:			Realisation errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	substitution	addition	omission	
2 (25%)	0	0	0	0	6 (75%)	8

There are eight instances of errors with regard to category and realisation in the progressive. Category errors are in a minority. While substitution of categories occurs in 25% of the cases, the majority of errors, 75%, involve realisation errors, all of the type where a form of *be* is left out, i.e. errors of omission.

The simple present tense is used in both instances of category substitution occurring with the progressive, (189)⁹⁰ and (190):

- (189) I wate fore at trawling to Britain and sie watt Britain look like and trawlin owl over Britain. [I'm waiting] (S 603)
- (190) The most of my time goes to home works and test (in the area we reads about). [we are reading] (S 1939)

The six realisation errors consist in omission of the auxiliary *be*. In accordance with the discussion in section 5.2.1, this type of error is referred to as a “reduced”⁹¹ progressive form in this study, and thus categorised as an error in the realisation of the progressive form:

- (191) Right now i ø lying in my bed and feels sorry about my self. [am lying] (S 3066)
- (192) ...but I hope they ø working on it. [are working] (S 3302)

Summing up the findings concerning the progressive form, the small number of instances can possibly be explained by the fact that the topic does not demand much use of any progressive forms. Realisation errors are most frequent. All of them are errors in which a reduced progressive form occurs. There are only two category errors. In both of them, the progressive form is replaced by a simple present verb form.

⁹⁰ Suggested interpretation: *I'm waiting to travel to Britain to see what Britain looks like, and to travel all over Britain.*

⁹¹ See Crystal (1997:325) for this and other uses of the term. Also, compare the discussion in this study in section 5.2.1.

5.4 The *do*-construction

The *do*-construction in questions and negation, i.e. both insertion of *do* and the use of an infinitive, is regarded as a grammatical category in this study⁹². Therefore, only errors where this structure is the expected correct form are discussed in this section. Problems with the auxiliary *do* in sentences where the *do*-construction is not required are not dealt with here, but in other sections, depending on what is the correct form, e.g. the simple present or past. This means that an error like **I don't can go* is found in the section on modal auxiliaries (under *can*). *Do* can also be used as a substitute verb instead of an ellipted main verb (which can have an object or an adverbial) in clauses like *Yes, I do* or *He doesn't drive, but she does*. Another use of *do* is found in *so do I* and *so she did*. The only type of problem found with these constructions involves using a pronominal object with the substitute verb *do*. However, this particular type of error is not included here but as errors relating to nonfiniteness (section 5.7.2).

Errors concerning the *do*-construction are relatively infrequent in the material investigated. Only 19 incorrect constructions have been found, where a majority, 79% (n=15), are category errors; see Table 5.4a. These include substitution and omission cases. The realisation errors are all cases of substitution.

Table 5.4a The *do*-construction: category and realisation errors.

Category errors:			Realisation errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	substitution	addition	omission	
2 (11%)	1 (5%)	12 (63%)	4 (21%)	0	0	19

There are two instances of category substitution. In these two, the auxiliary *be* is used instead of *do*, in (193)⁹³ and (194):

⁹² Quirk *et al.* (1985:133) also use the terms “*do*-support” and “*do*-periphrasis” for auxiliary *do* used in negations and questions; however, the expression “*do*-construction” is used throughout this study.

⁹³ This type is categorised as category substitution rather than omission of *do*. This is because calling it omission would forestall the discussion on how to treat *I'm* in this and similar cases. The main thing here is that the grammatical category “*do*- construction” is missing and instead we find a form of *be*. Compare also sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2.1, 5.2.3.1 and 5.5.4 and the discussion in section 16.1.

- (193) I wont to talk about peace and understanding becose I m not anderstand way we faight with ethader. (S 3367)
- (194) ... is to see the people have fine, so what are i want to do there? [do I want] (S 6049)

The only category addition error appears in a negated sentence, in (195). Here **am* is interpreted as *I'm* (App. 6):

- (195) Am don't like to buy things some i don't have am very thick. (S 6014)

Omission of *do* occurs in 12 instances, all in negated clauses, as in (196) and (197):

- (196) I lisen not to music. [do not listen] (S 1911)
- (197) ... I want to do insted of complaining of what I not want to do. [do not want] (S 2048)

The four realisation errors are substitution cases of two types: twice the main verb appears in the present 3rd person singular, as in (198), and twice in the past form, as in (199):

- (198) ...but when you are ther it doesn't feels like your not home. [doesn't feel] (S 2655)
- (199) If all teenagers didn't took their driving licence it wouldn't be... [didn't take] (S 4324)

The main problem with the *do*-construction seems to be to use it in negated sentences. It is important to take into consideration the fact that the composition topic does not favour the use of questions. To some extent, this explains the very low frequency of *do*-construction errors in the material.

5.5 Modal auxiliaries

There are several features used to define modal auxiliaries. Huddleston (1976:333) using Palmer's (1965) model, refers to some of them as the "NICE properties" of auxiliaries.⁹⁴ Apart from these properties, other criteria are often given, such as: modals do not take the singular third person -s; they

⁹⁴ NICE is an acronym for four properties that mark auxiliaries: negation, inversion, "code" (e.g. the possibility of occurring in tags) and emphatic affirmation. See Palmer (1965:15, 21) and Huddleston (1976:333) for a more detailed discussion.

have no nonfinite forms (**to can/ *canning/ *canned*)⁹⁵; there are no imperative forms; they cannot co-occur with other modals (**I will can come*); they take the bare infinitive (*I can go*).

With these definitions in mind, the following verbs can be defined as modal auxiliaries: *can, could, may, might, will, would, shall, should, and must*. In this group we also find *dare, need, ought to* and *used to*. These two types of modals are referred to as "central" and "marginal" modals, respectively, in Quirk *et al.* (1985:137). Furthermore, two other groups of verbs with modal auxiliary function are given: "modal idioms" (*had better, would rather/sooner, be to, have to* etc) and "semi-auxiliaries" (e.g. *have to, be about to* etc). Terminology varies for these types of expressions, and there are different ways of dividing them into groups. From the latter two groups, errors occur only with *would rather, have (got) to* and *is to* in this study. For convenience, these are discussed under the joint heading of "semi-modals" in section 5.5.5.⁹⁶

The central modals *can* and *may* are here discussed in pairs, according to their formal present and past forms, whereas *will/shall*, as opposed to *would/should*, are not included here, since all examples found with these two modals are discussed in section 5.2.3.1 on "future tense", i.e. there are no examples of "truly" modal uses in the material. For the rest of the modals, only those with which errors have been found will be dealt with here, which is why *must, dare, need, ought to* and *used to*⁹⁷ are not discussed. No instances of category or realisation errors have been found with any of these. In fact there are very few instances where they occur at all in the compositions⁹⁸. Any misspellings of the modals are disregarded. Errors concerning the bare infinitive in "modal constructions" are accounted for and discussed in section 5.8 on nonfinite constructions.

The frequencies of all 102 errors occurring with the modals and the semi-modals can be seen from Table 5.5a:

⁹⁵ Examples here are taken from Quirk *et al.* (1985:137). For further discussion on the modals, see sections 3.22 and 3.40 in Quirk *et al.* (1985).

⁹⁶ In Quirk *et al.* (1985:137) the term "modal idioms" is used for *had better, would rather, have got to* and *be to*, whereas *have to* is referred to as a "semi-auxiliary". In Huddleston (1984:165), *have to* is "not a modal" but a catenative, and *have* in combination with *better* (*I had better leave*) is said to maybe even have too weak a case to be included as a modal. I have chosen to use Palmer's (1990:44, 133, 167) terminology here and simply call all of them "semi-modals" for practical reasons.

⁹⁷ In the material investigated, *usually* is often replaced by **use to*, obviously perceived as being the corresponding present tense form of *used to*. This type of error is discussed in section 6.2 on adverbs.

⁹⁸ In the material *dare* occurs twice, *need* in 35 instances, and *must* 59 times. In all of these occurrences they are used correctly.

Table 5.5a Modal auxiliaries and semi-modals: category and realisation errors.

Modal auxiliary	Category errors:			Realisation errors:			Total
	substitution	addition	omission	substitution	addition	omission	
<i>can/could</i>	3	2	0	0	0	0	5
<i>may/might</i>	2	4	0	0	0	0	6
<i>would</i>	63	1	0	0	0	0	64
<i>should</i>	13	2	0	0	0	0	15
semi-modals ⁹⁹	3	0	0	0	1	8	12
Total	84 (82%)	9 (9%)	0	0	1 (>1%)	8 (8%)	102

Most errors with the modals, 91% (n=93), are category errors. Modals replacing other modals are considered category errors. In 84 instances, the correct modal or semi-modal is replaced by another modal auxiliary or a different construction. Realisation errors occur in 9% (n=9) of the instances, distributed over the two types addition and omission.

5.5.1 *Can/could*

Can and *could* carry the meaning of (a) ability, (b) possibility (especially in questions and negatives), and (c) permission (cf. Quirk *et al.* 1985:221-223). As shown in Table 5.5a, five instances have been found concerning *can/could*, all of which are category errors. Three of them are instances of substitution and two are cases of addition.

In the three substitution cases, two types of replacements are used: *should* (n=2) and *would* (n=1), as in (200), (201) and (202), respectively:

- (200) But what should you do? [can] (S 236)
 (201) ...and yos it to importat things that everyone can get food and all children schoold go to school. [can/could] (S 5818)
 (202) I would suggest that we talk about starving, war and how we would do to help them.[can/could] (S 3318)

In (200) the expected form is *can* (here, the learner says s/he does not really like asking people for favours ..*but what X you do?*). The context shows that the Swedish interpretation is ‘vad skulle man/du göra’ (or possibly ‘men vad gör man inte’). Obviously this learner uses the construction with ‘skulle’ and assumes that *should* is the equivalent in English. In the other two examples,

⁹⁹ In these figures *have (got) to*, *is to* and *would rather* are also included. See discussion in section 5.5.5.

(201) and (202), it is difficult to decide whether the correct form should be *can* or *could*. However, here it is counted as a substitution of *can*.¹⁰⁰ In (201) it could be argued that *can* is the best form in this context (.../so/ that everyone can get food and all children can go to school.) because it agrees in form with the preceding *can get food*.

There are two instances of category addition. In (203) a redundant form of *be*¹⁰¹ is added, and in (204) *do* is added to a negated *can* structure:

(203) This were my letters and i hope am can came to the conferene. [can /come/]
(S 6020)

(204) I am sorry if I don't kan write good but i trye my best. [can't write] (S 2026)

5.5.2 May/might

The main meanings of *may* are (a) possibility, (b) permission (Quirk *et al.* 1985:223-224), and (c) benediction/malediction, though rare and very formal according to Leech (1971:67-69).

There are six errors found with *may* and *might*, all category errors; see Table 5.5a. Two of them are substitution errors and the remaining two are cases of addition. In the first two, *may* is replaced once by *can*, in (205), and once by *maybe*, in (206)¹⁰²:

(205) Am really good at horse riding (if I can say it). [may] (S 742)

(206) I maybee want to work in Britain after school, that's why I want ...
[may/might] (S 2510)

In (205) it is *may* (or possibly *might*) in the second sense (permission) that should have been used. It is true that “[a]s a permission auxiliary, *may* is more formal and less common than *can*” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:223) and therefore *can* is more generally used in this sense. However, this is not

¹⁰⁰ It could be argued that in (202) there are several possible solutions to this example. One way of “correcting” it is to change *would* into the predictive future tense, (... and what we will do to help them.). However, I find it even more plausible, in view of the hypothetical topic, to change it into *can*, or possibly *could*, meaning *what it is possible for us to do to...*

¹⁰¹ Note that **am* here is probably a misspelling of *I'm*. Compare similar cases of realisation errors where an incorrect auxiliary (**I'm understand* and **I'll would like...*, etc.) is added. See sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2.1, 5.2.3.1 and 5.5.4 and the discussion in section 16.1.

¹⁰² In this example it could be argued that *maybe* is not wrong. However, if *maybe* is to be kept we get a word order error and a missing (emphasized) conjunction instead, in order to get a grammatically correct sentence *Maybe I want to work in Britain after school and that's why I want you to take me.* If the word order is changed like this, the implication of “possibility” in the Swedish equivalent ‘kanske’ (Engl. *maybe, perhaps*) is more or less literally transferred.

possible in sentences like (205) with “fixed phrases such as *if I may*” (Ibid.). Both *may* and *might* are possible in (206). This is due to the fact that *might* “can be used as a (somewhat more tentative) alternative to *may* as a modal of epistemic possibility” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:223). Keeping *maybe* as it is leads to awkward word order instead.

The four addition errors occur as double auxiliaries, as in (207), (208) and (209):¹⁰³

- (207) It could might be less racism if ... [there/ might] (S 4409)
 (208) They have to realise that they will may not get a work ... [may] (S 4150)
 (209) You know if we don't act now we might just don't have a future. [might not] (S 3169)

5.5.3 *Would*

Would can be a past form of *will*, but there are also special uses where no connection between the two can be found.¹⁰⁴ In indirect speech, *would* denotes (a) prediction, (b) intention, and (c) insistence, all in the past (cf. Quirk *et al.* 1985:228-229). It can also describe (d) characteristic or habitual behaviour, and there is also (e) the “weak volition of willingness” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:229), in which *would* is more tentative and polite than *will*. The special uses of *would* mentioned earlier express a hypothetical meaning which does not apply to *will*. This hypothetical *would* is typical of conditional sentences, but it can also be used in other contexts where there is an implicit *if*-clause (*I'd hate to lose this pen.*). “When followed by a verb such as *like*, *love*, or *prefer* [hypothetical *would*] is used to indicate a tentative desire in polite requests, offers or invitations” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:235). In the material, errors involving sentences with this hypothetical *would* followed by the verbs *like* and *love* are in a clear majority, 70% (n=45).

As shown in Table 5.5a, there are 64 errors with *would*, all of them category errors. A clear majority are cases of substitution (n=63) but there is also one addition error. *Would* is replaced in four different ways, illustrated in Table 5.5.3a.

¹⁰³ Compare this with errors of the type addition in the sections on *can/could*, *will/would*, but also on the present tense (5.2.1).

¹⁰⁴ These special uses of *would* (and *should*) are referred to as “mood markers” in Quirk *et al.* (1985:234).

Table 5.5.3a Category errors: substitution. Other tenses or constructions used to replace *would*.

Simple present	Simple past	Future tense	Miscellaneous	Total
49 (78%)	6 (10%)	5 (8%)	3 (5%)	63

Instead of using the hypothetical *would* the most frequent choice of form is the simple present tense. This occurs in 78% (n=49) of the substitution cases. Two typical examples are (210) and (211):

- (210) I like to be a hair dresser when I grow up. [would like] (S 1123)
 (211) I just love to see Liverpool against Arsenal if it is possible. [would love] (S 2164)

The main verbs with which hypothetical *would* should have occurred are *like* in 33 of the 49 cases, and *love* four times. Other verbs that occur here are *be*, *want*, *let*, *buy*, *select*, *know*, *forget*, *live*, and *choose*. With many of these, as in (212), it is the context and the assignment itself (a fictitious competition) that help in deciding that the *would*-construction is the proper one.

- (212) It's very nice to see how they havit att linkon school. [would be] (S 2687)

The simple past is used in six instances, all with the verbs *love*, *like* and *want*, as in (213):

- (213) I am a sixteen year old girl and I loved to win the trip to Britain. [would love] (S 327)

Almost as frequent a replacement as the simple past is the future tense. It occurs in five instances, four of which involve *will be*, as in (214), the remaining instance involves *will go*, in (215):

- (214) I like meting new people and meeting in Copenhagen will be very interesting. [would be] (S 5168)
 (215) If a came to London a will go and see some church, because...[would go] (S 783)

In example (214) it is most probable that *would be* is the correct form, since what is said is only hypothetical: the writer does not know whether s/he will win the trip or not. In (215) we are dealing with a conditional clause structure. Here it is possible that the verb in the *if*- clause is correct and thus

the matrix clause should be *would go*. However, if *come* is accepted as the correct form, then *will go* is correct and there is a tense error in the *if*-clause instead.¹⁰⁵

The miscellaneous group comprises substitution by the progressive or by another modal. In two instances in which the progressive is used, the present progressive appears once, in (216), and the past progressive once, in (217):

- (216) but i thing that if we got in war wher are we going. (S 5034) [would we be]
 (217) After some I was to England so skulle I see lite a England and I was shopping to. (S 2850) [would shop]

In the remaining instance of substitution, (218), *would* is replaced by *could*, i.e. there is a mix-up of modals:

- (218) I want the jury to select me because I have never been in Britain so I think it culd be fun if they take me. [would be] (S 521)

There is one case of category addition, (219), where the contracted form of *will* is added in front of the *would*+V construction:¹⁰⁶

- (219) I'll wuld like meeting peopel that is like me. (S 4981)

5.5.4 Should

Sometimes *should* + infinitive “may express a hypothetical meaning in main clauses” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:234), just like *would*. However, there are other uses of *should*. It can be synonymous to *ought to*, expressing “necessity” or “obligation”, and there is the “putative” *should*, equivalent to the “mandative subjunctive”.¹⁰⁷ Only the two latter uses appear in the material. The meaning

¹⁰⁵ When categorising errors of this type, it has sometimes been necessary to decide whether the error occurs in the first or the second part of a sentence. In such cases context is an important factor. Usually this solves the problem, but if it does not, native speakers have been consulted to give their opinion as to what is acceptable and what is not. If the problem still remains, the principle that the first part of the sentence is generally correct (cf. MCP, in section 1.4) has been applied. Another possibility is that *will go* is a lexical error through transfer of Swedish 'vill'. In that case, this instance should not be recorded as a grammatical error. However, in view of the other instances, it is here assumed that they all exemplify the same type of problem, and so should be included in the study.

¹⁰⁶ Compare this with other errors of addition in the discussion on the present tense, section 3.3.2.1, and on *shall/should*, section 3.3.5.4.

¹⁰⁷ See Quirk *et al.* (1985:157, 227, 234) for a discussion and examples of these terms.

of necessity/obligation is the expected correct interpretation in all instances but one.

All instances involving *should* are category errors. There are 13 cases of substitution and two addition errors. Three types of replacements are used for *should*, as shown in Table 5.5.4a:

Table 5.5.4a Category errors: substitution. Other tenses or constructions used to replace *should*.

Another modal construction	<i>be going to</i>	Simple past	Total
10 (77%)	2 (15%)	1 (8%)	13

In the majority of substitution cases, 77 % (n=10), another modal appears instead. Six times *shall* is used (section 15.3), as in (220), and four times *would*¹⁰⁸, as in (221):

- (220) One other, important thing to talk about is that everyone shall have the chans to go in school. [should have] (S 3435)
- (221) Everybody would have an activity on their sparetime. (S 3510)

Be going to appears twice instead, as in (222), and once, in (223), the simple past form is employed:

- (222) You are going to choose me beacause I like tours, shows, art, conserts and tennis, and you are going to like me. [should choose] (S 2205)
- (223) Two things I think are the most important to talk about at the conference are;
1. Everybody in the world got a job and nobody must be hungry speciell the children in Africa... [should get] (S 4744)

Using *be going to* in (222) is of course possible in a context where the writer is either very self-assured and matter-of-fact or simply deliberately threatening. Neither of these interpretations is plausible in view of the actual context.

There are also two category addition errors, in which a present form of *be*¹⁰⁹ is added to a correctly used *should* + the bare infinitive:

¹⁰⁸ Sometimes *would* and *should* are interchanageable but not in these cases, because the sentences express the meaning ‘ought to’.

¹⁰⁹ Compare similar cases of realisation errors where an incorrect auxiliary (**I’m understand* and **I’ll would like..* etc.) is added. See sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2.1, 5.2.3.1 and 5.5.4 and the discussion in section 16.1.

- (224) I think that I'm should get a free ticket because I am very good at talking whid people and I take notice on whats happening out in the world. [should] (S 4421)
- (225) you want surtnely now why am should go to Denmark. [should] (S 6010)

In (225) *am* is taken as the contracted form *I'm* since this is a likely interpretation found in several other compositions, e.g. *a'm*, *a live in*, etc. Further examples are discussed in 16.1.

5.5.5 The semi-modals *have (got) to*, *be to*, *would rather* and *be able to*

*Have (got) to*¹¹⁰, *be to*, *would rather* and *be able to*¹¹¹ all have most of the characteristics of a modal auxiliary. However, since they differ from the central and marginal modals in some respects, they are referred to as “semi-modals” in this study (section 5.5).

Very few errors concerning these semi-modals occur in the material. A total of 12 errors have been found, three errors involving category choice and nine being realisation errors, as can be seen from Table 5.5.5a:

Table 5.5.5a Semi-modals: category and realisation errors.

Category errors:			Realisation errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	substitution	addition	omission	
3 (25%)	0	0	0	1 (8%)	8 (67%)	12

The category errors are all cases of substitution, where *have to* is replaced by *must* in two cases, (226) and (227), and *is to* is replaced once by *shall* in (228):

- (226) ...I mean you must not love everyone but you must be nice... [do not have to] (S 3312)
- (227) ... but we just most go in the school. [have to] (S 5270)
- (228) If evolution shall continue, it can't be stopped by wars... [is to] (S 5181)

¹¹⁰ In Quirk *et al.* (1985:142-143) we find that “[f]rom the semantic point of view, [*have got to*] is best considered a variant of the semi-auxiliary HAVE to” though there are certain meanings in which they differ. In spite of these differences, both of them are referred to as semi-modals in this study, mainly because in most of the instances found, they are interchangeable. This is also why the form *have (got) to* is used unless there is an absolute need for separating the two.

¹¹¹ Compare Quirk *et al.* (1985:143-144) and Palmer (1988:106).

In (226) it is the negation that makes the difference, what is intended is obvious. According to NSs, the next example, (227), is acceptable only if the adverbial is removed or changed into *simply*, since **just must* is an unacceptable collocation, or if the modal *must* is replaced by *have to*. I have chosen to include this instance here, as a verb error for two reasons: first, it is more likely that *just*, rather than *simply*, is used at this level, and second, the general policy is to regard the part of a sentence preceding an error as the intended part as far as possible (the MCP, section 1.4). In (228), *shall* is used instead of *is to* referring to the future.

The realisation errors appear as one case of addition and eight cases of omission. No substitution errors have been found here. The addition error occurs with the construction *be able to*. The past participle ending *-ed* is added to the correct form (though misspelt) in (229):

(229) I was abeled to work a hole summer to get the money to the journey. (S 1962)

The majority of the realisation omission errors, 75% (n=6), occur with *have (got) to*¹¹² and two instances involve *would rather*, as can be seen from Table 5.5.5b:

Table 5.5.5b Realisation errors: omission occurring with the semi-modals.

<i>have (got) to</i>	<i>would rather</i>	Total
6 (75%)	2 (25%)	8

In all of the six errors concerning *have (got) to*, *have* is omitted, as in (230):

(230) I believe that if the young people all over the world stands together like one man against all this someone got to listen. [has (got) to] (S 3934)

Two instances of *would rather* have been found in the data. In both of them, *would* is omitted (231) and (232):

(231) ... but I'm not so good at it so I ø rather stay beside the court. [would rather] (S 1233)

¹¹² These six instances are included here, even though the semi-modal *have got to* is sometimes reduced to *gotta*. However, Quirk *et al.* (1985:142) say that sometimes "the pronunciation of the whole idiom is reduced to /gɒtə/ "and as such "represented in very informal written style (eg in fictional dialogue) [...] sometimes by the nonstandard spelling *gotta*". Swan (1995:233) agrees with the use being "informal American English (for instance in strip cartoons) to show the conversational pronunciation of *got to*". In view of this, the examples are recorded and counted in this study.

- (232) If it is possible I o rader live in a place outside the city... [would rather]
(S 1708)

5.5.6 Summary of “Modal auxiliaries”

The data in this section on the modal auxiliaries show that most problems occur with *would* and *should*. This is where 79% of all the errors with the modals appear, generally as category substitution errors. The most frequent replacement used for these two modals is the simple present for *would* + infinitive, and the future tense for *should* + infinitive. What few addition cases occur consist in adding a redundant *will* or a form of *be* (problems similar to cases discussed in sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2.1 and 5.2.3.1).

As regards *would*, it is mainly replaced by the the simple present tense and the most frequently used verbs combined with *would* are *like* and *love to*. A majority of the errors involving *should* consist in replacing it with another modal.

There are only a few errors with *can/could* and *may/might* in the material. Category and realisation errors are equally frequent. In the instances of category substitution, modals replace other modals, and the addition cases involve adding *be* or an extra modal. With the semi-modals, most errors are realisation errors of *have (got) to* and *would rather*.

5.6 The passive voice

Voice can be defined as a grammatical category (cf. Quirk *et al.* 1985:159). This means that, in this study, category errors concerning the passive consist in incorrectly replacing the passive verb phrase by using an active construction.

In English, the passive is normally construed by using a form of *be* with the past participle of the main verb: *He was arrested /by the police/*.¹¹³ Quirk *et al.* (1985:159) state that “a passive verb phrase contrasts with an active verb phrase”. Consequently, errors with the passive construction can overlap with almost all tense errors. However, there are several “voice constraints”. For instance, intransitive verbs can only be active, and certain verbs and verb constructions appear only in the passive (e.g. *be born*, as in *I was born...*).¹¹⁴

¹¹³ There is also the possibility of using *get*; see Quirk *et al.* (1985:160ff) for a detailed discussion.

¹¹⁴ Quirk *et al.* (1985:162-171), Palmer (1988:77-93) and Crystal (1997:280-281) discuss these and other constraints, as well as “semi-” and “pseudo-passives”.

Here, instances of the type **I am born* for *I was born* are regarded as category errors in connection with the past tense¹¹⁵, and thus, they are discussed in section 5.2.2.1.

In the material, 14 instances have been found in which a passive construction is regarded as necessary but is replaced by some other construction or is otherwise incorrectly realised, as shown in Table 5.6b:

Table 5.6b The passive: category and realisation errors.

Category errors:			Realisation errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	substitution	addition	omission	
7 (50%)	0	0	3 (21%)	4 (29%)	0	14

Category and realisation errors with the passive make up half of the errors each. With the category errors, substitution is the only subtype, whereas both substitution and addition occur with the realisation errors.¹¹⁶ The very low frequency of passive constructions in the material on the whole can, again, be explained by the the nature of the assignment and the text type. Quirk *et al.* (1985:166) say that the passive is "generally more commonly used in informative than in imaginative writing, and is notably more frequent in the objective, impersonal style of scientific articles and news reporting".

The seven category substitution errors involve three types of errors, the passive being replaced by an active verb phrase with the main verb either in the simple present (n=3), the past (n=3), or the present perfect (n=1). Two instances of the first type and all three instances of the second type involve the construction *be called*, as in (233) and (234). The two remaining cases involve the construction *be born* given in an attempted present perfect form, in (235), and the expression *is needed* being replaced by the incorrectly rendered simple present **it need*, in (236):

(233) Me and my family live in a small country who calls X. [is called] (S 886)

(234) My Brothers name is N and my Sister called N. [is called] (S 6004)

¹¹⁵ This type of error is categorised as “simple present replacing simple past tense”. The correct verb was chosen to realise the passive construction, but the auxiliary is in the wrong tense. Compare also the discussion in section 15.9.

¹¹⁶ In this work, the *-ed* suffix is regarded as a separate grammatical form in itself, rather than an element “added to” or “omitted from” the infinitive form. Thus, when the past form of a verb is used where the infinitive (or the simple present form) is correct, this is a case of category substitution, i.e. one grammatical category replaces another (*I lived* for [*I live*]). However, in cases of realisation errors like **I was borned*, we do get an error of addition. Here **borned* is wrong because the *-ed* suffix is actually added to a past participle form already. The correct form simply happens to be irregular.

- (235) Ever since I have born i want to go rock climbing. [was born] (S 505)
 (236) ... but I know that it need more than that. [/more than that/ is needed]
 (S 4056)

The seven realisation errors are of two types: substitution (n=3) and addition (n=4). These cases are classified as realisation errors because the passive form is considered a complex unit in this study (section 16.6). Substitution consists in replacing the past participle in the passive structure with the infinitive form, as in (237), or with an (incorrect) irregular participle form¹¹⁷ in (238):

- (237) There from we were escort by bus to our hotel. [were escorted] (S 2195)
 (238) ..are all humans and they all should be treaten like as if they were. [be treated] (S 3645)

In the four instances of realisation addition, either the *-ed* (239), or *-ing* suffix (240) is added to the participle:

- (239) My parents was just 16 years old when I was borned. [was born] (S 1871)
 (240) Wen you see a car who has been builing of a privat person. [has been built]
 (S 266)

5.7 Nonfinite verb constructions

In English there are three nonfinite verb forms with a variety of grammatical functions: (1) the infinitive in two forms, the *to*-infinitive and the bare infinitive (*to call/may call*); (2) the *-ing* form (*is calling / calling early*) and (3) the *-ed* participle (*has called /is called /called early,...*).¹¹⁸ Although the *-ing* form is “sometimes called the ‘present participle’, and the *-ed* participle is sometimes called the ‘past participle’ or, with transitive verbs, the ‘passive participle’ ” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:98), the terms “*-ing* form” and “past participle” are used throughout this study.¹¹⁹

As shown in the examples above, the past participle occurs as a nonfinite form in three cases; (a) in the perfect tenses after *have*, (b) in the passive voice after *be*, and, (c) in past participle clauses. The first two types,

¹¹⁷ Compare participle forms of other irregular verbs, e.g. *taken, broken, chosen* and *eaten*.

¹¹⁸ These examples are taken from Quirk *et al.* (1985:97).

¹¹⁹ The different functions of the *-ing* form (verbal, adverbial or adjectival function, on the one hand, and noun-like function, on the other) have traditionally been referred to as “participle” and “gerund”, respectively. Today, however, many grammarians avoid these terms and the more neutral terms “*-ing* forms” and “*-ed/-en* forms” are often employed instead. See Quirk *et al.* (1985:1290-1292), Huddleston (1984:81-84), Crystal (1997:279) and Swan (1995:277).

(a) and (b), are discussed as realisation errors in sections 5.2.2.2 on the perfect tense, and 5.6 on the passive voice, respectively. Errors involving the past participle are all constructions of the type exemplified in (c).

The nonfinite constructions discussed here are divided into five different types. The first deals with cases where only the *to*-infinitive construction is possible, the second with the bare infinitive construction, the third with the *-ing* form. The fourth involves cases where there is a choice between the *to*-infinitive and the *-ing* form and the fifth type deals with the past participle.

What is to be considered the correct form with verbs like *try*, *forget*, and *stop* depends on what meaning was intended (cf. *stop smoking/ stop to smoke*). In such cases the context determines which category the error belongs to. Instances like (241), where two correct forms are used in the same sentence resulting in grammatical inconsistency, are excluded on the grounds that they have more stylistic than grammatical implications:

(241) ... I like to play Piano, dancing, listen to music and much more. [/to/ dance]
(S 1490)

A total of 185 errors concerning nonfinite constructions have been found. A vast majority of these errors, 94% (n=174), are category errors. The realisation errors make up the remaining 6% (n=11). The category errors are mainly substitution errors, 74% (n=137). Apart from this, 14% (n=25) are instances of addition and 6% (n=12) are instances of omission. Among the realisation errors, 5% (n=10) are cases of substitution, and less than 1% (n=1) omission. This is illustrated in Table 5.7a:

Table 5.7a Nonfinite constructions: category and realisation errors.

Category errors:			Realisation errors:			Total
Substitution	addition	omission	substitution	addition	omission	
137 (74%)	25 (14%)	12 (6%)	10 (5%)	0	1 (>1%)	185

The 174 category errors are distributed over the five types of nonfinite constructions as follows from Table 5.7b below and from the discussion in each subsection.

Table 5.7b Category errors as distributed over the five types of nonfinite constructions.

Type	substitution	addition	omission	Total
<i>to</i> -infinitive	23	8	3	34 (20%)
bare infinitive	23	0	7	30 (17%)
<i>-ing</i> form	72	10	2	84 (48%)
<i>to</i> -inf or <i>-ing</i> form	19	4	0	23 (13%)
past participle	0	3	0	3 (2%)
Total	137	25	12	174

Most of the category errors, 48% (n=84), are instances where the *-ing* form is the expected correct choice. The remaining errors are fairly equally distributed over the *to*-infinitive, the bare infinitive and the cases where there is a choice between the *to*-infinitive and the *-ing* form. Very few instances involve the past participle.

The realisation errors make up about 6% of the errors (n=11). All but one (a case of omission) are substitution errors involving the *to*-infinitive. In the following subsections the errors are exemplified and discussed in detail.

5.7.1 The *to*-infinitive

Many English verbs and verb constructions, e.g. *learn*, *want* and *would like*, can only be followed by the *to*-infinitive construction. This construction is also used in clauses of purpose (*I sat down to rest*) and after *wh*-words in indirect interrogative clauses (*I wondered who to ask*). In the material, category errors are most frequent with verbs requiring the *to*-infinitive form.¹²⁰ Cases where the *to*-infinitive is replaced by *and* + infinitive, as in **I like english and a would go to England and see the country* (S 780) are excluded since this kind of pseudo-coordination (Quirk *et al.* 1985:978) is frequently used with verbs like *come*, *go* and *stay*.¹²¹

Out of the errors with nonfinite verb forms, 45 instances involve the *to*-infinitive construction. Section 5.7 shows that among them category errors

¹²⁰ For some discussion, see Quirk *et al.* (1985:sections 15-16 *passim*), Swan (1995:264-274), Ljung & Ohlander (1992:133), Svartvik & Sager (1996:376ff).

¹²¹ Four instances of this kind have been found in the material. All of them are excluded although only two involve the verb *go to* while the other two involve *travel to* and *get to*. These latter ones may be doubtful cases, but since native informants disagree on acceptability I have chosen to leave them out. See Quirk *et al.* (1985:978ff) and Swan (1995:47) for a detailed discussion.

are more frequent than realisation errors, 76% (n=34) and 24% (n=11), respectively.

The category errors are mainly cases of substitution (n=23), followed by addition (n=8) and omission (n=3). Most frequently the *to*-infinitive is replaced by the bare infinitive, and the *-ing* form. Apart from this, there are two other constructions used as replacements, as shown in Table 5.7.1a:

Table 5.7.1a Category errors: substitution. Constructions used to replace the *to*-infinitive.

Bare infinitive	<i>-ing</i> form	Miscellaneous constructions	Total
18 (77%)	3 (14%)	2 (9%)	23

The bare infinitive is used for the *to*-infinitive in 18 instances. Most frequently (n=14), a verb precedes the expected but replaced *to*-infinitive, mainly *want (to)*, appearing in nine of these instances, as in (242), but also other verbs, as in (243). The remaining four errors appear when an adverbial (n=2), an adjective (n=1), or a noun (n=1), precedes the nonfinite verb:

- (242) I also want see the country side. [to see] (S 1978)
 (243) In the winter me and my friends like go skiing. [to go] (S 1557)
 (244) And I would like to travel around in Britain just see it all sorts of things. [to see] (S 817)
 (245) ...it would be fun go around in London watching big ben and... [to go] (S 2595)
 (246) I also see it as a uppurtunity to travel, ø visit Denmark. [to visit] (S 4716)

Three times the *-ing* form is used, as in (247) and (248) below. In (247), both forms are formally possible, the *-ing* form indicating that the writer has simply forgotten that s/he has actually written about the place, whereas the *to*-infinitive would mean that nothing has been written. The latter is true in this case, and so only the *to*-infinitive can be used here. The second example, (248), involves the expression *get to know someone/~thing*. In the remaining instance in this group, (249), the error appears in connection with the verb *learn*¹²²:

- (247) I have forget writing about were I come from. [to write] (S 1494)
 (248) ...I want to get nowing other people arund the world. [to know] (S 4588)

¹²² This error is also recorded as one of the category substitution cases in section 5.7.3, regarding preposition + *-ing* form **about learn* [about learning to...].

- (249) Both the subjects are about learn having respect for other human beings.
[/learning/ to have] (S 4886)

Finally, the miscellaneous group consists of two instances where different replacements occur: a finite *that*-clause, with the modal construction *would+V* and a past participle form, again in the expression *get to know someone/~-thing*:

- (250) I wha`nts that my english would be better and... [to be] (S 2434)
(251) And it's also very interesting to get known different culture. [to know]
(S 5603)

The eight category addition cases are of three types. Six of the instances involve adding *-ing*, each with different verbs¹²³, as in (252), and once after a *wh*-word, in (253), and in the remaining two instances either *and* (254) or *do* (255) is added:

- (252) ...could be like a "språkresa" for me to practising the language. [to practise]
(S 2643)
(253) And meet people, and I want to learn how to surfing. [to surf] (S 1775)
(254) I would really like to go to this conference and to meet a lot of new friends...
[to meet] (S 5726)
(255) People have to learn to talk to each other and don`t care about someone's
colour or clothes. [not care about] (S 4922)

Category omission occurs three times. In these instances the *to*-infinitive is left out altogether, as in (256), where the missing form is likely to be *to go* or *to get*. All three instances involve the verb *want to* (section 15.6).

- (256) I want o back to the thousands of shops... [to go/get] (S 2949)

The 11 realisation errors are cases of substitution (n=10) and omission (n=1), as shown in Table 5.7.1a above. With the cases of substitution, the main verbs are replaced by three different forms: the simple past, the simple present and the past participle. These types are illustrated in Table 5.7.1b:

¹²³ In one of these instances, the Swedish infinitive marker *att* was used (**I wate fore at trawling to Britain and sie watt Britain look like and trawlin owl over Britain*). This example is included here among the other, similar, ones where the *to*-infinitive and the *-ing* form are mixed up but only the first is correct.

Table 5.7.1b Realisation errors: substitution. Forms used to replace part of the *to*-infinitive construction.

<i>to</i> + simple past	<i>to</i> + simple present	<i>to</i> + past participle	Total
8 (80%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)	10

The verb appears in the past form eight times, as in (257)¹²⁴ and (258). Apart from the verbs *meet* and *happen*, instances with *represent* and *mix* are also found.

(257) I whane go on this trip becors I want to met people in my eght ... [to meet] (S 4048)

(258) I don't no wath's goin to happened in the future. [to happen] (S 4068)

The two remaining instances consist in using a combination of either *to* + the simple present, in (259), or the past participle, in (260):

(259) I just want to thanks every one who is organising this... [to thank] (S 4778)

(260) I don't like to writen letter and speak English. [to write] (S 1910)¹²⁵

The only instance of realisation omission consist in leaving out the main verb, in (261):

(261) It wasn't his fault but the car will never be able to @ forword again. [to go/move] (S 795)

It is possible that this is only a slip-up, where the verb is simply forgotten, but a closer look at the Swedish equivalents shows that it is equally possible that the expression *be able to* is perceived as already including the necessary verb. This is further discussed in section 15.6.

All in all, with the *to*-infinitive construction, category errors are the most frequent ones. Most of them consist in replacing the correct form with either of the other two nonfinite constructions, the bare infinitive or the *-ing* form. These cases occur mainly after specific verbs taking the *to*-infinitive, especially *want* and *like*.

¹²⁴ Three instances of this type with the verb *meet* occurred in the material. It is possible that this is only a spelling mistake *meet* - *met*. However, I have included these instances here since *met* is an existing form.

¹²⁵ Even if **writen* in (260), is considered a misspelling of *writin'/writing* (and as such, it would have been accepted, had it not been for the preceding *to*), this is still a realisation error.

5.7.2 The bare infinitive

The bare infinitive is used (1) with modal auxiliary verbs, (2) after certain verbs that are followed by object + bare infinitive (e.g. *let* and *make*), and, (3), after *why (not)*.¹²⁶ The instances found in the material, are mainly of the first two types.

In Table 5.7b, it is shown that all of the 30 instances involving the bare infinitive are category errors appearing as errors of substitution (n=23) and omission (n=7).

The substitution errors consist in using the *to*-infinitive, the past participle, the *-ing* form or the simple past. The frequencies of the error types are shown in Table 5.7.2a:

Table 5.7.2a Category errors: substitution. Other constructions used to replace the bare infinitive.

<i>to</i> -infinitive	past participle	<i>-ing</i> form	simple past	total
12 (52%)	6 (26%)	4 (17%)	1 (4%)	23

The *to*-infinitive makes up more than half of the 23 errors. The verbs *let* and *make* account for six instances, as in (262)¹²⁷ and (263), and in the remaining six instances there is a preceding modal, as in (264) and (265):

- (262) They will never forget the lovely fish I will let them (to) eat. [let ... eat]
(S 2953)
- (263) And I must say that I can make nearly everybody to laugh! [make ...laugh]
(S 937)
- (264) to prevent hurting the nature we must to buy more nature kind stuff. [must buy] (S 5834)
- (265) ...and they would to show me some interesting playes there. [would show]
(S 1491)

In 26% (n=6) of the instances, the past participle is used instead, always in combination with a modal auxiliary, as in (266) and (267) below. In four of these instances, the past and the past participle forms are identical, so it could be argued that these are past forms instead. However, they are recorded as participle forms because there is a possibility that the Swedish use of ‘skulle + V participle’, as in ‘skulle jag fått...’ in example (266), literally **should I*

¹²⁶ The term, 'bare infinitive', is also the one used by Quirk *et al.* (1985:passim) and Palmer (1988:passim). Swan (1995:261), however, uses the expression “infinitive without *to*”.

¹²⁷ The brackets around the infinitive marker are there in the original text.

got, is the reason behind the choice of verb form in English. This is further discussed in section 16.2. In the remaining two instances, (268) and (269), it is undoubtedly the participle form that is employed:

- (266) should i got a freeticket are that so for im are very nice [should I get]
(S 5024)
- (267) I shoud talked about it if i came in on the conference... [should talk] (S 3154)
- (268) It's so much there I would seen. [would see] (S 1162)
- (269) So I can written a letter to them. [can write] (S 1671)

The *-ing* form appears as a substitute in four instances and, again, a modal construction is involved, as in (270) and (271):

- (270) I can listening to almost all kind of modern music... [can listen] (S 970)
- (271) I must going to Denmark because... [must go] (S 4072)

The remaining instance, (272), involves a simple past form for the expected correct bare infinitive:

- (272) This were my letters and i hope am can came to the conferene. [can come]
(S 6020)

Category omission has been found in seven instances. In these cases the modals *would*¹²⁸ and *must* appear without the required bare infinitive, as in (273):

- (273) I'm excellent speaker and think it would \emptyset very interesting to... [would be]
(S 4186)

To sum up, when the bare infinitive is the expected form, there are only category errors. A clear majority of the errors are cases of substitution and the most frequent replacement is the *to*-infinitive, followed by instances where the past participle occurs instead. A closer look at the preceding verb in all the instances reveals that in 24 of the 30 cases a modal auxiliary is involved.

5.7.3 The *ing*-form

The *-ing* form is used after prepositions (*interested in doing*) and certain verbs (e.g. *enjoy, finish, and give up*). Some verbs, like *stop*, can take both the

¹²⁸ These instances are recorded as errors of omission in accordance with the discussion on omission of verb forms in 5.1 and also the description of category omission in Chapter 3.

to-infinitive and the *-ing* form, but, depending on which form is used, the interpretation is different. In this section, only cases where the meaning is clearly “cease” as in *stop smoking* (as opposed to *stop to smoke*) are included. There are also special cases with *go+Ving*, referring to sports and leisure activities like *go fishing* and *go shopping*.¹²⁹

All errors found are category errors. Most instances, 86% (n=72), involve substitution, followed by addition, 12% (n=10), and omission, 2% (n=2); see Table 5.7b. The substitution cases include three types of replacement: the bare infinitive, the *to*-infinitive and a construction with the simple present form. This is illustrated in Table 5.7.3a:

Table 5.7.3a Category errors: substitution. Constructions used to replace the *-ing* form.

bare infinitive	<i>to</i> -infinitive	simple present	Total
44 (62%)	23 (32%)	5 (6%)	72

Most frequently the bare infinitive is used for the *-ing* form. This occurs in 62% (n=44) of the instances. In 22 of these, the nonfinite construction is a prepositional complement, mainly involving the expression *look forward to*, as in (274), but other prepositions also occur, as in (275):

- (274) I'm looking forward to come to the conference this summer. [coming]
(S 4362)
- (275) I often dream about go to Great Britain. [going] (S 1444)

In 19 of the instances, the nonfinite form functions as subject or subject complement, as in (276) and (277):

- (276) Going to London and stay there for a week is a quite happy dream ... [staying]
(S 2885)
- (277) My hobbies are: listen to music... [/hobby is/ listening] (S 890)

There are also three instances where there is a coordinating function, as in (278), and in the remaining two instances the nonfinite structure is a necessary complement to the verb *stop*, as in (279):

- (278) And it would be fun to stay with a British family for a week get away from my own! [getting] (S 1587)

¹²⁹For further examples and a discussion, see Quirk *et al.* (1985:1189-1190,1194-1195) and Swan (1995:290-298).

(279) Stop be so selviech. [being] (S 3754)

The second most frequent replacement consists in using the *to*-infinitive instead. This occurs 23 times and with four types of function. In most cases, the nonfinite construction appears either as a prepositional complement (n=9), as in (280) and (281), or as a verb complement (n=9), after verbs like *stop* and *enjoy*, as in (282) and (283). The remaining five instances involve three cases where the nonfinite structure functions as subject of the embedded *that*-clause, as in (284), and two instances with the construction *go+Ving* as in (285):

(280) I have thought about to bay a snowboard... [buying] (S 1097)

(281) ...because I'm intrested in to get to know people... [getting] (S 4142)

(282) so I have stopped to eat pigs, caows, horses and be a vegetarian... [eating]
(S 2971)

(283) If you enjoyed to read my letter... [reading] (S 456)

(284) ...because I think to read horses is an old tradision... [riding] (S 2084)

(285) When I will go to shop in London. [go shopping] (S 2294)

The third type of replacement involves four cases where the simple present appears. In two of them, the verb is preceded by *and*, as in (286), and in the three remaining instances a preposition is incorrectly followed by a finite *that*-clause, as in (287):

(286) Right now i lying in my bed and feels sorry about my self. [feeling] (S 3066)

(287) The subset about that everybody has the same valjue... [everybody having]
(S 3220)

Category addition occurs in 10 instances. The conjunction *and* is added in nine of these, as in (288) and (289), and in the remaining case, (290), the preposition *for* is used :

(288) ... a wounderfoul place to go and shopping clothes... [go shopping] (S 913)

(289) ...I am on the beach all day and sunbathing and swimming. [sunbathing]
(S 1214)

(290) It's the best time of the whole week, when I go for singing. [go singing]
(S 2831)

The two category omission errors, (291) and (292), are cases where *go* itself is left out from the construction *go+Ving*:

(291) ... I can as I sad ø shopping and everything ells on my own. [go shopping]
(S 271)

(292) ø Surfing. [go surfing] (S 2228)

In general, most problems of category substitution occur when the *-ing* form is required after a preposition or when it functions as a subject. The most frequent replacement is the bare infinitive.

5.7.4 Choice between forms: the *to*-infinitive or the *ing*-form.

Sometimes there is a choice between two nonfinite forms, with or without a change in meaning.¹³⁰ The instances discussed in this section are instances where there is a proper choice between the *to*-infinitive and the *ing* form, but where neither of them is used. Cases where agreement with the preceding verb form is necessary for the sake of consistency are not included. Neither are cases where the context determines which is the correct form with verbs like *stop*, *remember*, etc., as in *she has stopped to smoke/ smoking...* This type of error is discussed in section 5.7.3.

In the material, 23 instances have been found; see Table 5.7b. Most of them, 86% (n=19), are cases of substitution where the bare infinitive is used instead of either the *to*-infinitive or the *-ing* form. The remaining four instances are cases of category addition.

Most frequently, the nonfinite constructions function as verb complements but in some cases they act as subjects, as shown in Table 5.7.4a:

Table 5.7.4a Category errors: substitution. Types of function of the nonfinite *to*-infinitive/*-ing* form when incorrectly replaced by the bare infinitive.

Type of function:		Total
verb complement	subject	
12 (63%)	7 (37%)	19

In the 12 instances involving verb complement functions, the verbs *like* (n=8), *love* (n=1), *start* (n=1), *try* (n=1), and *continue* (n=1) occur. Examples of these are found in (293), (294) and (295):

(293) I like listen to music, and play music as well. [to listen/listening] (S 383)

(294) ... I want to start drive cars in a car race(!) and I want to... [to drive/driving] (S 1774)

¹³⁰ However, according to Quirk *et al.* “[a]s a rule, the [*to*-] infinitive gives a sense of mere ‘potentiality’ for action, [...], while the participle [i.e. *-ing* form] gives a sense of the actual ‘performance’ of the action itself” (1985:1191).

(295) We must try stop it. [to stop/stopping] (S 3403)

In seven instances, the nonfinite form functions as subject, as in (296) and (297):

(296) Watch Edberg beat becker in a wimbledon Final ... [Watching/to watch]
(S 2586)

(297) Writing to peopel is very fanny, but see them, is ofcourse, more real.
[seeing/to see] (S 5222)

The four category addition errors are all “blends” (James, 1998:111-113), i.e. a combination, or mix, of both possible forms (Ch. 18). An unnecessary element (in these cases either of two elements, *to* or *-ing*) is added, generally after the verbs *like* and *try*, as in (298) and (299):

(298) ... my theather how tried to teaching me english. [to teach/ teaching]
(S 1653)

(299) I like to listning to music and drive motor bike... [to listen/listening] (S 2912)

With the two optional forms, the *to*-infinitive or the *-ing* form, a vast majority of errors occur when these forms are complements of certain verbs, and when they function as subject.

5.7.5 The past participle

The few cases (n=3) involving the past participle are all category addition cases occurring in “reduced relative clauses” (see Quirk *et al.* 1985:1265, Turton 1995:670). In such cases, the relative pronoun + *be* are both redundant, but in the three instances found, the relative pronoun is incorrectly used together with the past participle, as in (300):

(300) Me and my family lives in a town in Sweden who called X. [called] (S 5596)

This could also be classified as omission of a form of *be* (plus the wrong choice of pronoun) but adhering to the MCP (section 1.4), a minimum of correction is desirable and, thus, keeping the participle and simply deleting the incorrect relative pronoun creates fewer errors, in the sense that the addition of the relative pronoun is one operation, whereas choosing the wrong relative pronoun in the other (possible) construction as well as omitting the verb results in two.

5.7.6 Summary of nonfinite verb constructions

Problems involving nonfinite verb constructions are most frequent with the *-ing* form, where 45% of the errors appear. The second most difficult construction to master is apparently the *to*-infinitive, accounting for 24% of the errors, followed by the bare infinitive, making up 16%. The first two are replaced mainly by the bare infinitive, whereas the bare infinitive itself is generally replaced by the *to*-infinitive.

Category errors are in an overwhelming majority with 94%, most of them cases of substitution. Among the category substitution errors, 91% involve confusing the three nonfinite constructions; only in the remaining 9% is a completely different structure used. This tendency is very clear in those cases where two of the three nonfinite forms may be used. In these cases it is always the third form that appears instead. The cases of addition comprise addition of either *to* or *-ing*, or adding *and* or *do*. The few errors occurring with the past participle, all of them addition cases, reveal problems in using the reduced relative clause properly. The realisation errors all involve the *to*-infinitive. In most cases, the infinitive marker *to* appears with what looks like a simple past verb form.

5.8 Verb transitivity

In this section, errors are divided into four types of structures, namely (1) verbs taking personal objects (e.g. *tell*), (2) verbs that do not take personal objects (e.g. *learn*), (3) verbs requiring the insertion of a “prop word” (e.g. *it*, *the fact*) as an object and (4) verbs not requiring a “prop word” as an object.

In the material, a total of 33 errors of these kinds occur. They are all regarded as category errors. Approximately one third are cases of addition, whereas the remaining two thirds are cases of omission, as shown in Table 5.8a:

Table 5.8a Transitive and intransitive verbs: category errors

Type of verb structure	Category errors:			Total
	substitution	addition	omission	
(1a) V+personal object	0	0	13	13
(1b) V-personal object	0	11	0	11
(2a) V+“prop word” object	0	0	8	8
(2b) V-“prop word” object	0	1	0	1
Total	0	12 (36%)	21 (64%)	33

The 11 cases of addition relate to verbs that do not require a personal object. Ten of these involve the verb *learn*. The combination **learn me* occurs in all but one sentence, where **learn us* is used instead, as in (301) and (302) below. There is also one instance with the prepositional verb *to qualify for something*, incorrectly followed by a reflexive pronoun, in (303):

- (301) I also must learn me more english... [learn] (S 900)
(302) ...I'm a member of the swedish air force where we lern us to shoot ... [learn] (S 769)
(303) I hope Liverpool will qualified themseleves to it. [qualify for sth.] (S 1263)

As regards the 21 instances of omission, they are found in two of the different structures. Most of them, 59%, involve V+pers object (n=13) concerning the verb *tell*, which, in the sense referred to in the sentences, requires a personal object. In all of them, *you* is left out, as in (304) and (305):

- (304) I don't know what to tell ø about my self. [you] (S 575)
(305) Well, Now I maybe should tell ø a little about myself. [you] (S 3034)

There are also nine instances where a “prop word” is either required as object or not.¹³¹ There is only one instance in which a pronoun is incorrectly added, in (306). All the other instances are cases of omission. In six of these instances *it* is missing, as in (307), and once the necessary insertion of a general noun such as *things*, as in (308), fails:

- (306) Some people maybe don't care but I do it and I hope... [I do] (S 3747)
(307) ... because they don't stand ø anylonger with me. [stand it] (S 165)
(308) Only one person can't change ø, but ... [things] (S 3519)

5.9 Summary of verb errors

There are several sections in this chapter covering areas big enough to require a summary of their own, which has also been provided.¹³² For summaries of errors in time and tense, modals and nonfinite verb constructions, see sections 5.2.4, 5.5.6 and 5.7.6. In spite of this, a bird's-eye view of all the sections might be useful in order to sum up the main results. Here, only a brief

¹³¹ Granath (1997:38) uses the term “prop word insertion” for pronouns as well as general nouns placed between a preposition and a *that*-clause.

¹³² Errors relating to concord involving verbs are not found here but in Chapter 11.

account of the different areas and the total number of errors is given. The results are summarized in Figure 5.9.i below.

On the whole, category errors (86%) are much more frequent than realisation errors (14%). Most of the realisation errors involve the present perfect, the simple present of *have got* and the future *will + V* construction.

Of the different types of errors, the errors in “time and tense” outnumber the others by far, making up 59% of all the verb related errors. They are followed by errors involving nonfinite verb constructions (21%), and modal auxiliaries (12%). In the section on time and tense, a significant majority involve the simple present. Generally, the problem consists in keeping the simple present and the simple present progressive forms apart. The second most difficult tense area is the future tense, which is mainly replaced by the simple present or a modal auxiliary.

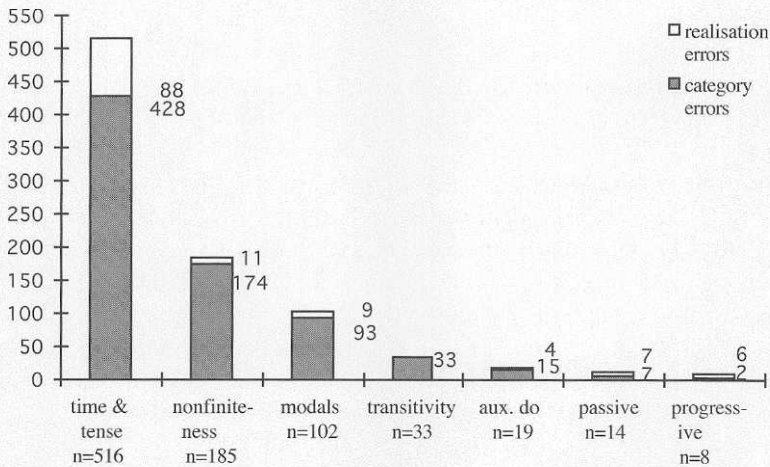


Figure 5.9.i Total number of errors involving verbs as distributed over category and realisation errors.

Errors concerning transitivity ($n=33$) and nonfinite constructions ($n=185$), show that there is confusion as to how and when to use the different forms. Most difficult are the *to*-infinitive and the *-ing* forms. In cases where either of these two forms is expected, the bare infinitive generally appears instead. With verb transitivity most problems occur with verbs that either require a personal object or those which do not.

The correct use of modal auxiliaries, including semi-modals, also causes problems. *Would* is apparently most difficult to handle.

In comparison with these three areas, there are very few errors involving the progressive, the *do*-construction, the passive and verb transitivity. Together they make up the remaining 9% of the verb errors. This is not very surprising bearing in mind that the topic of the compositions might not require frequent use of these structures.

6 Adjectives and adverbs

6.1 Adjectives

Adjectives have two main syntactic functions: attributive use premodifying or (less frequently) postmodifying a noun (*An ugly house* or *people careless in their attitude...*), and predicative use as subject or object complement (*The house is ugly* or *I consider the house ugly*).¹³³

One of the features of most¹³⁴ English adjectives is that they “can take comparative and superlative forms” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:403), by means of inflection (*tall-taller-tallest*) or periphrastic comparison (*beautiful-more beautiful-most beautiful*). There is also irregular comparison (*good-better-best*). Another characteristic is that English adjectives do not inflect for number and gender, unlike several other languages, e.g. Swedish.¹³⁵

In this section, grammatical errors include the use of an item from another word class instead of an expected adjective, e.g. noun for adjective¹³⁶ (*violence* for *violent*), or adding plural inflection to adjectives referring to plural nouns (**important_s things*), as well as difficulties relating to forms of comparison (**gooder* for *better*). Another problem appears with expressions of age, in particular the omission of the adjective *old* in the construction *I'm X years old*. This type of error is included as category omission of the adjective *old* rather than as category addition of the noun *years* to the phrase *I'm 15*. The reason for this will be further explained in due course.

Realisation errors, on the other hand, include the confusion of regular and irregular comparison, as well as other errors concerning the realisation of the forms of comparison, i.e. comparative inflection versus the use of *more/most*. No instances of incorrect use of inflected comparison have been found in the material. Two cases, *more funny* and *more close*, are excluded from this study, since many of the disyllabic adjectives and also some other frequent adjectives “have the alternative of the periphrastic forms” (Quirk *et*

¹³³ See Quirk *et al.* (1985:402ff), Huddleston (1984: 299) and Ljung & Ohlander (1992:158-161).

¹³⁴ Compare, e.g., certain classifying adjectives: *criminal lawyer* and *musical comedy*, etc. See Quirk *et al.* (1985:432) and Ljung & Ohlander (1992:148-149).

¹³⁵ An example of this is *a red car - two red cars* where there is no change in the form of the adjective, whereas in, e.g., Swedish this would be 'en röd bil - två röda bilar,' where the adjective referring to two cars takes the plural inflection *-a*. See Swan & Smith (1987:23) and Lindberg (1990:35).

¹³⁶ In some of these cases, e.g. the incorrect use of *height* for *high*, it is tempting to argue that this is a spelling error possibly due to pronunciation, or simply a slip. But in that case, how do we categorise an error like using an adverb (*beautifully*) for an adjective (*beautiful*)?

al. 1985:462).¹³⁷ Not using hyphens in adjectives like *a 16 year old girl* is considered a mere spelling mistake; in actual fact, this may even occur as an acceptable form in native speakers’ written language. Furthermore, problems with Adj+prep constructions of the type *interested in* and *good at* are considered prepositional rather than adjectival errors. Although they seem similar to phrasal verbs (V+prep/particle), they are different, since phrasal verbs are more closely linked together than Adj+prep. In the latter type it is often possible for the same adjective to take two or more prepositions (Ch. 9).

There is a total of 69 errors concerning adjectives, most of them category errors, as can be seen in Table 6.1a.

Table 6.1a Adjectives: category and realisation errors.

Category errors:			Realisation errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	substitution	addition	omission	
36 (52%)	10 (14%)	19 (28%)	4 (6%)	0	0	69

The figures in the table show that the large majority of the errors are category errors, distributed over all three error types: substitution, addition and omission. The remaining (6% n=4) are realisation errors of the substitution type.

Out of all the category errors, substitution makes up half of the instances. The errors occur with two types of adjectival constructions: (1) cases where words from other word classes or another adjective replace the correct adjective, as in *Britain* for *British* or *interesting* for *interested*, i.e. morphological errors of various kinds¹³⁸; (2), cases where one form of comparison replaces another, as in using *less* for *least*. The first type appears in 35 of the 36 instances, and the replacing items are, e.g., nouns, other adjectives (with different participle endings), or adverbs, distributed as shown in Table 6.1b:

Table 6.1b Category errors: substitution. Other word class items or wrong form of comparison used instead of the adjective.

Noun instead of adjective	Another adjective used	Adverb instead of adjective	Comparative form for superlative	Total
16 (44%)	12 (33%)	7 (19)%	1 (3%)	36

¹³⁷ See also Ljung & Ohlander (1992:150) and Swan (1995:121).

¹³⁸ These are considered grammatical errors rather than lexical ones, since the stem of the words is the same and only the word-final grammatical morpheme is replaced.

In most of the cases, 44% (n=16), a noun is used to replace the adjective. In seven of these 16 cases, this occurs with the constructions *interested* /in/ (n=4) and *interesting* (n=3) where *interested* or *interesting* are replaced by *interest*, as in (309)¹³⁹ and (310):

- (309) Sport cars are intresst to but meny of them are ugly... [interesting] (S 1988)
 (310) I am very intresst of all sport. [interested /in/] (S 2421)

Another five instances appear in which the proper noun *Britain* replaces the correct adjective *British*, as in (311), and in the remaining four instances an ordinary noun is used instead of adjectives ending in *-ful*, *-ing*, *-ical*, *-al*. Some are found in (312) and (313):

- (311) One thing I won't miss is to visit a real old Britain pub. [British] (S 2169)
 (312) I have always want to go to Britain and see the beauty country... [beautiful] (S 1861)
 (313) More and more of the young people in Sweden starts getting intrested in the envirement problem. [environmental] (S 3262)

The next type of replacement involves using another adjective. This occurs in 31% (n=11) of the instances of substitution. These cases are included in the study because they reveal problems in choosing between two similar adjectives with different forms and related, but different, meanings, e.g. employing *interesting* when the correct word is *interested* /in/, as in (314). This occurs eight times in the material:

- (314) I am very intreesting of horses. [interested /in/] (S 3076)

The three remaining instances involve two instances of cardinal points, as in (315), and one adjective of nationality, (316):

- (315) My name is N N and i live in the west part of Sweden. [western] (S 3976)
 (316) ...I think to read horses is an old tradision fore the Englishmens. [English] (S 2084)

In 20% (n=7) of the instances, an adverb replaces the adjective instead, as in (317), (318) and (319):

- (317) ... vote for a talanted, intellektuly and intressted boy. [intellectual] (S 2332)

¹³⁹ Although this could be argued to be a case of omission of the preposition *of* rather than a problem with the adjective, it is not very likely that the construction *be of interest* should be familiar to learners of this age.

- (318) ...we'll co-operate and get a very well European Union for teenagers. [good] (S 3894)
(319) I am going my 9th year in school, with normally marks. [normal] (S 5120)

One case of substitution occurs where the superlative form is replaced by the comparative (320):

- (320) In Sweden there are many skinn-heads running around yelling heil hitler without knowing the less about him. [the least] (S 3775)

These errors are likely to have different sources and are further discussed in sections 15.7 and 16.8.

Category addition accounts for 15% (n=10) of the errors. In these cases, the nominal plural marker is attached to “ordinary” adjectives, as in (321) and (322) (cf. section 15.4):

- (321) ...to talk about the importants of the world. [important /things/] (S 4447)
(322) ... and se differents cultures... [different] (S 4536)

Category omission makes up 28% (n=19) of the errors in this section. They are all of the same type, involving different ways of expressing age. The majority of them, 18 instances, are of the type exemplified in (323), whereas (324) is the only one of its kind:

- (323) I'm 15 years ø. [15 years old] (S 1316)
(324) I am a 17 years ø girl. [17-year-old] (S 4739)

Adherence to the minimal correction principle (section 1.4) explains why instances like (323) are included here. The principle is that *years* is actually where it was intended, probably because the Swedish equivalent is ‘jag är X år /gammal’. However, in the Swedish construction the adjective *old* (Sw. ‘gammal’) is optional, which is not the case in English (cases like this are further discussed in section 15.10).

There are 6% (n=4) realisation errors concerning adjectives, all cases of substitution. These four instances reveal problems in rendering the comparative form correctly. The examples show that the writer knows that the comparative form should be applied, but the problem is choosing the regular or the irregular form of comparison. The regular comparative form is incorrectly used twice with *bad*, instead of *worse*, as in (325), and a regular form is used for the correct irregular one in (326):

- (325) The violenc between young people and diffrent rases are going to be worser.
[worse] (S 3466)
- (326) I think it's going geoder to speak with other peopel... [better] (S 5349)

Summing up, out of the relatively small number of grammatical errors concerning adjectives, the majority are category errors. Very few realisation errors occur, but those found all concern comparative forms. The category substitution errors most frequently involve a noun or an adjective with an erroneous participle ending being used to replace the correct adjective (*interest/-ing, -ed*). The instances of category addition and omission reveal two interesting problems. In the first type, a plural number marker *-s* is very often attached to the adjective (*differents*), and the second type displays problems in expressing age by omission of *old* (**I'm 15 years*).

6.2 Adverbs

Adverbs have a variety of functions. They can modify verbs (*He sings beautifully*), adjectives (*They are unusually happy*) or other adverbs (*She drives too fast*) as well as clauses (*Unfortunately, I can't come*), but also nouns (*the meeting yesterday*).¹⁴⁰ The typical adverb suffix is *-ly*. However, there are some very frequent adverbs that do not take this ending, e.g. *fast*, and also the closed class of pronominal adverbs. The latter can be simple adverbs like *here*, and *now*, or compounds like *everywhere* and *somehow*. Many adverbs have comparative and superlative forms, either inflected (*fast, faster, /the/ fastest*) or periphrastic (*comfortably, more comfortably, /the/ most comfortably*). There are also irregular forms similar to the corresponding adjective forms, e.g., *badly, worse, worst*.

The errors in the material consist in using other forms instead of an adverb, most frequently adjectives, or there are problems in choosing the correct comparative form. Only one error occurs where a required adverb is omitted. There are 75 errors in the material, distributed as shown in Table 6.2a below:

Table 6.2a Adverbs: category and realisation errors.

Category errors:			Realisation errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	substitution	addition	omission	
73 (98%)	0	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	0	0	75

¹⁴⁰ This means that they have both adverbial and attributive function. See, e.g., Quirk *et al.* (1985:453), Ljung & Ohlander (1992:188) and Svartvik & Sager (1996:304).

Virtually all errors involving adverbs are category errors. Furthermore, nearly all category errors are substitution errors, there is only one case of category omission. There is also one instance of realisation substitution.

There are several types of category substitution. Most frequently an adjective appears instead¹⁴¹, but there are also cases where an adverb is replaced by a nonexistent verb form, as can be seen from Table 6.2b:

Table 6.2b Category errors: substitution. Word class items or constructions used instead of the adverb.

Adjective for adverb	Present tense of “used to”	Dem. adv. instead of relative adv.	<i>so ...that</i>	Total
38 (52%)	24 (33%)	10 (14%)	1 (1%)	73

Within the 52% of the instances where an adjective replaces the adverb, four “patterns” can be discerned. They are all regarded as category substitution because an adjective, a different word class, is the outcome of the “operation”. First, there are 19 cases with “ordinary” words like *particular*, *beautiful*, *near*, *serious* and *slight*, as in (327) and (328):

- (327) My name is N and I am 15, near 16 years old. [nearly] (S 3174)
 (328) I don't think that students in sweden takes this serious. [seriously] (S 4149)

Another ten cases involve using *real*¹⁴² instead of the adverbial form, as in (329), and (330):

- (329) I'm real interested in tennis too, but... [really] (S 1233)

¹⁴¹ Using *beautiful* for *beautifully* is considered replacing the adverb with an adjective rather than being a case of omission of the suffix *-ly*. See section 3.1.

¹⁴² These cases are included here as deviations from standard written language since they are often referred to as inappropriate in educated speech and writing (cf. Ljung & Ohlander, 1992:185), although, according to Quirk *et al.* (1985:406) "in nonstandard or very familiar English, the use of the adjective for the adverb is widespread", and forms like *real nice* "are typical of informal speech <esp. AmE>" (Ibid. p. 446). However, in this study, the basis for investigating errors is mainly what is considered Standard English in its written form. Data drawn from the Cobuild corpus confirm that the forms are not very frequent in written material, and when the forms do appear it is generally in AmE. There is a significant difference in frequency in the spoken material, both in BrE and AmE. There is a similar problem involving *quick*; *So we must do something quick before it's to late.* (S 5066). However, there is only one instance in the present data, and this has not been included as it is probably more acceptable to use the form *quick* than the form *real* found in the other examples, particularly since *quick* does occur instead of the adverb in colloquial Standard English (e.g. in *Come quick!*). This is fairly common in "informal style especially after verbs of movement" (Swan, 1995:18). See also Swan (1995:20) and Hughes & Trudgill (1996:29).

(330) I have a band named High Stakes and we tries real hard to... [really] (S 2247)

There are seven instances where *well* is replaced by the adjective *good*¹⁴³, as in (331) and (332):

(331) I am good manerd and pulite. [well mannered] (S 118)

(332) I would like to learn how to speak good. [well] (S 2552)

In the remaining two instances *most* is employed instead of *mostly* as in (333):

(333) Tennis i play most in the summers i like to play outside. [mostly] (S 1616)

With the second type of category substitution, the nonexistent form **use to+V* is employed in 38% (n=24) of the instances. The meaning is clearly *usually* or *generally*. In English, an adverb has to be used in this function because, in present-day English, there is no present tense form of *used to*. Furthermore, it is clear from the context that it is not the past tense form that is the correct one here. Examples of this error type are found in (334) and (335) and the source of this error type is discussed in 15.9:

(334) In my sparetime I use to run in the woods to get a litle motion. [usually] (S 429)

(335) I'm 15 years old, soon 16 and use to play football almost every evening. [usually] (S 1334)

There is one case in which the adverb *so* in the clause *so...that* is replaced by *that*, in (336):

(336) ...I always have that much to do, that I never have time to think ... [so..] (S 2524)

There are also ten instances where the demonstrative adverb *there* is incorrectly used for relative *where* in sentences like (337) and (338):

(337) My best friend's name is N but she don't live there I live. [where] (S 2135)

(338) We wan't to live in a world there everyone is happy and felling okay. [where] (S 3919)

¹⁴³ Quirk *et al.* (1985:406) observe that the use of the adjective *good* for the adverb *well*, as in *they played real good* is common in informal language (cf. above). However, just like *real*, this form is non-standard and much less accepted in written language than in informal speech. Therefore, they are included in the study. See also Hughes & Trudgill (1996:29).

The only instance of category omission involves the expression *how to* in (339):

(339) I know ø to behave my self. [how] (S 95)

Finally, there is one case of realisation substitution in which the negative place adverb *nowhere* is used for nonassertive *anywhere*, in (340):

(340) then it wouldnt be fun if we dont have no were to go. [anyhere] (S 5035)

In Standard English a nonassertive item “must normally be used after the negative element in place of every assertive item that would have occurred in the corresponding positive clause” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:787). Thus, double negatives are non-standard and should be avoided (Turton 1995:513, Swan 1995:362, Ljung & Ohlander 1992:100).

On the whole, there are relatively few errors involving adverbs. All but one of the errors are category errors. A majority of these, 73%, occur with lexical adverbs. Three special types of errors are prominent: adjectives replacing adverbs (e.g., *near* for *nearly*); **use to* instead of the adverb *usually* (or *generally*); and, finally, *there* for relative *where*.

6.3 Summary of adjective and adverb errors

A total of 144 errors relating to adjectives and adverbs have been found. Out of these, 48% (n=69) involve adjectives and 52% (n=75) concern adverbs. Most frequently errors consist in replacing an adjective or an adverb with a word belonging to another word class, e.g., adjective instead of adverb. There are some special cases also worth mentioning. With adjectives, several cases of addition of a plural *-s* ending appear (section 15.4). The omission of the required “prop” word *old* in the structure *X years old* (section 15.10) also creates problems. The adverb *usually* is frequently replaced by the incorrect present tense **use to*.

The distribution of category and realisation errors for adjectives and adverbs displays 86% (n=139) category errors and 14% (n=5) realisation errors, as illustrated in Figure 6.3.i:

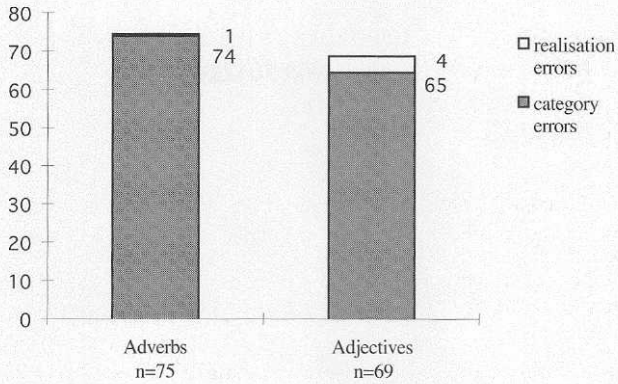


Figure 6.3.i Total number of errors involving adjectives and adverbs as distributed over category and realisation errors.

The overall picture is quite similar, although for the adjectives, the category errors make up 94% and the realisation errors 6% of the instances, whereas for adverbs there are 99% category errors and only 1% realisation errors.

7 Pronouns and pronominal determiners

7.1 Introductory

In this chapter different types of errors involving pronouns and certain determiners are discussed. The term “pronoun” in itself suggests that these grammatical items are used to replace nouns. However, this is a complex group which is probably better seen as “comprising a varied class of closed-class words with nominal function”¹⁴⁴ (Quirk *et al.* 1985:335). Since many pronouns — e.g. *this*, *that*, *what*, *some*, *any* and *neither*— may also have the function of determiners, the term “pronominal determiners” is used in order to separate these two functions when called for. It also makes it possible to keep the discussion of all pronouns and their associated determiners with the same (or a similar) form under the same heading. “Pronominal determiners” is also used in order to distinguish between this type and the other types of determiners: articles and numerals. The former type is discussed in 4.3 and the latter in Chapter 8. In this chapter, however, the simple term “determiner” is used to denote the determiner function, e.g. in *I want some ice*, as opposed to “pronouns”, which denotes the purely nominal function, e.g. in *Here’s some for you*.¹⁴⁵

The chapter is divided into eight sections according to the traditional subclasses of pronouns found in most grammars. Introductory *it*, existential *there* and the pro-form *so* are, however, discussed within the same section, relying on their shared Swedish equivalent *det* as a basis for this presentation. Huddleston (1984:276) states that “[i]t is very doubtful whether *so* [...] can be properly assigned to any of our part-of-speech classes”, and he goes on to say that *so* in this function “requires ad hoc description”. Furthermore, in contrastive (e.g., Swedish-English) grammars, *so* is usually presented in connection with *it* and *there*. In view of the discussion above, and the very few examples found, I have decided to include *so* in the same section as *it* and *there*. The inclusion here of existential *there*, is due to a similar motivation.

Within the subclasses of pronouns and pronominal determiners, errors consisting in mixing case forms, e.g. using personal objective *me* for subjective *I*, are classified as category errors, i.e. case forms are considered

¹⁴⁴ By “nominal function” is meant “noun-like” or “like a noun phrase”; see Quirk *et al.* (1985:335). Pronouns functioning like nouns or noun phrases have also been called “nominal” and those which function like adjectives, i.e. like determiners, have sometimes been denoted “adjectival” in earlier grammars.

¹⁴⁵ These examples are taken from Quirk *et al.* (1985:255).

grammatical categories, just like using the wrong type of pronoun/determiner, e.g. possessive *my* for personal *me*, although these are, strictly speaking, errors on a different level.

Since errors in case form are category errors, there can be no realisation errors, since realisation problems can only occur within each form or case form. Thus, by replacing one pronoun by another belonging to the same case form, e.g. *he* for *she* (as in *He is three years old*, referring to a little sister) we are dealing with cases of (gender) concord rather than problems of category realisation. Furthermore, cases where, e.g. *them* is used for *it* referring to a singular antecedent (e.g. ... *I could get them* S 5457) and singular *this* for plural *these* (e.g. ... *make this things better...* S 5383) and vice versa, are also classified as a type of concord error involving the determiner and its head in the NP. All such errors are discussed in Chapter 11.

A total of 276 errors have been found involving pronouns and pronominal determiners. They are described in the following sections.

7.2 Personal pronouns

Personal pronouns have no corresponding determiners, but they can be divided into subjective and objective cases. The subjective form functions as subject and subject complement and the objective form as object and object complement.¹⁴⁶ Sometimes the two forms overlap in usage especially in informal English, e.g., in sentences like: *That kid was me* (S 2799) or ...*the family and me...* (S 332). In cases like these, “[a]lthough the prescriptive grammar tradition stipulates the subjective case form, the objective form is normally felt to be the natural one, particularly in informal style” (Quirk *et al.*, 1985:336). Therefore, any instances of this kind have been excluded from this study.¹⁴⁷ Instances of the type *me and my family/friends* are also excluded for the same reason, and also because this structure is very frequent in written data in the Cobuild corpus.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ For further details, see Quirk *et al.* (1985:336-339).

¹⁴⁷ There were four instances of this kind in the data. See Ljung & Ohlander (1992:196) and Swan (1995:434-435) for some discussion on overlapping usage.

¹⁴⁸ There were 26 instances altogether of this type in the material, in 23 of them ‘*me and my X*’ appeared and in the remaining three ‘*I and my X*’ was used. When comparing the frequency of the forms ‘*my X and I*’, ‘*my X and me*’, ‘*I and my X*’ and ‘*me and my X*’ in the Cobuild corpus I found that the first of these was the most frequent form both in written and spoken language, with ‘*me and my X*’ in second place. The forms ‘*I and my X*’ and ‘*my X and me*’ were very rare.

Using one case form instead of another, e.g. the objective *them* for subjective *they*, is recorded as category substitution. There are no instances in which a pronoun is replaced by an item from a different word class, but omission of the required pronoun is very frequent.¹⁴⁹ Most errors of omission of a pronoun are seen as likely slips, as in **I drive moped very ofen and ø is trimad* (S 1912) and **...so it would be great if ø could live together with a family that plays golf* (S 546) where *it* and *I* are missing. In cases like these, both Swedish and English require a pronoun. These and similar instances are not included in this study. However, there are also cases where ellipsis of the pronoun is allowed in Swedish but not in English. Such cases are included due to the likely contrastive difficulty.

Table 7.2a shows the distribution of the 34 errors found relating to personal pronouns:

Table 7.2a Personal pronouns: category errors.

Category errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	
17 (50%)	1 (3%)	16 (47%)	34

The majority of errors, 50% (n=17), are errors of substitution. Omission occurs in 47% (n=16) of the instances and there is one case of addition making up the remaining 3%.

Out of the 17 instances of category substitution, 13 occur mainly in cases where the objective case is the required form. Table 7.2b shows that the objective case forms are most frequently replaced either by the equivalent subjective form, the possessive form, or the corresponding reflexive pronoun. In one instance an indefinite pronoun, *all*, appears instead of the objective form *them*:

The proportion of occurrences is very similar in written British and American English (UK 13.4 instances/million words, US 17.2 instances /million words). This is another reason why I decided to exclude cases involving *'me and my'* from this study. Using the form *'I and my X'* alongside *'my X and I'* is considered to be mere stylistic variation, and so cases of this type are excluded from the study.

¹⁴⁹ All instances involving "normal ellipsis" (Quirk *et al.* 1985:948) as in *'I am 15 years old and have a dog'* (S 31) and *'I am sociable and like to talk with people'* (S 1297) are naturally excluded from the study. There is also another type of omission occurring in verb+object constructions like *tell somebody /about/ something* where the object is often a personal pronoun. These cases are discussed in section 5.7 on verb transitivity.

Table 7.2b Category errors: substitution. Items used to replace the objective forms of personal pronouns/determiners.

Correct objective form	Personal pronoun, subjective form	Possessive determiner	Reflexive pronoun	Indefinite pronoun	Total
me	-	my 6	myself 1	-	7
him, her	he, she 2	-	-	-	2
them	they 3	-	-	all 1	4
Total	5	6	1	1	13

Replacing the first person singular form is the most frequent error: instead of *me*, *my* is used six times, as in (341), and *myself* occurs once, in (342):

(341) They were to young to take care of my. [me] (S 1872)

(342) Well, now you know a little about my self. [me] (S 2159)

Errors also occur with the third person, both singular (except *it*) and plural, as in (343) and (344) below, whereas the first person plural *us* does not seem to create any problems. Nor, of course, does the form *you*, since the subjective and objective forms are identical.

(343) ...and why some of us don't like he or she. [him, her] (S 5124)

(344) I think Swedish yong people think's most of they can... [them] (S 3702)

In the remaining four instances the subjective case form is the correct form. The data in table 7.2c show that the picture is reversed compared to the objective case forms discussed earlier. Here the most frequent replacement is the objective case form:

Table 7.2.c Category errors: substitution. Items used to replace the subjective forms of personal pronouns.

Correct subjective form	Personal pronoun, objective form	Possessive determiner	Total
they	them 2	-	2
you	-	your 1	1
he	him 1	-	1
Total	3	1	4

The four instances of substitution display problems with the third person plural *they* (n=2), which is replaced by the objective form *them*, as in (345),

and with *you* being replaced by the possessive determiner *your*, in (346), and using the objective form *him* instead of *he*, in (347):

- (345) Have them schooldresses? [they] (S 1665)
 (346) Your shuld take mie because I'am a smart guy. [you] (S 873)
 (347) ... for I lett leaurn one of men of the jury and him fixet to me. [he /will fix it/]
 (S 3095)

Category addition occurs once, in (348), where *it* is incorrectly added. Again, this is a special case of addition since there should be no pronoun after the nonfinite verb and it is not a question of a verb not taking an object (section 5.7.2):

- (348) Motorcycles and cars are always funny to whatch in action so the Earls Court motorshow should be very funny to see it. (S 2239)

Category omission accounts for 47% (n=16) of the errors. In these instances, the pronoun is omitted altogether. This occurs only with the subjective case forms and only with the first person singular form *I* (n=15), as in (349), and *we* (n=1) in (350):

- (349) My name is N N and ø is 15. [I /am/] (S 6001)
 (350) It must be something we can do if ø all help. [we] (S 3627)

To summarize, there are only category errors concerning personal pronouns. Most of the errors found consist in using the wrong case form. Most frequently the objective case is replaced, whereas the subjective case is more frequently subject to omission. When the subjective case is replaced by the objective case, the form *they* apparently creates most problems. As regards replacement of the objective case, *me* is most often replaced. Omission of the pronoun *I* is also very frequent. This is further discussed in section 15.8.

7.3 Introductory *it*, existential *there* and the pro-form *so*

This section deals with words corresponding to Swedish *det*, viz. *it* and *there* in their function as “grammatical subjects”¹⁵⁰, but also *so* when replacing a

¹⁵⁰ Other works use the terms “anticipatory”, “extrapositive”, “preparatory” or “introductory” *it* and *there*. In Quirk *et al.* (1985:1403) the term “grammatical” subject is used for the function of *there*. However, in this study the term “grammatical subject” is used as a collective term for both. When referred to separately I use “introductory *it*” and “existential *there*”. On terminology and

that-clause as object (section 7.1). In English the grammatical subject can be either *it* or *there* depending on what is the “logical” or “notional” subject. In principle, a subordinate clause or nonfinite construction as subject can be extraposed and *it* put in its place, whereas a noun phrase in the indefinite form or an indefinite pronoun can be replaced by existential *there*, functioning as grammatical subject (Quirk *et al.* 1985:1391). Cases where “prop *it*” is an obligatory verb complement (Quirk *et al.* 1985:1183-1184), as in *I take it that...*, as well as cases where a redundant pronoun is added after the verb, as in **...and I do it*, are dealt with in section 5.8.

So as a pro-form, or “pro-clause” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:880), can be used as a substitute for adjective phrases, noun phrases functioning as complement, or, more frequently, for *that*-clauses as direct object. This use of *so* is “restricted mainly to verbs of belief or assumption” (Quirk *et al.* 1985 *ibid.*) and to some verbs of saying (e.g. *say* and *tell*). All in all, there are 85 instances found, out of which a clear majority involve the distinction between *it* and *there* with an auxiliary. Only two instances involve the pro-form *so*. All errors are category errors.

The 83 errors relating to *it/there* are errors of substitution and omission, as seen from Table 7.3a.

Table 7.3a Pronouns *it - there*: category errors.

Type	Category errors:		Total
	substitution	omission	
<i>it</i>	2	7	9
<i>there</i>	71	3	74
Total	73 (88%)	10 (12%)	83

A clear majority of the errors are thus cases of substitution. The rest are cases of omission, 12% (n=10).

Of the large number of substitution errors, constructions with *there* create most difficulties. In a total of 71 instances another word appears in its place. Most frequently (n=68) *there* is replaced by *it*, as in examples (351) and (352), and in the remaining instances either *that* (n=2) or *what* (n=1) appear instead, as in (353) and (354):

the functions of *it/there*, see Quirk *et al.* (1985:1391-94, 1403-09), Huddleston (1984:451-470), Ljung & Ohlander (1992:198-201), and Svartvik & Sager (1996:431ff). On the functions of *so*, see Quirk *et al.* (1985:868, 880ff), Ljung & Ohlander (1992:202), Svartvik & Sager (1996:198) and Swan (1995:538-539). On the definition of the terms, see also Crystal (1997:21, 142, 146, 310).

- (351) It is alot of beutiful girls in Sweden. [there] (S 1057)
 (352) In Sweden it is no war. [there] (S 4842)¹⁵¹
 (353) And so many people isnt that in Sweden. [there] (S 5989)
 (354) If what not finns a ticket I love to go and se... [there] (S 208)

Only two cases of substitution of *it* have been found, as in (355), where *it* is replaced by *that*:

- (355) Thats are wery fantastic to see how they are bilding... (S 2681)

Category omission occurs in 10 instances. Seven times *it* is left out, as in (56), and in three instances the writer failed to include *there*, as in (357):

- (356) ...I think ø is imporent to meet people... [it] (S 4535)
 (357) ... and infront of the motorbike ø is two skis. [there /are/] (S 3102)

The two instances involving *so* are both category substitution cases. In (358), *so* is replaced by *it* and in (359) *that* is used instead:

- (358) Am really good at horse ridng (if I can say it). [so] (S 742)
 (359) I don't think I will win this competition but i hope that. [so] (S 36)

All errors concerning introductory *it*, existential *there* and the pro-form *so* are category errors. The most frequent error type is where *there* is replaced by *it*. By contrast, *it* is never replaced by *there*. In all but one of these instances, *be* is the main verb in the present and future tense constructions, as well as postposed to the modals *could* and *would*, as in *there is/will be/could be*, etc.

7.4 Possessive pronouns and determiners

There are two series of possessives: the determiners (*my*, *her*, *our*, etc.) and their nominal equivalents (*mine*, *hers*, *ours*, etc.). The forms in the first set have a determinative function and are found in pre-head position whereas the latter type is “particularly common in complement function” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:362) with no following head.

A total of 33 errors have been found, all of them category errors, as can be seen from table 7.4a:

¹⁵¹ This is interpreted as *In Sweden there is no war*. However, another interpretation of this might be *It is not war in Sweden* in which case the error has nothing to do with introductory *it* but reveals problems with negation instead. However, I have chosen to go by the first interpretation and include it as a problem concerning the *it-there* distinction.

Table 7.4a Possessive pronouns/determiners: category errors.

Category errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	
31 (94%)	0	2 (6%)	33

The errors are of two types: substitution, in an overwhelming majority with 94% (n=31), and omission in the remaining 6% (n=2). Out of the 31 substitution cases, 28 instances involve determiners and three concern pronouns. The determiners are replaced mainly by a non-existent genitive form of a personal pronoun or by a corresponding possessive pronoun, as shown in Table 7.4b:

Table 7.4b Category errors: substitution. Items replacing the possessive determiners.

Possessive determiner	Pers. pron., non-existent genitive	Possessive pronoun	Pers. pron., subj./ obj. form	Miscellaneous	Total
<i>my</i>	-	-	<i>me</i> 2	<i>any</i> 1	3
<i>your</i>	-	<i>yours</i> 1	-	-	1
<i>his</i>	<i>he's</i> 2	-	-	-	-
<i>her</i>	<i>she's</i> 5	<i>hers</i> 1	-	-	-
<i>its</i>	<i>it's</i> 1	-	<i>it</i> 1	<i>the</i> 1	11
<i>our</i>	-	-	-	-	-
<i>your</i>	-	<i>yours</i> 1	<i>you</i> 1	-	2
<i>their</i>	<i>they's</i> 5	<i>theirs</i> 4	<i>they</i> 1	<i>an</i> 1	11
Total	13	7	5	3	28

Most frequently the determiner is replaced by a contracted form¹⁵² presumably perceived as a genitive (n=13), as in (360) and (361), or by a possessive pronoun (n=7), as in (362), or a subjective form or an objective form of a personal pronoun (n=5), as in (363) and (364):

- (360) I have one older brother and a junger sister, they's name is N and N. [their] (S 3140)
- (361) She's name is N and my mother's name is N... [her] (S 2133)
- (362) Theirs name is N and N. [their /names are/...] (S 3710)
- (363) It name is Depeche Mode. [their] (S 2140)

¹⁵² Out of these nine instances, there are two slightly dubious types: *he's* (n=2) and *it's* (n=1) as in 'I also have a rabbit and he's name is N.' (S 2566) and 'I would really like to go to England and discover it's customs and culture.' (S 1783). They could very well be simple spelling mistakes. In fact, these are also common native-speaker errors. They are regarded as errors since (1) the forms are grammatically correct contracted forms, and (2) it is impossible to know what the writer intended, so the written form is what counts when recording the errors.

(364) Thats me wich. [my /wish/] (S 5819)

The remaining three instances are of miscellaneous types. Once each the determiner is replaced by the definite article (365), the indefinite article (366) and the indefinite pronoun *any* (367):

(365) Well Britain is very popular for all the horses so i suppose that... [its] (S 3079)

(366) Both my brothers has an own department. [/have/ their] (S 4726)

(367) I want a free ticket because I can't afford to pay any own ticket. [my] (S 4160)

Category substitution errors involving possessive pronouns occur in three instances with *yours* and *theirs*. It does not occur with any of the other forms of the possessive pronouns, as shown in Table 7.4c:

Table 7.4c Category errors: substitution. Items replacing the possessive pronoun.

Possessive pronoun	Personal pronoun	Possessive determiner	Total
<i>yours</i>	<i>you</i> 1	<i>your</i> 1	2
<i>theirs</i>	<i>them</i> 1	-	1
Total	2	1	3

Two instances of *yours* are replaced by the personal pronoun *you* and the determiner *your*, respectively, in (368) and (369), and *theirs* is replaced by *them* in (370):

(368) you always, N N Sweden. [yours] (S 1927)

(369) Your sincerly N N. [yours] (S 2709)

(370) I am a true fan of them. [theirs] (S 360)

Category omission occurs in two instances with possessive determiners *their* and *her* as in (371) and (372):

(371) The family I want to live with must be kind with ø own childrens. [their] (S 2277)

(372) And I hope that this genartion will help Mother eart back on ø feet again. [her] (S 4248)

With the possessives there are only category errors. The overall picture in this section shows that the possessive determiners cause many more problems than the possessive pronouns, 31 versus 3 errors. One reason for this may be

that the determiners are used more frequently in the text. However, this would have to be investigated further before any firm conclusions can be drawn.¹⁵³ In general, the determiners are replaced by other types of pronouns or articles. In a few cases they are simply omitted. The possessive pronouns, on the other hand, are replaced by a personal pronoun or by the corresponding possessive determiner.

7.5 Reflexive and reciprocal pronouns

In this section both reflexive and reciprocal pronouns are discussed. The two are functionally related, in that the latter “can be said to express a ‘two-way reflexive relationship’ ”(Quirk *et al.* 1985:364). A reflexive pronoun is generally in a “coreferential relation” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:356) with the subject of the clause or sentence which it belongs to. There is agreement between the reflexive pronoun and its antecedent in both gender, number and person.

Reciprocal pronouns can only refer back to plural noun phrases (*They helped each other*). The genitive form, *each other’s/ one another’s*, is also used with a plural NP, as in *They borrowed each other’s books*.

There are six errors concerning these two types of pronouns. Five of them relate to reflexive pronouns and one to a reciprocal pronoun. The figures are displayed in Table 7.5a:

Table 7.5a Reflexive and reciprocal pronouns: category and realisation errors.

Category errors:			Realisation errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	substitution	addition	omission	
0	0	1 (14%)	5 (71%)	0	0	6

The only category error involves a reciprocal pronoun, which is left out. Most problems, 71%, involve incorrect realisation of reflexive pronouns. The category error is found in (373), where *each other* is left out:

(373) Have a nice day and we perhaps to se o sone. [will see/ each other] (S 1915)

¹⁵³ A very rough estimate of all instances found (correct and incorrect) shows that there is an overwhelming majority of determiners in the material, compared to the number of independent pronouns.

The five realisation errors are all instances of substitution. In four of them the reflexive form is replaced by **self*, as in (374), and once an attempt at the full form is made but comes out wrong, as in (375)¹⁵⁴:

(374) I've got a snowmobile self. [myself] (S 2986)

(375) If we don't we will go like robots and only think about each self. [ourselves] (S 4643)

Problems concerning the reflexive and the reciprocal pronouns and instances of these pronouns on the whole, are scarce in the corpus. Errors in reflexive pronouns are realisation errors concerning correct production of the form, whereas the error involving a reciprocal pronoun involve category omission.

7.6 Demonstrative pronouns and determiners

This section accounts for errors concerning the demonstrative pairs *this-that* and *these-those*, henceforth referred to as “demonstratives”, including both pronouns and demonstrative determiners.¹⁵⁵ There is a distinction in number as well as one involving “near” (*this/these*) versus “distant” (*that/those*) reference (Quirk *et al.* 1985:372).

Errors may consist in replacing the correct demonstrative with a grammatical item from another category or mixing up the words for “near” and “distant” reference. Errors in number of the type **This books are mine* and **it is impossible subjects...* are recorded as concord errors and, as such, will be discussed in chapter 11.¹⁵⁶ A total of 20 instances have been found, as illustrated in Table 7.6a:

Table 7.6a Demonstrative pronouns and determiners: category and realisation errors.

Category errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	
19 (95%)	1 (5%)	0	20

¹⁵⁴ This type of error is also an example of a concord error *-self* should be *-selves* in the plural, agreeing with the plural pronoun *we*. See chapter 11.

¹⁵⁵ “Demonstratives” is the term used in Quirk *et al.* (1985:372) to refer to both the pronouns and the determiners *this/that* and *these/those*. See also Huddleston (1984:296-297) and Swan (1995:593-595).

¹⁵⁶ It is possible, of course, that this type of error could be due to faulty pronunciation; nevertheless, I have decided to include it as a grammatical error rather than regard it as a mere misspelling.

All the errors are category errors, 95% of them (n=19) instances of substitution and the remaining 5% (n=1) of addition.

The 19 substitution errors are of three types. Either the singular form *that* is replaced, or the plural forms *these* and *those*. No errors concerning *this* occur in the material, as follows from table 7.6b:

Table 7.6b Category errors: substitution. Number of errors where other items are used to replace the demonstratives.

Singular <i>that</i> replaced	Plural <i>these</i> replaced	Plural <i>those</i> replaced	Total
9 (47%)	1 (5%)	9 (47%)	19

That is replaced nine times by two different items, the most frequent replacement being *it* (n=8), as in (376) and the other one *what* (n=1), as in (377):

- (376) It's not all, I wan't to meet new friends also. [that] (S 10)
(377) ...and what is that I would talk about if ... [that /is what] (S 5226)

In (376), *it* refers back to a previous statement, and thus, *that* is the correct form here.

The plural form *these* is replaced once by *those*, in (378):

- (378) ...it is very important in those day's. [these] (S 3674)

In sentences where the demonstrative is modified by a restrictive relative clause, the correct form *those* is replaced nine times. Six times *them* is used instead, as in (379), and three times *they* appears, as in (380):

- (379) I realy hope I will be one of them who can go to England. [those] (S 2089)
(380) I tink they who are cutting down the rain forrest shuld... [those] (S 3347)

Category addition occurs once, in (381), a special case of addition (section 3.1) since a redundant *that* is added in the clause:

- (381) A catshow wouldn't be wrong that either. (S 2053)

To sum up, all errors appearing with demonstratives are category errors. The majority of them involve *that* and the plural form *those*. Most problems with *that* consist in using *it* in its place, whereas the errors occurring with nominal *those* are found only in the combination *those who*.

7.7 Relative pronouns

Relative pronouns introduce relative clauses and they have two functional roles. Like personal pronouns, they “have coreference to an antecedent” and they function “as all of, or part of, an element in the relative clause” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:365).

There are two series of relative pronouns: (a) *wh*-pronouns (*who*, *which*, *what* etc.), and (b) *that* and zero. Neither of these series displays number or person contrast, “but the *wh*-series has gender contrast between personal *who* and nonpersonal *which*” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:366). Further, there is case contrast between subjective *who*, objective *who(m)* and genitive *whose*.¹⁵⁷

In this section, instances where a relative pronoun is either replaced by other grammatical items, incorrectly added or omitted are discussed. Instances where personal *who* is replaced by nonpersonal *which* and vice versa are treated as erroneous gender concord and so are discussed in Chapter 11.

Instances where a personal pronoun is used for a relative pronoun, with or without a preceding comma, as in **I've also got a little brother he is called N...* (S 5614) are excluded. This applies to similar cases like **I hate school thats wy I want to win a Dream* (S 33) and **We have a dog it's a shefer* (S 3114), as well as **I also got a sister her name is N and she is 19 years old* (S 620). Such cases are regarded as punctuation errors, not as grammatical errors.

Other instances which are excluded are cases where the use of *who* overlaps with that of *which*, e.g. in clauses where the antecedent of the relative is a pet considered more as a member of the family (personal relative) than an animal (nonpersonal relative) as in *We have a dog who is called Hugo...* (S 3460).¹⁵⁸ This leaves a total of 18 errors, displayed in Table 7.7a:

Table 7.7a Relative pronouns and determiners: category errors.

Category errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	
16 (89%)	0	2 (11%)	18

The figures show that all errors are category errors. Of these, 89% (n=16) are instances of substitution and the remaining 11% (n=2) are cases of omission.

¹⁵⁷ For a discussion of the formal and informal use of *who(m)*, see Quirk *et al.* (1985:367), Swan (1995:435) and Ljung & Ohlander (1992:214).

¹⁵⁸ This is connected to the question of relative gender concord. See Quirk *et al.* (1985:1245).

There are instances where either *that* or *who* /*which* are possible, especially in restrictive relative clauses.¹⁵⁹ Cases like these have been given a separate column in the table below. Thus, the substitution cases involve replacing *what*, *that/which* or *who*, *whose*, *that* and *who* mainly by other pronouns, as shown in Table 7.7b:

Table 7.7b Category errors: substitution. Number of errors where other items are used to replace the relatives.

Replace-ment	<i>what</i> replaced by:	<i>that/which</i> or <i>tat/who</i> replaced by:	<i>whose</i> replaced by:	<i>that</i> replaced by:	<i>who</i> replaced by:	Total
<i>which</i>			1			1
<i>that</i>	4				1	5
<i>who's</i>		1	1			2
<i>how</i>		1				1
<i>what</i>		1		1		2
<i>as</i>		3				3
<i>like</i>	1					1
<i>the one's</i>	1					1
Total	6	6	2	1	1	16

First, there are six instances where *what* is replaced.¹⁶⁰ In its place, *that* appears four times, as in (382), and once each *the one's* and *like* are used, in (383) and (384):

- (382) I want to hear about that ather teenagers think and says. [what] (S 5229)
 (383) The only money I could spare was the one's I gave away... [what] (S 4379)
 (384) ...he don't have done like I want and don't looke like you. [what] (S 4646)

Next, there are another seven instances where either *that* /*which*¹⁶¹, or *that* /*who*, is possible but something else occurs instead. In five of these cases,

¹⁵⁹ Using *that* in nonrestrictive clauses with antecedents referring to persons is not grammatically incorrect although it seems to be less acceptable to NSs and also in the Cobuild corpus. This is especially true with antecedents like *we*, *my sister* or *my friend*. See Olofsson (1981) for a detailed discussion on relative clauses. There is only one case of the type *we that* in the data. However, a more thorough search would have to be done to investigate this in detail.

¹⁶⁰ This is often referred to as a “free relative”, i.e. a combination of antecedent + relative pronoun, e.g. *that+which*. See Trotta (2001:125ff).

¹⁶¹ In one of these, **I've got all what it takes to earn at least one week in England* (S 2103), only *that* or \emptyset is possible. In the others both *that* and *which* are correct

that/which is replaced twice by *as*¹⁶², as in (385), and twice by *what*, as in (386) below. Once each it is replaced by *who*'s (387) and *how* (388). In the remaining instance *that/who* is also replaced by *as*, in (389):

- (385) I even got a dog as we count to our family. [that/which/(who)] (S 5567)
 (386) One thing what would be intresting to see is how... [that/which] (S 569)
 (387) We we just have to dealing with the problems who's exist today. [that/which] (S 4736)
 (388) I think at the most important thing how we could talk about ... [that/which] (S 5458)
 (389) I wane see the other people as coming and... [that/who /are coming/] (S 5327)

The genitive form *whose* is replaced twice: once by *which* and once by *who*'s in (390) and (391):

- (390) I'm going in a school wich name is Y. [whose] (S 5827)
 (391) I have a bird ho's name is koko,... [whose] (S 1487)

There are two instances of category omission.¹⁶³ They demonstrate omission of *who* in (392), and *that*, in (393):

- (392) In Kopehagen there is alot off people o just need any help. [who] (S 4074)
 (393) i hope the war and the world is the thing o are most important... [/are the things/ that] (S 5025)

However, in (392) the structure could perhaps be acceptable and in accordance with the SVO structure in *There are plenty of people getting promotion* (Quirk *et al.* 1985:1404), but then *need* would have to be in the *-ing* form (i.e. another type of error) or possibly rephrased into *...there are a lot of people just in need of any help*.

Summing up this section, only category errors appear with the relatives. A majority of errors occur with *what* and *that*. On the whole, there are relatively few errors involving relative pronouns. It should be kept in mind, however, that the distinction between *who* and *which* is not treated here, but in section 11.5 on gender concord.

¹⁶² In (390) it could be argued that *who(m)* is acceptable, if the pet is regarded more as a family member, but it is recorded among the cases relating to *that/which*. See also the introduction to this section. In the other instance where *as* appears, *who* is not a possible alternative.

¹⁶³ Instances like **I am a girl 15 years old* are regarded as punctuation problems (omission of a comma) rather than omission of a relative pronoun.

7.8 Interrogative pronouns and determiners

Formally, the interrogative pronouns *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *what* and *which* are identical with the *wh*-series of the relative pronouns but they have different functions (Quirk *et al.* 1985:368). They have corresponding interrogative determiners in the forms *whose*, *what* and *which*. The subjective, objective and genitive case forms *who*, *who(m)* and *whose* are personal, whereas the remaining two, *what* and *which*, have no contrast in case, nor in person.

In the corpus, errors occur only with interrogative *what* (including exclamatory *what*) in a specific idiomatic context. All in all, 23 errors have been found, as shown in Table 7.8a:

Table 7.8a Interrogative pronouns and determiners: category errors.

Category errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	
21 (91%)	2 (9%)	0	23

All errors are category errors, and a vast majority of them are instances of substitution. There are also two cases of addition.

The 21 cases of substitution all consist in using the interrogative adverb *how* instead of *what* in indirect questions. Most instances involve two specific constructions: either *what something is/are/will be /like* (n=10), as in (394) and (395), or *what something looks like* (n=6), as in (396) and (397)¹⁶⁴:

- (394) ... I would like to see how it is like to go to a British school. [what it is like] (S 401)
- (395) Maybe they want to know how it is to live in a town like 6. [what it is like] (S 3785)
- (396) ... so I know a little about how you look like. [what you look like] (S 1460)
- (397) Because there I can see how it looks inside a British school. [what it looks like] (S 2238)

In the remaining five instances, the constructions *what someone /should,would/ do or think* are incorrectly rendered four times, as in (398) and (399), and once, in (400), the construction *what something is* is incorrect:

¹⁶⁴ It is difficult to label this type of problem as being either grammatical or lexical/idiomatic. However, they are here treated as grammatical errors, partly because they highlight contrastive differences between English and Swedish. It may be mentioned that in 12 of the 21 instances found, *like* was omitted from these constructions (in one case it is optional). This type of omission is discussed in Chapter 9.

- (398) ...and we got to find out how we should do. [what] (S 5692)
 (399) I want to see how they think about sweden ... [what] (S 5786)
 (400) how the reules ar and how they work. [what] (S 2467)

There is one case of category addition, in which the two construction types discussed in the previous paragraphs are apparently mixed up. In (401) *like* is added to a construction with exclamatory *what*:

- (401) I have always wanted to travel and see new places and I've heard so much about what a wonderful country Britian is like, and... [what ...is] (S 2501)

With the interrogatives there are only errors involving *what*, all of them category errors. A majority of them are errors of substitution, most often idiomatic constructions like *what x is* or *what x is like*. Instead of the correct interrogative pronoun *what* we find the interrogative adverb *how*.

7.9 Indefinite pronouns and determiners

There are several subclasses of pronouns and determiners that are covered by the term "indefinite". Major features are the facts that they "lack the element of definiteness which is found in the personal, reflexive, possessive, and demonstrative pronouns, and to some extent also in *wh*-pronouns" and that they are "in a logical sense, quantitative: they have universal or partitive meaning, and correspond closely to determiners of the same or of similar form" (Quirk *et al.* 1985:376).

This type of pronoun is notoriously difficult to define and "considerable differences will be found from grammar to grammar with respect to its membership, its name and further subdivisions within it" (Huddleston, 1984:298). In this study, the classification is basically the one used in Quirk *et al.* (1985).

The pronouns and determiners in this section are discussed in five classes: (1) universal (*every*~, *all both*), as in *Everyone over 18 can apply/The games are open to all nationalities/ Both children are tall*; (2) assertive (*some*-series¹⁶⁵, multal¹⁶⁶, paucal¹⁶⁷, "prop word" *one*), as in *Some / Many / A*

¹⁶⁵ The indefinite article *a(n)* can carry the meaning of 'inte/ någon, något, några' in Swedish when used in negated and interrogative clauses with count nouns in the singular (*I haven't got a ticket*). Similarly, *one* can contrast with *some* as a substitute pronoun. For contrastive reasons, instances of this type, where *a(n)* or *one* is incorrectly replaced by other constructions are included in this subclass and recorded together with the pronouns belonging to the *some*-series. Compare Ljung & Ohlander (1992:226) and Swan (1995:49).

few apples had been eaten/ Would you like *one*?; (3) nonassertive (*any/one* etc, *either, any*), as in *I haven't got any apples./ Either book will do*; and (4) negative (*no one, no/body, etc, none, neither, no*), as in *No one came to the games/ None of the boys won*. There is also a fifth, separate group (5) for *other* and *another* which, in this study, is reduced to *other/s* since no errors occurred where *another* is the correct form. Examples of this class are *The other children had oranges /The others had oranges*. Errors of the type where, e.g., *many* is used instead of the correct *much*, or vice versa (*There is much cars in the streets*), are treated as concord errors and, thus, found in Chapter 11.

All in all, 57 errors have been found, distributed over category and realisation errors as shown in Table 7.9a:

Table 7.9a Indefinite pronouns and determiners: category and realisation errors.

Category errors:			Realisation errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	substitution	addition	omission	
33 (58%)	0	5 (8%)	1 (2%)	9 (16%)	9 (16%)	57

66% of the errors (n=38) are category errors, occurring mainly as instances of substitution. Only 8% are cases of omission. The remaining 34% are realisation errors, the majority divided equally between addition and omission errors 16% (n=9), and only 2% appearing as realisation substitution.

The 57 errors are assigned to the five classes of indefinite pronouns and determiners discussed above, as follows from Table 7.9b:

Table 7.9b Number of errors distributed on subclasses of indefinite pronouns and determiners.

Universal	Assertive				Non-assertive	Negative	<i>other/s</i>	Total
	i) <i>some-series</i>	ii) <i>multal</i>	iii) <i>paucal</i>	iv) <i>one</i>				
4	3	15	2	4	8	2	19	
4 (7%)	24 (42%)				8 (14%)	2 (4%)	19 (33%)	57

The figures in this table show all errors appearing with indefinite pronouns/determiners belonging to each of these classes regardless of error type. Most problems, 42% (n=24), occur with indefinite pronouns from the “assertive”

¹⁶⁶ “Multal”, includes *many/more/most/much (of)*, but also open-class quantifiers such as *a lot of* and *a great deal of*.

¹⁶⁷ “Paucal” consists of expressions like *a few (of)* and *a little (of)*.

class. In this class, expressions with *many* and *much* from the subclass “multal pronouns” create most difficulties. Another major group is the fifth class, involving *other* and *others*. This type gives rise to 33% (n=19) of the problems.

As regards the error types substitution, addition and omission, the errors will be discussed in order of frequency according to the five classes mentioned above. The substitution errors are presented in this way in Table 7.9c:

Table 7.9c. Category errors: substitution. Errors distributed on subclasses of indefinite pronouns and determiners.

<i>other/s</i>	Non-assertive	Assertive				Negative	Univer-sal	Total
		i) <i>some-series</i>	ii) multal	iii) paucal	iv) <i>one</i>			
19 (59%)	8 (23%)	3 (9%)	0	0	0	2 (6%)	1 (3%)	33

With substitution, most errors are found with *other/s* (n=19), followed by non-assertive pronouns (n=8), assertive pronouns (n=3), negative pronouns (n=2), and, finally, universal pronouns (n=1).

With the class “*other/s*”, the forms *other* and *others* are replaced eleven and eight times, respectively, and the corresponding genitive form *other people’s* is replaced once. *Other* is most frequently replaced by *others* (n=8), as in (402), but there are also instances with *another* (n=2) and *else* (n=1), as in (403) and (404). In five of these instances, the pronoun appears after a determiner or a quantifier.

- (402) ...when it whos thousand others people they kunde take. [/of/ other] (S 2881)
 (403) I want to meat a new frends, from another countrys [other] (S 4742)
 (404) I writing about how I meat Bon jovi or some else gay [other] (S 2371)

Out of the eight instances where the form *others* is incorrectly replaced, *other* is used five times, as in (405) and (406)¹⁶⁸, *the other* twice, as in (407), and the genitive form *other people’s* is replaced once by *another* in (408):

- (405) ...why you should choice me among thousands of other. [others/other people] (S 1636)
 (406) We must look up and help other. [others/each other] (S 3752)

¹⁶⁸ In this example, *each other* is a possible alternative to *others*. However, it is recorded in this section since context and NSs found this solution a slightly more common choice.

- (407) I’m a person who likes to do things that the other think is strange.
[others/other people] (S 1285)
- (408) ...Me, and my class know how important it is to meet another people children
and...[other people’s] (S 5672)¹⁶⁹

Eight instances have been found involving non-assertive pronouns. The class “non-assertive” pronouns includes *any* itself and its compounds and the *of*-pronouns *any* and *either (of)*. Errors appear only with *anything* and *any*. *Anything* is replaced five times by its assertive and universal equivalents, i.e. *something* (n=4), as in (409), and *everything* (n=1) in (410), and three times assertive *some* is used instead of *any*, in negated or interrogative clauses, as in (411):

- (409) ...we didn’t expect something else! [anything] (S 2411)
- (410) ...and I can eat almost everything that is served on my plate. [anything]
(S 295)
- (411) ...but I have never went to some of her concerts. [any] (S 338)

With the “assertive” pronouns three instances have been found, all occurring with the so-called *some*-series. This includes *some* and all compound pronouns with *some*- as the first element, e.g. *someone*. Errors involving the *some*-series only occur with *some* and *something*. *Some* is replaced once by **someones* in (412), and once by the indefinite article *a*, in (413), and once *something* is replaced by *anything*, in (414):

- (412) Everyone doesn’t do illegal things, someones just stay home... [some]
(S 5719)
- (413) ... put my snowboard on and do a hard cour snowboarding. [some] (S 52)
- (414) ...because if we don’t do anything soon, we are going to... [something]
(S 4182)

In the class “negative pronouns”, we find *no* with the compounds, the negative determiners *no* and *neither*, and the *of*-pronouns (e.g. *none* and *few (of)*). In the material, there are only two errors in which *no* is replaced either by *nothing* or *none*, in (415) and (416), respectively:

- (415) ...so skulle Im skänka 1000 to de some have nothing money. [no] (S 2857)
- (416) Peapel have no jobs and none ediceson. [no /education/] (S 4264)

¹⁶⁹ This could perhaps also be interpreted as an attempt at ...*other people, children and ...* rather than *other people’s children*.

Finally, among “universal” pronouns only one error appears, concerning *everything*, replaced by *anything* in (417):

(417) Anything is funny to do when you are in a new country. [everything] (S 916)

Category omission occurs only five times. Four of these cases involve assertive *one* being omitted, as in (418), and *ones* left out, in (419). In the remaining instance, (420), universal *all* is left out:

(418) And that’s why I want to borrow o and ride on the big hills... [one] (S 1243)

(419) ...I’m interested in many different things and I want to try new o. [ones]
(S 2349)

(420) ...I don’t no wat to say but o I con say is that... [all] (S 4200)

As regards the 19 realisation errors, they involve universal and assertive pronouns only. There is one instance of realisation substitution in which a part of the construction *a lot of* is replaced by **very lot of*:

(421) Today it’s very lot of racism and I think we could... [a lot of] (S 3535)

The realisation addition cases also involve the addition of a grammatical element to *a lot of*. In the nine cases found, this is better described as a mix-up between the two possible forms *a lot of* and *lots of*, but since an *-s* is in fact added, as in (422) and (423), these are all classified as cases of addition:

(422) I have alots of freinds how just can talk english. [lots of/ a lot of] (S 1649)

(423) I’m intrested in a lots of things ... [lots of/ a lot of] (S 2620)

Nine instances of realisation omission have been found. They are cases of partial omission, seven of them with assertive pronouns, and two involving universal pronouns. With the assertive pronouns, the indefinite article in the expressions *a lot of* and *a little* was left out. Five times incomplete variants like **lot of*, **a lot* or simply **lot* appear for the multal *a lot of*, as in (424), (425) and (426). Twice paucal *a little* is erroneously rendered, as in (427):

(424) I have lot of frends and we often play card and gos to discos. [a lot of]
(S 5968)

(425) ...that means that i and a lot other have to go up at six and...[a lot of /others/]
(S 4986)

(426) ...because it should meen lot for me...[a lot] (S 5815)

(427) Maybe I should write o little about myself... [a little] (S 62)

The remaining two instances appear with universal *the whole of*, as in (428) and (429):

- (428) I will see hole Britain and go to Cinema,... [the whole of] (S 178)
(429) We have the biggest Cathedral in the hole o Scandinavium. [the whole of] (S 283)

To sum up this section, there are both category and realisation errors although most of the problems consist in finding the correct grammatical category. Three classes of pronouns stand out as being most error prone, viz. the class concerning the use of *other/s* (n=20) and the closely related “assertive” (n=24) and “nonassertive” (n=8) classes (i.e. the *some-* and *any-* groups). With these classes, substitution is predominant. Most frequently *other* replaces *others* and *some-* replaces *any-*, and vice versa. The cases of category omission involve mainly the “prop” word *one/ones*.

Out of the 19 realisation errors found, 15 display problems in rendering *a lot of*. Most frequently the problems involve addition (n=9) and omission (n=5) of parts of this construction.

7.10 Summary of pronoun and pronominal determiner errors

There are 276 errors altogether concerning the different pronouns and their corresponding determiners. Among the eight different types of pronoun there are two areas that are clearly most prone to errors: the *it-there* distinction and indefinite pronouns/determiners. Figure 7.10.i gives an overall view of the number of errors in each area in order of frequency.

The high frequency of errors with *it/there/so* and indefinite pronouns is not very surprising since the overall frequency of these types of pronouns/determiners is higher than for all the others (except personal and possessive pronouns). Thus, the frequent use of these pronouns, combined with differences between L1 and L2 make them more prone to errors.

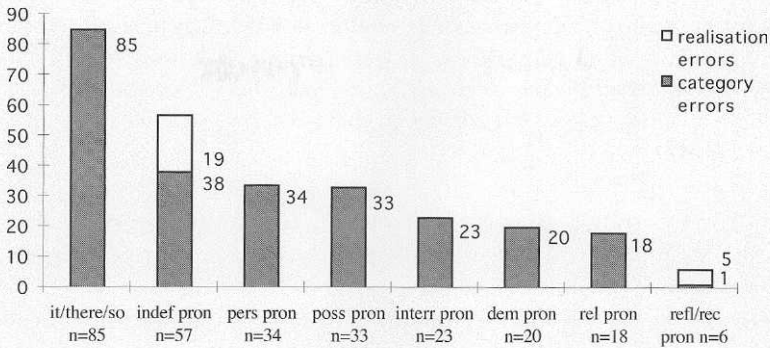


Figure 7.10.i Total number of errors involving pronouns and pronominal determiners as distributed over the eight major classes and over category and realisation errors.

In the *it/there/so* section, the errors consist mainly in using introductory *it* for existential *there*. Similarly, a problem in keeping forms apart is evident with the indefinite pronouns/determiners, where three pronouns are most exposed, viz. *other/s*, *some* and *any*. In general, the related forms replace each other, i.e. *other* occurs for *others* and *some* for *any* and vice versa. This also applies to personal pronouns, where the main problem seems to be to distinguish between the subjective and objective case forms. Most of the errors relating to possessives reveal problems in keeping this type of pronoun distinct from the personal pronouns.

As regards interrogative pronouns, a clear majority of errors involve the distinction between *what* and *how* in certain idioms, and with the demonstratives, most problems involve *that* being replaced by *it*. The errors concerning the relative pronouns consist in using the wrong relative (excluding the *who-which* distinction) or replacing it with items from completely different grammatical categories.

Finally, the very few errors involving reflexive and reciprocal pronouns are generally problems in rendering the forms correctly. Thus, this is also where some of the few realisation errors occur.

On the whole, the errors in this chapter are mainly category errors, i.e. no less than 92% of the errors derive from problems choosing the correct grammatical category. In fact, six of the eight subclasses display only category errors. This means that the 8% realisation errors only involve reflexive and indefinite pronouns.

The overall picture of pronouns and pronominal determiners is that the category substitution cases generally consist in using a replacement that belongs to either a different category (e.g., personal for possessive pronoun)

or subcategory (e.g., subjective for objective case with personal pronouns). Looking at the distinction between determiner and nominal function, it seems that the latter is more frequently represented among the errors, 66% (n=183) versus 34% (n=93).

8 Numerals

Numerals are difficult to classify since they display similarity to both open and closed word classes. They resemble the productive (open) classes in being a very large class, but they are also similar to the non-productive classes in that “the semantic relations among them are mutually exclusive and mutually defining” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:73-74), i.e. new numerals are not created in the way that, for instance, new nouns are. There are two “systems”, the cardinal numerals and the ordinal numerals, and they can function as both determiners and heads in noun phrases.

In the material, 14 instances relating to numerals have been found, as illustrated in Table 8a:

Table 8a Numerals: category errors.

Category errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	
12 (86%)	2 (14%)	0	14

All the instances are category errors of two types: substitution and addition. There are 12 instances of substitution of different types. In five of the instances an ordinal is replaced by a cardinal as in (430):

(430) Here in X goes i in school in nine grade also i am 15 years old. (S 6044)

Another five instances involve nominalised numerals like *hundreds /of/*. Three times the plural *-s* is left out, as in (431), and twice it is incorrectly added, as in (432):

(431) I don't no why they “select” me, when it whos thousand others people they kunde take. (S 2881)

(432) ...because i won 30 miljons on Lotto for one week ago. (S 2991)

The remaining two instances occur with a cardinal being replaced by an ordinal in (433) and by *once* in (434):

(433) I'm a boy how is 15th year old. [15 /years/] (S 3098)

(434) Once is ugly and sane other is fair to look at. [one is ugly...] (S 1990)

Addition occurs in two instances and only with cardinals, as in (435):

(435) in My family are we six a four girls and one brother... (S 5299)

In these cases the indefinite article is used in front of the numeral.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ Compare these examples with the similar problem in **...meet a new friends* recorded as a concord error and as such discussed in Section 11.4 on internal NP concord.

9 Prepositions

9.1 Introductory

A preposition is traditionally defined as “a word that indicates a relation between the noun or pronoun it governs and another word, which may be a verb, an adjective or another noun or pronoun” (Huddleston 1984:336). The role of prepositions “is largely or wholly grammatical” in contrast to lexical words “which carry the main semantic content” (Crystal 1997:162). However, it is not self-evident that prepositions should be included in a study limited to grammatical errors, since prepositions can be said to fall into both the lexical and the grammatical field. In many cases prepositions are grammatical in the sense that they combine with a certain verb (*look at*) or adjective (*sorry for*) to make up a grammatical unit. At the same time, there is a lexical connection governing the choice of *at* in *look at* rather than some other preposition. Other prepositions are completely free to be used in many combinations depending only on what meaning is to be conveyed (cf. *on/in/by/under the box*). “Free” prepositions are non-idiomatic in that they do not form a fixed unit with the preceding verb. In this study, however, preposition errors are included mainly on the grounds that prepositions make up a closed word-class. Also, it is of interest to find out what problems are most frequent, bearing in mind that English prepositions are generally regarded as a problem area in language learning.¹⁷¹ In Svartvik *et al.* (1973) preposition errors account for approximately 30% of the errors, in Stenström (1975) about 18%. In the present study they make up 18% of the total number of errors found.

Due to the contrast between free prepositions and prepositions more closely attached to adjectives and verbs as well as nouns (cf. Bowen, forthcoming), the errors relating to prepositions in different functions are discussed in separate subsections: PPs in complementation, PPs as adverbials and PPs as postmodifiers in NPs. The first type deals with both adjective and verb complementation. An example of the different functions is found in *turn on*, which would be treated in several sections: on the one hand, it is a free preposition when the meaning is ‘rotate on’, but, it is also a particle verb meaning, e.g., ‘switch on’ or ‘stimulate, excite’, and a prepositional verb in ‘become hostile towards’.

Some errors are clearly lexical/idiomatic. For instance, a case like **Thanks on be for hand* (S 131) is excluded because the word *beforehand* is

¹⁷¹ See Swan (1995:445ff) and e.g. Svartvik & Sager (1985).

incorrect in this context where it is supposed to mean ‘/på/ förhand’ (Engl. *in advance*). The entire phrase is incorrect and the choice of preposition is irrelevant here. Furthermore, errors with “free” prepositions are included only if the context clearly shows which is the intended meaning — doubtful or ambiguous cases are excluded (*My parents are at/in the library looking for my sister...*).

A total of 619 errors have been found concerning prepositions, the vast majority of them being category errors, as shown in Table 9.1a:

Table 9.1a Prepositions: category and realisation errors.

Category errors:			Realisation errors:			Total
substitution	addition	omission	substitution	addition	omission	
487 (79%)	51 (8%)	76 (12%)	1 (>1%)	0	4 (>1%)	619

The errors are mainly cases of category substitution, i.e. the wrong preposition is chosen in 79% (n=487) of the instances, followed by omission 12% (n=76) and addition 8% (n=51). Category addition also involves cases where no preposition is required in English, i.e. zero preposition is regarded as a grammatical category. There are only five realisation errors, all involving complex prepositions like *because of*. One is a case of substitution, the other four concern omission. The frequencies of all errors are displayed in Table 9.1b, in which the prepositions are listed in order of total frequency. For practical reasons, only examples of the most frequent errors are discussed separately in this chapter.

On the whole, Table 9.1b below shows that there are five predominant prepositions, *to*, *in*, *at*, *of* and *for*, making up 78% (n=484) of the errors. These, and the next five in the table, are more or less identical to Kennedy’s (1998) findings regarding the ten most frequent prepositions used in written material.¹⁷²

¹⁷² Compare figures from a frequency investigation of prepositions in written (and spoken) English based on the BNC, British National Corpus, carried out by Professor Graeme Kennedy, University of Wellington, New Zealand, 1998. Kennedy’s findings show that *of*, *in*, *to*, *for*, *on*, *with*, *by*, *at*, *from* and *as* are the most frequent prepositions in written material.

Table 9.1b Errors involving prepositions as distributed on error type in total frequency order.

Preposition	Category errors:			Realisation errors			Total
	subst. omission	addition		subst. omission	addition		
<i>to</i>	135	3	12	-	-	-	150
<i>in</i>	93	8	13	-	-	-	114
<i>at</i>	84	5	8	-	-	-	97
<i>of</i>	45	6	13	-	-	-	64
<i>for</i>	38	11	10	-	-	-	59
<i>about</i>	20	1	6	-	-	-	27
<i>on</i>	14	8	5	-	-	-	27
<i>by</i>	14	4	2	-	-	-	20
<i>with</i>	9	5	2	-	-	-	16
complex	8	-	-	1	-	4	13
<i>during</i>	6	-	-	-	-	-	6
<i>outside</i>	5	-	-	-	-	-	5
<i>from</i>	5	-	3	-	-	-	8
<i>as</i>	3	-	-	-	-	-	3
<i>into</i>	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
<i>across</i>	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
<i>among</i>	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
<i>until</i>	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
<i>except</i>	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
<i>like</i>	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
<i>but</i>	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
<i>up</i>	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
<i>upon</i>	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Total	487 (79%)	51 (8%)	76 (12%)	1 (>1%)	0	4 (>1%)	619

Most errors are cases of substitution where the five most frequently appearing prepositions are generally replaced by a set of seven prepositions including the same most frequent ones, as shown in Table 9.1c:

Table 9.1c Substitution of prepositions. The most frequent replacements of the five most frequent prepositions.

Preposition replaced	Replacement									Total
	<i>on</i>	<i>in</i>	<i>at</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>of</i>	<i>about</i>	<i>with</i>	<i>for</i>	misc.	
<i>to</i>	49	57	13	-	2	-	6	7	1	135
<i>in</i>	45	-	18	5	14	7	2	-	2	93
<i>at</i>	43	33	-	4	4	-	-	-	-	84
<i>of</i>	14	13	7	3	-	2	-	2	4	45
<i>for</i>	3	9	3	18	3	1	-	-	1	38
Total	154	112	41	30	23	10	8	9	8	395

The same set of prepositions are also most frequently overused (i.e. added) and omitted in the material, although in a slightly different order. Moving on to the different functions of the PPs involved in these errors, it should be of interest to find out whether the same pattern holds in all types of PP functions.

9.2 Prepositional phrases as complements

Prepositional phrases as complements can be of three kinds: verb, adjective and noun complementation (cf. Bowen, forthcoming). The first type includes "phrasal verbs". In this study, this term is used as a cover term incorporating particle verbs, prepositional verbs and particle-prepositional verbs (cf. Cowie & Mackin 1993).¹⁷³ Adjective complements are similar to verb complements, although they are not as fixed units as phrasal verbs. For instance, it is often possible for the same adjective to go with two or more prepositions, as for example with *angry about*, *angry at* and *angry with* (Quirk *et al.* 1985:1221). Both types of complementation are treated in this section. No cases involving noun complementation have been found. All in all, there are 259 errors relating to PPs as complements, accounting for 42% of the preposition errors: 74% (n=191) involve phrasal verbs and 26% (n=68) concern adjective complementation.

¹⁷³ Quirk *et al.* (1985:1150ff) use the term "multi-word verbs" to cover these types referred to as phrasal verbs, prepositional verbs and phrasal-prepositional verbs.

9.2.1 Prepositional phrases as verb complements

There are three types of structures discussed in this subsection: (1) verbs taking objects or complements with a preposition, (2) verbs that take objects or complements without a preposition, and (3), verbs with a required object followed by a PP (e.g. *tell sb. about sth.*). Except for one instance, *look forward to*, a particle-prepositional verb, all instances of types (1) and (3) involve prepositional verbs.

In the data, a total of 191 errors of these types occur, making up 31% of the preposition errors. They are all regarded as category errors rather than realisation errors since each preposition has a specific function in these structures. Table 9.2.1a shows the distribution of the errors found:

Table 9.2.1a Phrasal verb (V+PP) constructions: category errors

Type of verb structure	Category errors:			Total
	substitution	addition	omission	
(1) V+prep+object	138	0	16	154
(2) V (no prep) +object	0	17	0	17
(3) V+ object + PP	20	0	0	20
Total	158 (83%)	17 (9%)	16 (8%)	191

Most errors, 83% (n=158), are cases of substitution, followed by addition, 9% (n=17), omission making up the remaining 8% (n=16). The substitution errors occur with two types of structures, the majority (n=138) involving V+prep+ object and a smaller number, (n=20), involving V+object+PP. In 114 of the 138 instances of the former type, five different prepositional verbs are involved: *go to* meaning 'attend' or 'visit' (n=107), as in (436), *listen to* (n=3), as in (437), *talk to* (n=1), *happen to* (n=1) and *be to* (n=1), and once a particle-prepositional verb, *look forward to* appears instead, in (438).

- (436) I think it would be fun to go on this conference, because... [go to] (S 3178)
 (437) I also like to listen on music. [listen to] (S 996)
 (438) ...remember I'm looking so much forward for this... [look forward to] (S 388)

In all of these cases, the errors consist in replacing *to* with *in* (n=57), *on* (n=44), *at* (n=10), *with* (n=2) or *for* (n=1) (cf. Table 9.1c).

Among the remaining 24 instances of this type of structure there are a variety of prepositions involved. Five instances involve *on* being replaced by

to (n=3), with (n=1) and of (n=1) in the prepositional verbs *go on (holiday)*, *count on*, *agree on*, as in (439)¹⁷⁴, (440) and (441):

- (439) Most of all id like to go to the Adventureholidays... [go on] (S 141)
(440) I'am counting with you guys. [count on] (S 808)
(441) Maybe we can agree of something and... [agree on] (S 3166)

In four instances, *about* in *complain about*, *think about*, *speak about* and *learn about* is replaced by *of* (n=2), as in (442), *at* (n=1), in (443) and *with* (n=1), in (444):

- (442) ... insted of complaining of what I not want to do. [complain about] (S 2048)
(443) And allso think at the natur use electriccars etc. [think about] (S 3684)
(444) ...to speak with other peopel with intresting things. [speak about] (S 5349)

The remaining errors include prepositions in various common expressions, such as *look at*, *scream at*, *hope for*, *qualify for* and *learn from*, where *at* (n=3), *for* (n=3) and *from* (n=3) are replaced by *on*, *to* and *of*, as in the following examples:

- (445) ... they are saing on the TV without looking on the translation.[look at] (S 2083)
(446) ...because he was screaming to his best friend. [scream at] (S 4090)
(447) I hope on a soon answer... [hope for] (S 3995)
(448) I hope Liverpool will qualified themseleves to it. [qualify for] (S 1263)
(449) I've have learn more english of my friends then in school. [learn from] (S 1650)

Substitution of the preposition also occurs in the V+object+PP structure, accounting for the remaining 20 instances. Most of them (n=8) involve PPs with *about*, mainly in the structure *do sth. about sth.*, as in (450), but also *tell sb. about sth.* (451), and *think sth. about sb./sth.* in (452):

- (450) ... we have to do something to the unemployment... [do sth. about] (S 3421)
(451) Now, I've been telling you a little by myself, ... [tell sb. about sth.] (S 2186)
(452) of peace and understanding i'm choir the most of the poeple in sweden think the same. [think sth. about sb./sth.] (S 3595)

In the instances found, *about* is replaced by *of* (n=3), *for* (n=2), *against* (n=1), *by* (n=1) and *to* (n=1). Other structures found involve *for* (n=6) being

¹⁷⁴ Adventure Holidays does not refer to a place such as a leisure park or fun fair. Instead it is about holiday trips on offer. See Appendix 2.

replaced either by *to* (n=5) or *on* (n=1), e.g. *choose sb. for sth.*, as in (453), and *do sth. for sb.*, as in (454):

- (453) ... the jury is mad he's chosen me on a free tripp to norway but ... [for]
(S 1487)
- (454) I think it's very important for our kids, and their kids to know that we did
something to them. [do sth. for sb.] (S 6032)

The rest of the instances involve *to* (n=2) and one instance each of *from*, *into*, *of* and *with* replaced by *for* in *save sb. from sth.*, as in (455), and *to* in *take notice of sth.*, in (456), and *communicate with sb.*, in (457):

- (455) ... that we're going to save the world for distruction and... [from] (S 6033)
- (456) So I hope dear conference that you take notice to my letter. [of] (S 4425)
- (457) I don't have any difficulties communicating to unknown people. [with]
(S 4035)

The 17 cases of category addition occur only with the V+object structure, where no preposition is required in L2 (sections 15.1 and 16.5). Here, many different verbs appear, e.g. *watch*, *climb*, *plan* and *try*. The prepositions added are *at* (n=5) resulting in **watch at*, **cheer at* and **ride at (a horse)*, as in (458); *on* (n=5) used in structures like *see on something* and **try on sports*, as in (459); *with* (n=3) appearing in, e.g., **take something with* (meaning *bring*) and **fly with something*, as in (460) and (461); *in* (n=2), as in **climb in mountains* (462), and finally, *about* (n=1) in **discuss about something*, as in (463), and *upon* (n=1) in **have someone to trust upon*, in (464):

- (458) I like to read books and watch at TV. [watch sth.] (S 5813)
- (459) I have tried on a lot of sports but ... [tried sth.] (S 256)
- (460) ... and he takes his reafel with and we go out... [takes sth.] (S 1818)
- (461) I like the more adventurous sports like rock climbing, freestyle skiing and flying with aeroplanes. [flying sth.] (S 3126)
- (462) I want to climb in mountains and i like watersports. [climb sth.] (S 2539)
- (463) ... It's imporment to discuss about how we are going to ... [discuss sth.]
(S 5763)
- (464) children who don't have anyone to trust upon. [trust sb.] (S 3484)

There are also 16 instances of omission in the V+prep+obj structure. They involve omission of four different prepositions. *To* is missing seven times from instances such as *go to+ NP*, *object to something* and *talk to somebody*, as in (465), (466) and (467):

“To Err Is Human”

- (465) All in my family hope’s that I could go \emptyset England ... [go to] (S 165)
(466) So the testing, of shampoo and[...] is highly objected \emptyset . [object to sth.]
(S 4385)
(467) ... have somebody to be with and somebody to talk \emptyset ... [talk to] (S 5225)

About is left out six times in expressions like *think about*, *read about*, *know about* and *talk about*, as in the following examples:

- (468) ...but you never think \emptyset how much work the person... [think about] (S 266)
(469) ...I have to read \emptyset it in school (for a test or something)... [read about] (S 2834)
(470) ... it’s [...] exciting to know \emptyset other countries. [know about] (S 2894)
(471) ... and we talk \emptyset how we have it here in Sweden,... [talk about]

Finally, *from*, *up*¹⁷⁵ and *with* are missing in *learn from*, in (472), *go up*, in (473) and *play with*, in (474):

- (472) I tink I learn very much \emptyset what ader peopel...[learn /very much/ from]
(S 4273)
(473) ...so this month the price have went \emptyset by 25% and... [go up] (S 4687)
(474) I often play \emptyset computer. [with /the, my/] (S 5964)

Summing up, most preposition errors relating to verb structures consist in replacing the preposition in very common prepositional verbs. The problem generally involves the most frequently used prepositions *to*, *about*, *on*, *at*, *from*, and *with*.

9.2.2 Prepositional phrases as adjective complements

Problems with prepositions in adjective complementation account for 12% (n=68) of the preposition errors. For the same reason as with phrasal verbs (V+PP structures), all errors are classified as category errors. Table 9.2.2a shows the distribution over the operations involved:

Table 9.2.2a PPs as adjective complements: category errors

Type	Category errors:			Total
	substitution	addition	omission	
Adj+PP	50 (74%)	9 (13%)	9 (13%)	68

¹⁷⁵ Although there is a contrast between prepositions and particles, here, the only example of a particle verb error involving *go up* is treated in connection with the prepositions.

In Adj+PP structures, too, cases of substitution dominate, accounting for 74% (n=50) of the instances, addition and omission making up 13% (n=9) each. Three prepositions are predominant in the errors: *in*, *at* and *to*. Out of the substitution cases the most frequent types involve problems with *in* (n=19). In all the instances, the correct preposition is replaced by *of* (n=12) or *about* (n=7), as in (475) and (476):

- (475) I'm intrested of hockey. [in] (S 1171)
 (476) I am also very interesting about motors and cars. [in] (S 1450)

The second most frequent preposition involved in errors is *at* (n=13). The errors occur in the expressions *good/better/best at*, *bad at* and *the greatest at*. Among the first type, *at* is replaced by *on*, as in (477), *in*, as in (478) and (479), or *of*, in (480):

- (477) I'm very good on dancing. [at] (S 7)
 (478) I'm not so good in school. [at] (S 1577)
 (479) ... I want to be better in Englisch and I want to have new friends. [at]
 (S 4837)
 (480) ...a really good school for student who wants to be best of horses. [at]
 (S 1689)

In the two remaining expressions the preposition is replaced by *in* and the infinitive marker *to*, respectively, as in (481) and (482):

- (481) I'm very bad in English and 'cause that I wont to talk more... [at] (S 5348)
 (482) And I'am one of the worlds greatest to reapere motors. [at /repairing/]
 (S 2980)

The third most frequent preposition is *to* (n=7). Six different replacements appear: *with* (n=3), *for* (n=2), *at* (n=1), and *against* (n=1). The most common adjective expressions involved are exemplified in (483), (484) and (485):

- (483) ... and that's very important for me. [to] (S 4099)
 (484) But my father is married whit my stepmother. [to] (S 4670)
 (485) I am 15 yers old and my family are very nice aginst me. [to] (S 4824)

Other common errors in adjective expressions involve, e.g., *angry with* and *sorry for*, as in (486) and (487):

- (486) ... and they have asked if I am angry of them. [angry with] (S 1884)
 (487) Right now i lying in my bed and feels sorry about my self. [for] (S 3066)

Category addition occurs in nine instances, a majority of them involving expressions with *near*, *more* and *most*. With *near*, *by* is added (n=4), as in (488), and with the two other expressions *of* is inserted (n=4), as in (489) and (490). There is also one instance in which *of* is added to the expression *countries today*, in (491):

- (488) I live in Sweden, near by X. [near X] (S 1656)
 (489) ... a good apurtiunety to learn a little bit more of english. [more E.] (S 1408)
 (490) I think that most of Swedish young people think that peace and... [most Sw.] (S 5877)
 (491) ...war and terror that are existing in many countries of today. [countries today] (S 3932)

The remaining nine category omission cases involve leaving out *of* (n=3), *in* (n=2), *from* (n=1), *to* (n=1) and *with* (n=1). Some of them are exemplified below:

- (492) If we hav time i wanted to see the hoolle o England. [of] (S 2463)
 (493) i`m pretty interested a and conserved over how young people are being... [in] (S 4786)
 (494) The school isn`t far away a my home so every morning I ...[from] (S 5108)

Summing up this subsection, several very common adjective expressions appear among the errors accounted for.

9.3 Prepositional phrases as adverbials

Most prepositional errors involve adverbials, which account for 42% (n=260) of the errors. The most frequent prepositions in this type of PP error are *in* (n=87), *at* (n=75), *for* (n=33), *on* (n=17), and *to* (n=13), all also among the most frequent prepositions in Table 9.1b. The distribution over category and realisation errors is displayed in Table 9.3a:

Table 9.3a PPs as adverbials: category and realisation errors

Type	Category errors:			Realisation errors:			Total
	substitution	addition	omission	substitution	addition	omission	
Adverbial	201 (77%)	18 (7%)	39 (15%)	1 (>1%)	0	1 (>1%)	260

The vast majority of errors are category errors, accounting for 99% (n=258) of the errors found. Realisation errors occur only with complex prepositions, making up 1% (n=2) of the total 260 errors. On the whole, adverbials of time and place, e.g. *in my sparetime* and *in the summer*, are the most frequent. With this type of PP error, category substitution is also the dominant type of operation.

Out of the 201 substitution errors, the five prepositions most frequently replaced are *in*, *at*, *for*, *on* and *to* accounting for 86% (n=173) of the substitution errors. The first preposition, *in*, is replaced 73 times, generally by *on* (n=45) and *at* (n=18), as in (495) and (496) below. It is also replaced by *to* (n=5), *of* (n=2) as well as by *with*, *during* and *inside*, once each in the remaining instances.

(495) On my spare time I play guitar. [in] (S 32)

(496) At the summer I usually play football... [in] (S 1648)

At is the second most frequent preposition replaced: 67 instances have been found. *At* is most frequently replaced by *on* (n=39) and *in* (n=25). Again, these are mainly adverbials of place, as shown in the examples below. In the remaining three instances, *of* appears twice and *to* once.

(497) ...i dreamed about getting to England and play fotball on Wembly. [at]
(S 3062)

(498) On the conference I think we should talk a lot about healthcare. [at] (S 3508)

(499) ... think is important to discus in the international conference... [at] (S 3389)

The third preposition, *for*, is replaced 17 times. Here, the two most common replacements are *in* (n=9) and *to* (n=4), as in (500), (501), and (502), followed by four instances in which *at* (n=3) and *into* (n=1) appear instead. The most frequent context causing problems involves time adverbials, especially *for X years* and *for the rest of my life*:

(500) I have lived abroad in 6,5 years... [for] (S 715)

(501) I won't a free ticket because I haven't any many to a ticket. [for] (S 3673)

(502) Because I hadn't seen him at six years. [for] (S 1958)

In fourth place we find *on*. In the nine instances found, *at* (n=7) and *in* (n=2) appears in its place, as in (503) and (504):

(503) All the things you see at TV,... [on] (S 5764)

(504) I live with my parents and my sister in the outskirts of a quite big town called X. [on/ the outskirts of] (S 2828)

A further 10% (n=27) of the category substitution cases involve the simple prepositions *to* (n=7), *by* (n=6) and *during* (n=6), but also the complex prepositions *because of* (n=5), *instead of* (n=1), *in front of* (n=1) and *out of* (n=1), as exemplified below. *Because of* is replaced four times by *because* and once by *for*:

- (505) I have been on 24 motor shows and I like it very much. [to] (S 1953)
(506) I have to travel with bus every day. [by] (S3720)
(507) ...the wimbledon tennis cup is under the time that we would be in Britain.
[during] (S 1705)
(508) I'm very bad in English and 'cause that I wont to talk... [because of]
(S 5348)
(509) We can't be sitting in our big house before the TV and... [in front of]
(S 4845)
(510) And why would you just pick me in a thousand others. [out of] (S 2923)

The remaining eight instances involving *about*, *across*, *as*, *but*, *from*, *until* (one instance each) and *with* (n=2), are not discussed here, but are simply shown in Table 9.1b, all in order of total frequency, irrespective of their grammatical function.

The 18 instances of category addition involve *for* (n=7), *in* (n=3), *on* (n=3), *to* (n=3), *of* (n=1) and *with* (n=1). Again, all of them are among the most frequent prepositions found in Table 9.1b. These are special cases, treated here as addition errors although the correct “category” is a “zero” preposition, i.e. no preposition is required in English (section 3.1).

Most of the seven instances where *for* is incorrectly added involve expressions with adverbials like *X years ago* or similar (n=5), as in (511) and (512):

- (511) For two years ago I played tennis but I stopped. [two years ago] (S 1758)
(512) ... crime is growing for each day and we teenagers ... [growing each day]
(S 4520)

In is mainly added in expressions like *these days* and */walk/ around the streets*, as in (513) and (514); *on* occurs incorrectly in instances as in (515), and *to* is added in cases like (516):

- (513) ...people are so stranges in these days. [these days] (S 5627)
(514) ... and walk around in the streets of London. [around the streets] (S 1792)
(515) ...when I followed my dad on elkhunting. [/accompanied my dad/ elk hunting] (S 2837)

- (516) I will going to Madechange in England. [I will go to X/ in England]
(S 2855)

Category omission occurs in 40 instances, the majority of which, 70% (n=28), appear with *in* (n=11), *for* (n=9) and *at* (n=8). The instances concerning *in* and *for* are mainly adverbials of time and place, as in (517) and (518), whereas all the omission cases of *at* involve the expression *at home*, as in (519):

- (517) I live in Sweden, ø X, and I like it. [in] (S 5918)
(518) ...it's we that's going to live with it ø the rest of our lives. [for] (S 5481)
(519) I have 5 pets ø *home*, 2 birds, fish, 1 rat, 1 dog. (S 2962)

The remaining 12 instances of omission concern *on* (n=5), *to* (n=3), *by* (n=2) *of* (n=2) and *from* (n=2). Some interesting examples are shown below:

- (520) See you ø 3 July. [on] (S 5213)
(521) Education is one step closer ø a better environment. [to] (S 5174)
(522) I will go ø underground. [by] (S 2300)
(523) The school isn't far away ø my home so... [from] (S 5108)

The two realisation errors occur with complex prepositions. The only case of substitution involves *out of*, in which *of* is replaced by *from*, in (524). The other error is a case of omission, where *in* is left out in the construction *in front of*, in (525):

- (524) And it would be nice to get out from this boring town. [out of] (S 5621)
(525) I see it on picture but not ø *front of* me. [in front of] (S 2301)

To sum up, a total of 260 errors have been found relating to PP adverbials. Almost all of them are category errors, involving mainly the five most frequent prepositions in Table 9.1b.

9.4 Prepositional phrases as postmodifiers in noun phrases

PPs as modifiers in NPs, i.e. postmodifiers, account for 16% (n=100) of the errors relating to prepositions. The prepositions most commonly involved in errors in this type of PP function are *of* (n=47), *for* (n=15), *by* (n=6), *to* (n=6) and *about* and *outside*, both found in five instances each. Most errors, 97% (n=97), are category errors, as illustrated in Table 9.4a:

Table 9.4a PPs as modifiers in NPs: category and realisation errors

Type	Category errors:			Realisation errors:			Total
	substitution	addition	omission	substitution	addition	omission	
NP+PP	78 (78%)	8 (8%)	11 (11%)	0	0	3 (3%)	100

A clear majority of the errors involve category substitution, followed by omission 11% and addition 8%. Realisation errors are very few: only three cases of omission have been found.

Among the substitution cases, the prepositions most frequently involved in the errors are *of* (n=40), *for* (n=10) and *by* (n=6). The first of these, *of*, is most frequently replaced by *on* (n=14), *in* (n=12) and *at* (n=6). *On* appears incorrectly mainly in the expression (*an*) *example of* and *the name of sth.*, as in (526) and (527). *In* is used in instances like (528) and *at* occurs in, e.g., (529):

- (526) All this three things are example on things that could... [examples of] (S 4086)
- (527) I sutudging in Sveden and the name on the school is Xschool. [name of] (S 2022)
- (528) But if I use my knowledge in karte in other times then self defens ... [of /karate/] (S 199)
- (529) I am a girl at 15 years and my hobbies are... [of] (S 2955)

The remaining instances where *to*, *for*, *over* and *about* are incorrectly used for *of* involve various types of expressions and structures, as in the following examples:

- (530) ... she has resently become a mother to a little baby-girl. [of] (S 4395)
- (531) This is the begining for the rest of our life. [of] (S 5462)
- (532) If I would do a list over what I want to buy in England... [of] (S 365)
- (533) ...and I have seen thousands of picture about Britain [of] (S 393)

The second most common type of problem concerns *for* (n=10) replaced mainly by *of* or *to* in structures like *the reason for sth.*, as in (534) and *money for sth.* or *find/get jobs for someone*, as in (535):

- (534) The reson of my dreams is that i have never been abroad. [for] (S 1998)
- (535) Nowadays it is a big problem to get jobs to everybody... [for] (S 3814)

Third, the problems with *by* (n=6) involves the use of *with* in its place in the structure *by the name of*, as in (536):

(536) I'm a 16 years old swedish girl with name N. [by /the name of/] (S 1930)

Three prepositions, *about*, *to* and *outside*, account for 5 instances each. *About* is replaced either by *of* or *with*, exemplified in (537) and (538). *To* is replaced by *of*, *on* and *for*, as in (539), (540) and (541), and instead of *outside* we find *out of*, exemplified in (542):

- (537) I think the idea with a international conference for teenagers is terrific. [about] (S 4345)
 (538) That's why I think questions of the enviroment is wery important. [about] (S 5160)
 (539) ..the only thing we do there is to write answers of a lot of stupid questiuns...[to] (S 770)
 (540) I't moust be an end on that war. [to] (S 3550)
 (541) ...and that is very difficult to find a salution for. [/solution/ to] (S 5080)
 (542) ...end I like to work out of sweden because I can see hall the world. [outside] (S 4072)

The remaining prepositions, *with* (n=2) as well as *as*, *in*, *like*, and *except* (one instance each), are simply listed in Table 9.1b, irrespective of their grammatical function.

The eight instances of category addition involve three prepositions only: *for* (n=4), *in* (n=3) and *with* (n=1). *For* is incorrectly added to structures where the interrogative determiner *what*+NP with nonpersonal reference occurs, as in (543). *In* is added mainly to a NP functioning as premodifier, as in (544), which also causes a word order error, and in one case *with* is added in an expression involving a quantifying determiner, in (545):

- (543) ...and what they have for books and... [what books they have] (S 2683)
 (544) ... or see the final in Wimbledon tennis. [Wimbledon tennis final] (S 486)
 (545) ...that I have enough wit qualifications to join your conference. (S 4334)

The 10 category omission cases are also restricted to three prepositions: *of* (n=8), *for* (n=1) and *to* (n=1). Omission of *of* occurs mainly in the expression *by the name of*, as in (546), whereas *for* is omitted in (547) and *to* in (548):

- (546) I'm a 16 years old swedish girl with name ø N. [of] (S 1930)
 (547) ...EU is an inportent thing for the young people and ø school.[for] (S 4707)
 (548) ...it would nice to take a tripp somevere, for example ø: USA a year... [to] (S 2778)

Finally, there are three realisation errors, all involving complex prepositions such as *in front of*. Part of it has been omitted in the instances found, as exemplified by (549):

(549) ... the picture o front of me. [in front of] (S 2301)

9.5 Summary of preposition errors

To conclude this chapter, a total of 619 errors have been found relating to prepositions. Almost all of them are category errors. A clear majority of the errors, 78% (n=484), occur with five different prepositions: *to* (n=150), *in* (n=114), *at* (n=97), *of* (n=64), and *for* (n=59). Errors are most frequent with adverbials, accounting for 42% (n=260) of the errors, rather than phrasal verbs (V+PP), 31% (n=191), PPs as modifiers in NPs, 16% (n=100) or adjective complements, 11% (n=68), as illustrated in Figure 9.5.i below. In Svartvik *et al.* (1973), PP adverbials also dominate, although not as clearly as in the present study, accounting for 37% of the errors, followed by PPmod at 36%, V+PPs 25% and only 1% Adj+PP structures. The results in Mukattash (1978) are similar — PPA_{adv} 37%, PPmod 19%, V+PP 17%, and Adj+PP 9% — although there is a large group of items collapsed into a miscellaneous category, making up 15% in his study.¹⁷⁶

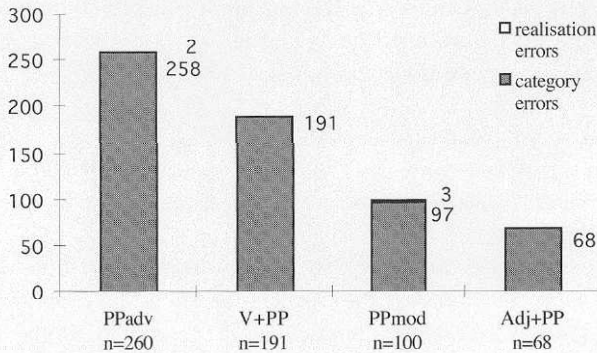


Figure 9.5.i Total number of errors involving prepositions as distributed over different structures and over category and realisation errors.

¹⁷⁶ These instances include items from the other PP functions on the grounds that they are represented by "less than five students" or they are "difficult to classify" (Mukattash, 1978:271).

An overwhelming majority of the preposition errors, 99%, are category errors. The few realisation errors found, 1% (n=5), involve only complex prepositions, since substitution, addition and omission of a simple preposition is automatically classified as a grammatical category error. The most frequent error type is category substitution and, comparing the five prepositions mentioned above, most of the errors occur with adverbial expressions (prep+determiner+noun), as *in my sparetime*, *at the conference* and *(work) in an office*. Category addition occurs mainly with adverbial expressions like *X years ago*, the adjective structure *near+a place*, and *more/most +NP*. Omission most frequently occurs in time and place adverbials, like *for X years/weeks* and *at home*. Thus, it seems that the errors involve mainly common PPs functioning as adverbials of time, place and means of transportation, phrasal verbs like *go to*, *listen to*, *speak/talk about*, *look at* etc., and PPmodifiers such as *a boy by the name of*. The Adj+PP structures most frequently involved are, e.g., *interested in* and *good/bad at sth*.

10 Conjunctions

10.1 Introductory

A conjunction is “an item or a process whose primary function is to connect words or other constructions” (Crystal 1997:81).

This chapter deals with co-ordinating and subordinating conjunctions (henceforth also referred to as “coordinators” and “subordinators”). It is often debatable what is to be referred to as grammatical errors or as problems of cohesion, punctuation and/or style. For instance, even though some people object to sentence-initial *and*, *but* and *because*, as in *And I have never been i Britain before* (S 2958), *But now I have a new sweet cat, N.* (S 66) and *Because I like to have fun and be up all night* (S 161), such cases are not included since these are seen as matters of style not as grammatical errors.¹⁷⁷

Cases where the conjunction is omitted but where there is a punctuation mark (often a comma), as in **When I was 9 years old I brought a little cat, I called her Tessan* (S 64), or where the insertion of one would solve the problem, as in **I'm a sixteen years old swedish girl I live in X.* (S 2352) and **Tennis i play most in the summers i like to play outside* (S 1616), are also excluded. This means that most instances of omission of a conjunction are excluded being regarded as matters of punctuation rather than grammar. However, cases where *and* links more than one conjoin, as in **I'am pretty tall, I have brown hair, green eyes* (S 854) are included, since “the ellipsis of all but the last coordinator is *customary*” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:926, emphasis added).¹⁷⁸ Finally, in informal style *like* is often used instead of *as*, as in *Like you can see, I like sports very mutch* (S 2230) (cf. Svartvik & Sager 1996:345, Swan 1995:313, Turton 1995:456). Therefore, this type of “substitution” is also regarded as a matter of style and, thus, excluded.

After these delimitations, 73 errors remain to be discussed. These are distributed over category and realisation errors as shown in Table 10.1a:

¹⁷⁷ Turton (1995:§169) says that “in most varieties of written English, a clause beginning with a subordinating conjunction [...] cannot be used on its own as a sentence”, and “coordinating conjunctions *and*, *or* and *but* are not placed at the beginning of a sentence”. However, in many handbooks on English usage it is said that, sentence-initial conjunctions can be used in this position to “make a sentence more dramatic or forceful” (*Collins Cobuild English Grammar*, 1990:376). See also, e.g., Howard (1994) and *Webster's Dictionary of English Usage* (1989).

¹⁷⁸ Although these cases may, to a certain extent, resemble asyndetic coordination, i.e. omission of conjunctions, as in *Mrs Varley sold sweets, chocolate, toffee apples - anything a child could desire* (Quirk *et al.* 1985:918) they cannot be said to be used in the same way. Thus, they are included in the study. See also Turton (1995:§178) and Swan (1995:45).

Table 10.1a Conjunctions: category and realisation errors.

Type of conjunction:	Category errors:			Realisation errors:			Total
	subst.	addition	omission	subst.	addition	omission	
coordinator	0	0	52	1	0	1	54
subordinator	11	1	3	4	0	0	19
Total	11 (15%)	1 (1%)	55 (75%)	5 (7%)	0	1 (1%)	73

There is a dominance of errors involving coordinators, 74% (n=54), compared to subordinators, 26% (n=19). A majority of 92% are category errors and only 8% are realisation errors. Most of the category errors involving coordinators are cases of omission, whereas there are cases of all three types with the subordinators.

10.2 Co-ordinating conjunctions

There are three simple co-ordinating conjunctions, *and*, *or* and *but*, and several complex ones, e.g. *both...and* and *not (only)...but*.¹⁷⁹ Out of the 54 errors found involving coordinating conjunctions, 96% (n=52) are category errors. All of these errors occur as instances of omission. There are also 4% (n=2) realisation errors, one case of substitution and one of omission (see Table 10.1a).

In all of the 52 cases of category omission, *and* is omitted, as in (550) and (551):

- (550) I’am pretty tall, I have brown hair, o green eyes. [and] (S 854)
 (551) My interest is to swim o take care of older people. [and] (S 2356)

Only two realisation errors occur. One case of substitution in (552), where *and* in the complex coordinator *both...and* is replaced by the subordinator *as*, and one case of omission, in (553), where part of the structure *not just/only...but also* has been left out:

- (552) ...that it’s important with both violence as the enviroment. [both...and] (S 4022)

¹⁷⁹ Quirk *et al.* (1985:920) describe the first three as being “clearly coordinators”, whereas a conjunction like *for* is referred to as “[o]n the gradient between ‘pure’ coordinators and ‘pure’ subordinators”. Ljung & Ohlander (1992:275) treat *for* among the coordinators, whereas Quirk *et al.* (1985:922) and Svartvik & Sager (1996:343) discuss it in the section on subordinators. In this study *for* is treated as a subordinator.

- (553) ...I'm a very cultural person, not just because of my languages o also because of my bakground,... [but also] (S 4495)

On the whole, it seems that there are problems in using the coordinator *and* (even apart from the punctuation problems discussed earlier). It would be interesting to make a separate study of this, comparing it with the number of correct occurrences. Very often the coordinator is simply omitted and this is why most errors are category errors. In other cases only parts of a complex coordinator are replaced or left out. This, however, occurs only in a very few cases.

10.3 Subordinating conjunctions

There are several types of subordinating conjunctions. In this study they are discussed in terms of causal, comparative, concessive, interrogative, temporal, conditional and consecutive conjunctions, as well as subordinating *that*.¹⁸⁰

In the material, 19 errors involve subordinators. Most of them, 79% (n=15), are category errors, and only a few realisation errors appear, 21% (n=4). Among the category errors, substitution is most frequent. The realisation errors are all cases of substitution (see Table 10.1a).

There are 11 instances of category substitution, five of which involve *because*.¹⁸¹ Three times it is replaced by the preposition *before*, as in (554), once by *though*, in (555), and there is also one instance where it is replaced by the complex preposition *because of* in (556):

- (554) I think I should have a free ticket before im so intresting in differen cuntries and cultures... [because] (S 3592)
- (555) I don't want to discuss something about my childhood though it would be embarassing for me. [because] (S 2801)
- (556) I send you because of i wan't some tickets ... [/I send you this/ because] (S 6046)

¹⁸⁰ The terms used are adapted from the terminology used in the discussion on conjunctions in Quirk *et al.* (1985:Ch. 13 *passim*, Ch. 14 *passim*) and Holmes & Hinchliffe (1994:Ch. 9 *passim*), but are also translated from Ljung & Ohlander (1992) and Svartvik & Sager (1996).

¹⁸¹ Eight times *because* is replaced by *for*, as in **Tonight I shall look at TV for it is a motorcycels program* (S 1992). This type is not included on the grounds that it can occur, although, today, it would be seen as rather formal written or literary style (Swan, 1995:72; Turton, 1995:311). This, incidentally, is an obvious example of transfer from Swedish 'för', Engl. *for*.

Another four instances involve comparative conjunctions. In three of them, *as...as* is replaced by *how* twice, e.g. in (557), and once by *so...than*, in (557), and once *than* is replaced by *or*, in (559):

- (557) ...why our teenagers mopeds aren't allowed to go how fast they want to and... [/aren't allowed to go/ as fast as..] (S 4604)
(558) ... but I think that it's atleast so important than racial discrimination. [/at least/ as important as...] (S 4885)
(559) It's nobody who is better or another. [/There's nobody who is better/ than /any other/] (S 4746)

The remaining two instances involve interrogative *whether* (n=1), replaced by *whatever*, in (560), and temporal *when* (n=1) replaced by *then*, in (561):

- (560) They can go away whatever you pay them or not. [whether] (S 2930)
(561) Then you are sixteen years old, I want my parent to trust me ... [when] (S 5228)

Category addition occurs once. *Like* is incorrectly added to *as if* in (562), (although this combination could possibly be acceptable in very informal speech):

- (562) There are people all over the world which just can't see that all people in the world are all humans and they all should be treated like as if they were. [as if] (S 3645)

Category omission occurs in three instances: *so* is omitted twice from *so that*, as in (563) and *if* is left out once, in (564):

- (563) I look forward to drive to England o that a can speak English... [so that] (S 1914)
(564) And o I have a chance to meet her I should ask her if she like kid. [if] (S 2376)

The four realisation errors are cases of substitution. They involve the complex conjunctions *even though* (n=1), *same...as* (n=2) and *as...as* (n=1). In all these, the final part is replaced, as in (565), (566) and (567):

- (565) I am a happy young girl and I love to meet new friends even when I could be a little shy sometimes. [even though] (S 868)
(566) I you have any children who are at the same age like me... [same...as] (S 1455)¹⁸²

¹⁸² The initial / in this example is probably simply a misspelling of *if*.

(567) The situation in oher country is not as bad like it is in ... [as...as] (S 3859)

To sum up, substitution of the conjunction is the most frequent error type with the subordinators. Problems occur mainly with *because*.

10.4 Summary of conjunction errors

There are 73 errors relating to conjunctions. Errors are most frequent with the coordinators and category errors dominate, making up 92% of the instances. All of the coordination errors involve omission or substitution of *and*. With the subordinators, *because* is involved in a majority of cases. It is replaced by other grammatical items and also omitted.

It may thus seem that there are considerable problems in coordinating and subordinating clauses. However, this cannot be verified unless a proper performance analysis in this area is carried out. Most sentences are short and simple, which would imply a low frequency of coordination and subordination on the whole.

11 Concord

11.1 Introductory

“Concord” deals with relations of number, gender, person, case, or tense between two or more grammatical elements “such that one of them displays a particular feature (e.g. plurality) that accords with a displayed (or semantically implicit) feature in the other” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:755). The first three — number, gender and person — are “the most important features in English” (Thagg-Fisher, 1985:5). In this study, the term ‘concord’ is used to denote relationships of the first three types.¹⁸³

In English, “number” is a two-way system, (singular versus plural), whereas “gender” and “person” are both three-way systems. In “gender” there are three distinctions: masculine, feminine and neuter (third person singular). “Person” distinguishes between “1st person (speaker), 2nd person (addressee) and 3rd person (any entity other than speaker or addressee)” (Thagg-Fisher 1985:7).

Following the division in Thagg-Fisher (1985: 6), concord can be divided into four main types. First, there is agreement between subject noun phrases and finite verbs, as in *my sister wants* vs. *my sisters want*, or *I am* vs. *you are* i.e. subject-verb concord. Second, there is pronominal concord, where agreement occurs between 3rd person personal, possessive and reflexive pronouns and their antecedents¹⁸⁴, as in *Joanna ... she/her/hers/herself*, or male nouns like *man* agreeing with *he/who* and female *woman* with *she/who*, whereas nonpersonal nouns like *the car* agree with *it/which*. The third type, internal noun phrase concord, refers to agreement between the noun phrase head and certain determiners that can be marked for number, such as *one/this sister*, *two/these sisters* or *many cars/much traffic*. There is also subject-complement concord, which occurs between the subject and the subject complement noun phrases in copular complementation, e.g. *my sister is a nurse/my sisters are nurses*. Quirk *et al.* (1985:767-768) further mention object-complement concord, as in *I consider my child an angel/my children angels*, as well as distributive number concord, as in *We all have good appetites*.

¹⁸³ Other terms used are “agreement”, “government” and “coreference”. However, in this study I will disregard the differences between these terms and settle for the concept “concord” to include all of them. See e.g. Quirk *et al.* (1985:755ff), Thagg-Fisher (1985:2ff), Huddleston (1984:240ff), and Crystal (1997:14,79).

¹⁸⁴ This is referred to as “pronoun reference” rather than concord by Quirk *et al.* (1985:768).

The different types of concord are usually fairly straightforward cases, as shown by the examples given above. However, the classification of errors involving subject-verb and subject-complement is sometimes difficult. Combinations of certain subjects, verbs and complements give rise to complicated error patterns. This occurs, e.g., when the subject is *hobby*, *interest* or *thing* followed by *be* and a subject complement denoting the hobby/-ies, etc. This is illustrated in Table 11.1a, where the grammatically and contextually correct structures, within square brackets, and examples of theoretically possible deviant structures and their classification/s are given.

Table 11.1a Classification system for errors concerning subject-verb and subject-complement concord.

Type of construction and corresponding error patterns*	Examples	subj-verb	subj-comp
[subj sg + Vsg + comp sg]	[my hobby is x]		
(a) subj sg + <i>Vpl</i> + comp sg	*my hobby <i>are</i> x	+**	-**
(b) subj sg + Vsg + <i>comp pl</i>	*my hobby is x, y and z	-	+
(c) <i>subj pl</i> + Vsg + comp sg	* <i>my hobbies</i> is x	+	+
(d) subj sg + <i>Vpl</i> + <i>comp pl</i>	*my hobby <i>are</i> x, y and z	+	+
(e) <i>subj pl</i> + <i>Vpl</i> + comp sg	* <i>my hobbies are</i> x	-	+
[subj pl + Vpl + comp pl]	[my hobbies are x, y and z]		
(a) subj pl + <i>Vsg</i> + comp pl	*my hobbies <i>is</i> x, y and z	+	-
(b) subj pl + Vpl + <i>comp sg</i>	*my hobbies are x	-	+
(c) <i>subj sg</i> + Vpl + comp pl	* <i>my hobby</i> are x, y and z	+	+
(d) subj pl + <i>Vsg</i> + <i>comp sg</i>	*my hobbies <i>is</i> x	+	+
(e) <i>subj sg</i> + <i>Vsg</i> + comp pl	* <i>my hobby is</i> x, y and z	-	+

* Italicised terms denote incorrect form/s as compared to what was intended

**The sign + denotes a concord error of this type, - indicates that there is no error.

There are five possible deviant structures, (a)-(e), for each of the two correct constructions. The erroneous combinations in types (a) and (c) suggest that the complement is correctly represented, and that the rest of the clause is dependent on the form of the complement. This is generally the case in the error material. However, in cases of type (b), it is actually the complement that is incorrect. The possible reason for this will be discussed in chapter 13.

A clear example of type (d) is found in **This were my letters...* (S 6020), where it is clear from context (as well as from the assignment itself) that only one letter has been written. Therefore, in cases like this, the subject is correctly rendered, whereas the verb and the complement are wrong. Thus, this is recorded both as subject-verb and subject-complement discord. Furthermore, structures of the type found in (e), as in **My hobbies are bodybuilding* (S 255), have a correct form of the complement. Again, context reveals that here the subject and verb are both wrong. To avoid unnecessary repetition, discord between verb and complement are not recorded separately. Instead they are considered to be already included either in discord between subject and verb, as in **My interests | is music and reading* (Vsg + comp pl) and **My interest | are | music* (Vpl + compl sg), or between subject and complement, as in **My hobby is | music and reading* (Vsg+comp pl) and **My hobbies are | music* (Vpl + compl sg).¹⁸⁵

The four main types of concord, subject-verb, pronominal, internal NP, and subject-complement, as classified by Thagg-Fisher (1985), with the addition of "distributive number", are used to classify the errors in this chapter. No cases of object-complement discord have been found. The errors are distributed on these five types of concord, in frequency order, as shown in Table 11.1b.

Table 11.1b Types of concord.

Subject - verb concord	Internal NP concord	Subject - complement concord	Pronominal concord	Distributive number concord	Total
453 (72%)	103 (16%)	42 (7%)	29 (5%)	5 (>1%)	632

Most errors concern the subject-verb relation, followed by problems with internal NP concord. The other three types make up the remaining 12% (n=76).

Number, gender and person concord are included in the general discussion within the various sections in this chapter, whereas tense and case concord are discussed in Chapters 5 and 7, respectively. Gender concord,

¹⁸⁵ This type of verb-complement discord has been found in 68 instances, 59 of them combining a singular verb with a plural complement, **But my favorite sport is football and tennis* (S 2006), and nine involving a plural verb combined with a singular complement. In 32 of the cases the verb agrees with the subject and only disagrees with the complement, as in the example given above, but in 36 instances the verb disagrees with both subject and complement, as in **My parents names is N and N* (S 3190). As already mentioned, these instances are not recorded as verb-complement errors, and consequently, they are not counted separately.

where relative *who* and *which* are confused, is dealt with in this chapter, whereas gender concord of the lexical kind, *he is an actor - she is an actress*, is excluded. Problems involving *there is/are* and *here + verb* are found in the section on subject-verb concord.

A total of 632 errors have been found, all of them category errors. There are no realisation errors since agreement between the parts involved is regarded as a grammatical category. Only cases of substitution can occur, since adding or omitting a category automatically means substituting one grammatical category for another.

11.2 Subject-verb concord

The most important type of concord in English is that between the subject and the verb. The basic principle is very simple: the verb agrees with the subject in number, whether the subject or the head of the subject is a noun/NP (*The flower grows/The flowers grow*), a pronoun (*He likes/I like*), a finite or a nonfinite clause (*How you go there doesn't matter/To go there is dangerous*), a PP (*In the evenings is best*) or an AdvP (*Slowly does it*). The 453 errors found in the material involve subjects that are nouns/NPs, pronouns or adverbs, as shown in Table 11.2a.

Table 11.2a Types of subject with errors concerning subject-verb concord.

Pronoun	Noun/NP	Coordinated NPs	Existential <i>there (is/are)</i>	Other type of subject	Total
204 (45%)	200 (44%)	24 (5%)	23 (5%)	2 (>1%)	453

Nearly half of all the errors occur in constructions where the subject is a pronoun, followed by almost as many cases with a noun or a noun phrase as subject. This section is divided into five subsections depending on whether the subject is a pronoun, a noun/NP, consists of coordinated NPs, existential *there*, or belongs to a small, mixed group of other types of subjects. Problems in concord further involve different types of verbs, full (main) or primary verbs, as will also be noted below.

11.2.1 Pronoun as subject

One type of subject-verb concord obtains when the subject is a pronoun. As already mentioned, this is the most frequent type, making up 204 instances of

the errors. The subject can be a personal, a relative, an indefinite or a demonstrative pronoun, as shown in Table 11.2.1a:

Table 11.2.1a Types of subject with errors concerning subject-verb concord.

Personal pron.	Relative pron.	Indefinite pron.	Demonstrative pron.	Total
128 (63%)	48 (23%)	24 (12%)	4 (2%)	204

The most common problem concerns the correct verb form when the subject is a personal pronoun. This is the case in 63% (n=128) of all the instances. Among these instances, *I* occurs as the subject in 57% (n=73), *s/he* accounts for 20% (n=26), *we* for 17% (n=22), whereas *they* make up 4% (n=5) and singular *you* only 1% (n=2). There are two types of error: either the subject requires the verb to take the 3rd person singular *-s* or it does not. With the personal pronouns, errors of the second type are more frequent, i.e. incorrect use of *-s*. In 70% (n=52) of the cases where the subject is *I*, full verbs like *live* are involved, as in (568), and *be* appears in 31% (n=16), ten times in the 3rd person singular form *is*, as in (569), and in the 2nd person form *are /were* six times, as in (570). With *have* (n=3) and *do* (n=2), the 3rd person form is also incorrectly employed, as in (571) and (572):

- (568) I lives in a small town 22 Km north of X. [live] (S 2419)
 (569) Oh I forgot I also is the singer in the band, I'm not good but it's fun. [am] (S 1574)
 (570) My name is N I are 16 years old. [am] (S 5845)
 (571) I'm 15 years old, 176 cm tall and has brown hair. [have] (S 2651)
 (572) I doesn't have to worry abot my brothers home work. [don't] (S 802)

Out of the 22 cases where *we* is the subject most of the cases, 68% (n=15), also involve full verbs, as in (573). In the remaining 32% (n=7), the primary verbs *be* (n=4) and *do* (n=3) appear in the 3rd person, as in (574) and (575). In all of these instances, the 3rd person verb form is used:

- (573) At home with my family we often talks about this... [talk] (S 3162)
 (574) Sometimes when we is there we play football... [are] (S 987)
 (575) ...we doesn't like this thing.... [don't] (S 3164)

The remaining seven instances involve the second person singular/plural *you* (n=2) and the third person plural *they* (n=5), as in (576) and (577) below, and again, it is the 3rd person form that appears:

- (576) I have heard that you gives away 500 tickets... [give] (S 5144)

(577) But they only says that it will be to hard to clean up... [say] (S 305)

In 26 instances, the subject is *he/she/it*, and the verb incorrectly appears in the unmarked form. In these cases, 65% (n=17) of the instances involve full verbs, as in (578), (579) and (580), whereas the remaining 35% (n=9) of this type occur with primary verbs, with a slight dominance for *have* (n=5), as in (581):

(578) He love to play tennis whith me. [loves] (S 47)

(579) She is 19 years old and live still home. [lives] (S 2132)

(580) Beacouse it represent to me beutiful nature and... [represents] (S 121)

(581) My mother have cancer and she have no mucle in her leg. [has] (S 4672)

In 48 instances the subject is a relative pronoun, most frequently *who* (n=29), followed by *that* (n=11), *which* (n=7) and *what* (n=1), as in (582) - (586).¹⁸⁶ Problems are equally common with relative pronouns with a 3rd person singular antecedent appearing with the verb given in the unmarked form (48%), as in (582), and vice versa, as in (583). In a majority of cases, 56% (n=27), full verbs are involved, as in (582) and (583), and the primary verbs *be* and *have* appear in the remaining 44% (n=21), as in (584), (585) and (586):

(582) I am N N a 16 years old boy who live in Sweden. [lives] (S 4278)

(583) ...give some money to different organizations that helps people in the third world. [help] (S 4332)

(584) I'm going in grade nine at s'chool wich are two miles (in Swedish counting) from home. [is] (S 3526)

(585) What I think are important to talk about is peace... [is] (S 5623)

(586) ...I love everything wich have to do with arts ... [has] (622)

Problems also occur in 24 instances where indefinite pronouns function as subject. In 79% (n=19) of these, *every~* and *some~* compounds appear with an unmarked verb instead of the correct marked form, i.e. *every~/some~ +*VØ*, as in (587), (588), and (589):

(587) Everyone need to learn writing an reading. [needs] (S 3437)

(588) Everybody are all the same. [is] (S 3534)

(589) I think someone have to do something about the school. [has] (S 5861)

¹⁸⁶ Note that the choice of relative pronoun is sometimes wrong. Such cases, however, are recorded as pronominal errors (Chapter 7) or as concord errors (section 11.5).

There are also five instances (21%) involving indefinite pronouns taking plural verbs: universal *all* (n=1), assertive *some* (n=1), and multal *many* (n=2) and *most (of)* (n=1), as in the examples below. Here, a singular verb appears instead. In these cases, 63% (n=15) of the verbs involved are full verbs whereas primary verbs occur in 37% (n=9) of the instances:

- (590) All in my family hope's that I could go England... [hope] (S 165)
(591) Some seems to think that they are more worth than others. [seem] (S 3221)
(592) But I think that many of them wants to do something about it. [want]
(S 5771)
(593) ...my sisters boyfriend have many car about 40 most of all is Volvo 140,
Amazon... [are] (S 999)

A few errors occur with demonstrative pronouns (n=5) involving *this* (n=1), in (594)¹⁸⁷, and *that* (n=4) with a singular antecedent, as in (595). All of these instances appear with an incorrect plural verb:

- (594) This were my letters and i hope... [these were] (S 6020)
(595) For about three years that have been one of my greatest dreams. [that has]
(S 2066)

To sum up, a vast majority of the errors concern personal pronouns, mainly *I* and *he/she/it* or *we*. With the relatives, the problems most frequently relate to *who*. Here, the two types of error, either **who/which* (pl)+**is* /*lives* and *who/which* (sg)+**are/live* are almost equally frequent. When the subject is an indefinite pronoun, it seems that *every-* and *some-* compounds are most prone to errors, whereas three of the four cases involving demonstratives are of the type where *that* has a singular antecedent but is incorrectly followed by a plural verb form.

The results show that with pronominal subjects the most frequent error (71%) consists in incorrectly using the marked 3rd person verb form (Vs) with *I*, *you* (sg) or pronouns denoting plural subjects, rather than using a 3rd person singular subject with an unmarked verb form (V \emptyset), 29%. However, there are individual differences. The Npl+*Vs structure is clearly over-represented with personal pronoun subjects, whereas Nsg+*V \emptyset appears in a clear majority of cases involving indefinite and demonstrative pronouns as subject. The two structures are equally frequent when the subject is a relative pronoun. Further, most errors involve full verbs with all types of pronominal subjects.

¹⁸⁷ In (603), both verb and complement are incorrect (when context is taken into account).

11.2.2 Noun or noun phrase as subject

Errors are almost as frequent in this type of construction as with personal pronouns: 200 instances occur. The nouns or the heads in the subject NPs are either (a) count nouns (including NPs like *one/both of x + verb*), (b) noncount nouns, or (c) collective nouns (including some proper names). Out of these three, a clear majority of the noun/NP subjects, 88% (n=176), are count nouns, only 14% are noncounts and 10% collective nouns. The distribution of errors on the three types is displayed in Table 11.2.2a:

Table 11.2.2a Subject-verb concord. Types of noun/NP subjects.

Count noun	Noncount noun	Collective noun	Total
176 (88%)	14 (7%)	10 (5%)	200

Out of the 176 errors involving count nouns, a majority of 75% (n=132) are problems of the type Npl+*Vs (**students takes*). In the remaining 25% (n=44) the situation is reversed, i.e. the structure Nsg+*V \emptyset (**my mother have*) is used.¹⁸⁸ With the first error type, Npl+*Vs, there are subjects either in the regular plural (n=97), as in (596); in the unmarked plural (n=32), as in (597); in the irregular plural (n=2), as in (598); and with the expression *both of* (n=1), in (599):

- (596) I enjoy life and my friends says that I'm very talkative. [say] (S 757)
 (597) I would like to know what other young people thinks about that. [think] (S 4019)
 (598) Because small children listens to older people. [listen] (S 4024)
 (599) Both of my parent's is psykologer and that can ... [are] (S 2704)

In the instances of unmarked plural, exemplified by (597), the subject is always *people*, and the two instances with irregular plural involve *children* and *men*.

With the structure Nsg+*V \emptyset , the subjects are mainly ordinary NPs, as exemplified in (600) and (601) below, but there are also four instances involving the expression *one of*, as in (602):

- (600) I got one cat and my mother have a dog... [has] (S 415)

¹⁸⁸ Note that in eight of these instances, there is discord between subject and verb but the deviant part is the subject, as in * My interest are boy's, horses, music and having fun (S 2630). The verb agrees with the complement, which is also correct according to context. However, they are included in this section since they display a concord problem between subject and verb.

- (601) My older sister N are 18 years. [is] (S 1370)
(602) One of my other interests are scouting. [is] (S 2707)

Most of the errors with count noun subjects, 76% (n=133), occur with primary verbs. In 80% of these cases, the verb is *be*, generally in its main verb function. The remaining 24% (n=43) involve full verbs.

There are 14 instances involving noncount nouns, including proper names, which require a verb in the 3rd person singular. Primary (n=6) and full verbs (n=8) are about equally frequent here. In eight of the 14 instances, ordinary noncounts like *music*, *money*, *violence*, and *peace* are subjects, as in (603), in the remaining six instances the subject is a proper name, as in (604):

- (603) ...if for example the violence don't stop... [doesn't] (S 4026)
(604) But London are so much more and I will see the hole London. [is] (S 1846)

Collective nouns appear in 10 instances of discord. In all of them, the verb should be in the singular, but instead we find Nsg + *V \emptyset , as in (605) and (606):

- (605) My family consist of my parents, my younger sister N and me of course.
[consists] (S 5868)
(606) ...the government take more and more money from the schools. [takes]
(S 5386)

Summing up, out of the total of 200 errors with noun/NP subjects, a majority of 88% involve count nouns, followed by 7% noncount nouns and 5% collective nouns. Most errors, 66% (n=132), are of the type Npl+*Vs, as in **my friends says*, but looking at the three types of subjects separately we find that with the noncount and collective nouns, Nsg+*V \emptyset is used in all instances.

On the whole, primary verbs (*be*, *have*, *do*) are involved in 71% (n=142) of the cases, full verbs in the remaining 21% (n=58). Out of these instances, 75% (n=132) involve a plural subject in combination with a full or a primary verb in the 3rd person singular. In the remaining 25% (n=44) a singular count noun subject (*my mother*, *the school*) appears with a full verb or the primary verbs *have/do* in the infinitive form (n=23) or with the 2nd person form of *be* (**my mother are*, **the school are*). On the whole, the incorrect combination Npl+*Vs accounts for 66% (n=132) of all the instances with noun/NP subjects.

As regards verb types involved in the errors, most instances 74% (n=148) occur with primary verbs, especially *be*. Errors with regular count nouns involve the primary verbs *be*, *have* and *do* more frequently, whereas

errors with count nouns taking irregular or unmarked plural forms occur more often with full verbs.

11.2.3 Coordinated noun phrases as subject

Coordinated noun phrases appear with the wrong verb form in 24 instances. Most of the instances, 63% (n=15), coordinate two nouns as in (607) and (608), whereas the remaining 37% (n=9) combine a pronoun and a noun, as in (609) and (610):

- (607) Football and tennis is my favorites. [are] (S 385)
 (608) My grandma and grandpa lives there. [live] (S 2874)
 (609) Me and my boy friend borows a videotape of somebody. [borrow] (S 1361)
 (610) N and I spends alot of time together. [spend] (S 616)

Errors with this type of subject are all coordinated with *and*. In 75% (n=18) of the instances both conjoins are in the singular (Nsg+Nsg or Nsg+Prsg), or in the plural (Npl+Npl or Npl+Prpl).¹⁸⁹ Subjects in the singular are more frequent than subjects in the plural with N+N conjoins.¹⁹⁰ With the N+Pr combination, singular conjoins or mixed conjoins are more or less equally frequent.¹⁹¹ All 24 instances are errors with subjects resulting in N(Pr)pl+*Vs. Full verbs are as frequent as the primary verb *be* in this type of construction, but no instances with *have* or *do* have been found.

11.2.4 Existential *there* as subject

The function of existential *there* as grammatical subject and errors where *there* is replaced by *it* are not discussed here but in section 7.4. In this section, the focus is on the relation between the subject *there* and the following verb form, which is dependent on the “notional subject”. There is a well-known tendency, especially in spoken language, to use *there is* in its contracted form *there’s* even when followed by a “notional subject” in the plural.¹⁹² Only three instances of contracted forms of this type are recorded here. However, since it is generally pointed out in these grammars that this

¹⁸⁹ The patterns with coordinated noun/NP+Pr could of course also be reversed, i.e Pr+noun/NP.

¹⁹⁰ With N+N conjoins two singular conjoins are combined 11 times and two plural conjoins appear three times. Only once are singular and plural conjoins combined into N+N subjects.

¹⁹¹ With N+Pr subjects, two singular conjoins occur in four instances and mixed conjoins, i.e. a singular + a plural conjoin, occur five times.

¹⁹² See Quirk *et al.* (1985:756, 1405), Ljung & Ohlander (1992:200), Svartvik & Sager (1996) and also Swan (1995:533).

holds for informal spoken language or style and that it is not acceptable to all NSs, especially in the non-contracted form such cases are included in the study. In the material, 23 instances of this type of concord error have been found. In 83% (n=19) of them, plural *are* is replaced by singular *is*, as in (611) and (612):

- (611) I know that there is many teenagers who would like to... [are] (S 254)
(612) Here in Sweden there is many teenagers who don't have a job. [are] (S 5717)

In the remaining 17% (n=4) of the instances, plural *are* is used for singular *is* or plural *were* for singular *was*, as in (613) and (614):

- (613) I like to go to london because there are so much to see. [is] (S 2462)
(614) Oh Yes there were one more thing [was] (S 4695)¹⁹³

Apart from one case (615), in which the full verb *live* is involved, all instances contain a form of the primary verb *be*:

- (615) There lives about 2000 people. [live] (S 3716)

Thus, the majority of instances involve *there* with a singular verb and a notional subject in the plural, i.e. Npl+*Vs. Furthermore, all but one instance involve the primary verb *be*.

11.2.5 Other types of subjects

Two errors, (616) and (617), appear where the subject is an interrogative clause:

- (616) Why I wont to get a free ticket are because... [is] (S 4659)
(617) Why I'm writing to you are that I'm a little poor kid and... [is] (S 5289)

Here, the verb is incorrectly given the second person (or plural 3rd person) instead of the third person form.

11.2.6 Summary of subject-verb concord

With regard to subject-verb concord, pronouns and nouns/NPs functioning as subjects are almost equally frequent in the data, making up around 45%

¹⁹³ There is also a tense error in this example, treated in section 5.2 among similar instances.

each.¹⁹⁴ When the subject is a pronoun, matching the personal pronouns *I*, *he/she/it* or *we* with the correct verb form creates most problems. The main problem with nouns/NPs as subjects seems to be to combine a plural count noun with a plural verb form, especially when the verb *be* is involved. Another interesting problem involves existential *there* as the subject, where *there is* is very often used for *there are*.

In 66% (n=301) of the 453 instances the error consists in the incorrect combination of a plural subject and a 3rd person singular verb, i.e. Npl+*Vs. Thagg-Fisher's (1985) results from composition tests are in the opposite direction, accounting for 43% of the errors, whereas Nsg+*V \emptyset makes up a majority of 57%.¹⁹⁵

Taking a closer look at subject-verb contiguity, the data in the present study show that in 86% (n=390) of the instances the subject and the verb are contiguous, i.e. they are placed next to each other. This may be compared to Thagg-Fisher (1985:93), who found that 55% of the errors occurred in contiguous constructions and 45% in noncontiguous ones.

For primary verbs in general, the present data also reveal that Npl+*Vs is more frequent (64%) than Nsg+*V \emptyset . Within this group of verbs, however, there are also certain differences. The errors involving *be* and *have* show similar results in this and Thagg-Fisher's (1985) study. With these two verbs, Npl+*Vs is more common in both studies. With *do*, there is a completely reverse situation. In the present study, Nsg+*V \emptyset (**s/he do*) accounts for 67% of the instances, whereas the same error type makes up only 35% in Thagg-Fisher (1985). The differences between the two studies are interesting and possible reasons could relate to age differences between testee groups or the topic given (section 11.7).

11.3 Internal noun phrase concord

Internal noun phrase concord is "an agreement relation at the phrase level, more specifically between elements within the noun phrase, namely the head noun and such determinative elements as have number contrast" (Thagg-Fisher 1985:113). This includes all types of determiners: predeterminers (*all/both books*), central determiners (*a book, this book, these books*) as well as postdeterminers (*a lot of, many, few, three books*). In the following

¹⁹⁴ Compare this with Thagg-Fisher (1985:73), who states that "nouns dominate [as subjects] in the composition errors (66.9% v. 33.1%)" in her investigation.

¹⁹⁵ There are also differences in results between Thagg-Fisher's study and the present one as regards what type of structure is used with full verbs and primary verbs. The data in this study show that the Npl+*Vs structure (**they lives*) is more frequent than Nsg+*V \emptyset (**he live*). Here it accounts for 70% of the errors, as opposed to Thagg-Fisher's 38%.

discussion, closed-class quantifiers such as *many*, *much* and *a lot of* are included among the postdeterminers since they function as such (cf. Quirk *et al.* 1985:262).

This type of concord “offers a reconstruction problem, since the analyst must interpret what the speaker/writer intended to say” (Thagg-Fisher 1985:114): either the determiner or the head noun is the deviant part. Here context is vital.

This section is divided into two parts depending on whether it is the determiner or the head noun that is incorrect. The distribution of errors of these two types between different types of determiner involved is shown in Table 11.3a. A total of 103 errors have been found.

Table 11.3a Internal noun phrase concord: deviant part as distributed on types of determiner.

Deviant part	Type of determiner involved:			Total
	predeterminer	central determiner	postdeterminer	
determiner (*det + head)	0	11	9	20
head noun (det + *head)	13	18	52	83
Total	13 (13%)	29 (28%)	61 (59%)	103

The table shows that most errors, 59%, occur with postdeterminers, whereas central determiners cause problems in 28% and pre-determiners in 13% of the cases. This is similar to the results in Thagg-Fisher (1985:115). The deviant part is generally the head noun, 81% (n=83), as in (618), (619) and (620) below, rather than the determiner itself, 19% (n=20), as in (621) and (622). This result is also in line with Thagg-Fisher’s (1985:115ff) figures. Errors involving predeterminers are exemplified by (618). No errors of the type **all car*, for *every car*, have been found in the data. Problems with central determiners are of the type found in (619) and (621), and the postdeterminer errors are illustrated by (620) and (622). When looking at the central determiners only, the determiner and the head noun are the deviant part almost equally often.

- (618) So we willnot be afraid of all new rules that all politician make without asking us. [all politicians] (S 3895)
- (619) I love animals I have a cats, a rabbit and a horse. [a cat] (S 859)
- (620) My name is N N I’m 15 year old and live in Sweden. [15 years] (S 941)
- (621) All this things and many more I want to do when... [these things] (S 2625)
- (622) ...but not såw much computer ... [/so many/ computers] (S 3802)

11.3.1 Deviant form of determiner

This subsection deals with 20 instances where the determiner is the deviant part of the NP. These errors occur with central determiners and postdeterminers. Most of them, 55% (n=11), display a deviant form of a central determiner, mainly consisting in problems using *this* vs. *these*. The remaining 45% (n=9) involve the postdeterminers *much* vs. *many*.

Out of the 11 cases concerning the central determiners, seven occur in instances like (623), where *this* is used with a plural head noun, while four instances involve *these* used for *this* with a singular head, as in (624):

- (623) When I saw this words I think that it was my chance... [these] (S 1278)
 (624) I hope you didn't forget opening these letter. [this] (S 3088)

Here, context determines which is the deviant part, the determiner or its head. In these examples it is clearly the determiner that is wrong.

With the postdeterminers nine errors have been found. They concern the pair *much* vs. *many*. *Much* is used instead of *many* six times with ordinary count nouns (*things*, *schools*, *computers*) as in (625) and twice with the unmarked plural *people*, as in (626). Once *many* appears instead of *much*, in (627), an error likely to have been triggered by the incorrect plural form of the head noun *homework*:

- (625) It's much things we can talk about. [many] (S 3622)
 (626) ...why is so much people so careless that they go without it. [many] (S 4774)
 (627) ...we get to many homeworks and so long school time. [much /homework/] (S 5862)

To sum up, only central determiners and postdeterminers are involved in the errors discussed in this section. Errors with central determiners are slightly more frequent (55%), mostly in connection with the pair *this-these*. The postdeterminer distinction *much-many* makes up the remaining 45% of the errors.

11.3.2 Deviant form of head noun

The head noun is incorrectly rendered in 83 cases. This occurs mainly with postdeterminers (n=52), but also with central determiners, (n=18), and predeterminers (n=13); see Table 11.3.1. With these errors, too, context is necessary to decide which part is the deviant one.

The 13 incorrect instances involving predeterminers occur with the construction *all* + plural noun. In eight of these instances, the head noun is *kind* or *sort* appearing in the singular, as in (628)¹⁹⁶, and in the other five instances *all* determines other count nouns, as in (629):

- (628) I eat all kind of food. [kinds] (S 645)
(629) And think of all the thing there is to see. [things] (S 2615)

With the central determiners, there are 18 errors. Most of them (n=14) involve a determiner that requires a singular noun, like the indefinite article. Twelve times a plural noun appears instead, as in (630) and (631), and once each with *this* (n=1) and *every* (n=1), in (632) and (633):

- (630) ... and my mother is a teachers. [teacher] (S 3414)
(631) in X we got a coupels of New Nazis and there oppinion is that... [couple] (S 5033)
(632) I want this free tickets so I can go to the conferens and talk. [ticket] (S 5456)
(633) ...let evry children to go in school. [child](S 5675)

In the remaining four instances, a singular count noun appears in connection with *some* as in (634):

- (634) Here comes some fact about the place I live in... [facts] (S 2448)

Most errors with a deviant form of the head noun, 63% (n= 52), occur with postdeterminers. A majority of them are preceded by cardinal numerals (n=36), quantifiers (n=14) or *other* (n=2).

The errors concerning cardinals involve three types of structures or nouns. There are 25 expressions dealing with time (including 16 instances of the structure *X years (old)*¹⁹⁷) and measurements as in (635), (636) and (637):

- (635) I have one little brothr who is 12 year old. [years] (S 961)
(636) I have only got three month left at this school... [months] (S 5397)
(637) My name is N and I live 2 mile outside X. [miles] (S 3394)

There are also nouns denoting persons and things (n=11), as in (638), (639) and (640):

¹⁹⁶ According to Svartvik & Sager (1996:354), the singular form, as in *those kind[s]*, is possible. However, no examples with the determiner *all* is given. Quirk *et al.* (1985:249) only give plural count nouns in this type of partitive construction.

¹⁹⁷ A similar type of error is involved in the omission of *old*, see section 6.1.

- (638) I go on a little school in X, ther is it about 500 pupil. [pupils] (S 1386)
 (639) I've got 2 sister and one brother. [sisters] (S 5004)
 (640) If I can do two thing I' allso want to ... [things] (S 865)

This group also includes the structure *one of*+ NP+Vs, as in *One of my friends is French*, as a form contrasting with *two/many of my friends*+V \emptyset . *One (of)* "introducing" the subject is always followed by a plural N. Only one instance of this type, (641), has been found in which the noun is incorrectly given the singular form:

- (641) One of my other interesst is dancing and singing. [interests] (S 472)

The second largest group concerns 14 incorrect noun heads preceded by quantifiers or quantitative nouns. Problems with quantifiers occur mainly with *many* + an incorrect singular noun (n=7), as in (642). Two cases occur where *much* is incorrectly used for *many* (deviant determiner) together with a singular head noun, as in (643), and there are also errors with *a lot of* (n=4), as in (644). One instance, (645), includes the quantitative noun *thousand* followed by an *of*-phrase and a singular head noun:

- (642) ...there is many problem witch I am gowing to meet... [problems] (S 4262)
 (643) It is mutch thing we can talk about... [/many/ things] (S 3629)
 (644) I have a lot of friend, and if I could get two tickeys I could... [friends] (S 480)
 (645) ...and I have seen thousands of picture about Britain... [pictures] (S 393)

Finally there are two cases of *other*+noun plural (+verb plural) in which the noun is wrongly given the singular form, as in (646):

- (646) My school is old but not so poor as other school is. [schools /are/] (S 3461)

The errors concerning the form of the head noun most frequently involve discord with a preceding postdeterminer. The determiners are generally cardinal numerals or other quantitative words like *much/many* and *a lot of* followed by a noun given the wrong number. Problems also arise with central determiners, mostly with the indefinite article *a/n*. Interestingly, problems arise even with determiners that clearly refer to either a singular (the indefinite article) or a plural (cardinals or other quantifiers). An overwhelming majority of the instances, 89%, are contiguous, i.e. the determiner is placed next to its head, as in **many boy* for *many boys*.

11.4 Subject-complement concord

Subject-complement concord “refers to a shared number relation between a subject and a noun phrase as subject complement” (Thagg-Fisher 1985:12) as in *my child is an angel* or *my children are angels*.¹⁹⁸ In the material, 42 errors have been found. They are of the types (b-e) specified in Table 11.1a. The errors display two kinds of discord. In a clear majority of instances, 74% (n=31), there is a singular subject combined with a plural complement, i.e. problems in number concord, as in (647) and (648):

- (647) But my favorite sport is | football and tennis. [sports are] (S 2006)
(648) My interest | are boy’s, horses, music and having fun. [interests are] (S 2630)

The remaining instances, 26% (n=11), contain a combination of a plural subject and a singular complement, as in (649) and (650):

- (649) My best friends | is N. [friend is] (S 615)
(650) My interest’s are | music. [interest is] (S 2547)

Among all the instances, certain phrases/phrase types appear to be more prone to errors than others. The most frequent combination is *my interest/s* +V¹⁹⁹, as in (651) and (652), which occurs in 40% (n=17) of the instances:

- (651) My interests is music, sport, disco, animals mm. [interests are] (S 2287)
(652) My hobbies ar bodybuilding ... [hobby is] (S 255)

Then there is the combination *their name is* + a plural complement, i.e. two or more names given. This type occurs in 19% (n=8) of the instances, as in (653):

- (653) Oh, I forgottan my father and mother, there name is N and N. [names are] (S 3309)

In the remaining 40% (n=17), problems with subjects of various types are displayed, such as *the most important X*, as in (654), or determiners (*this*, numeral, etc.), as in (655) and (656), with no correspondence to the following complement, :

¹⁹⁸ Examples from Quirk *et al.* (1985:767).

¹⁹⁹ Similar constructions with *hobby*, *-ies* and *favourite Nsg/Npl* are included in this type.

- (654) I think that the most important things to talk about is the environment...
[thing] (S 5255)
- (655) Well this was some facts about me and... [these /were/] (S 2559)
- (656) All this three things are example on things that could ruin your life.
[examples] (S 4086)

To sum up, most errors occur in the incorrect combination “singular subject+verb+plural complement”. The verb form agrees with either the subject or the complement. Counting all 43 errors of subject-complement concord, it is interesting to note that in 38 of them it is the subject that is given the wrong form. In a majority of these, the subject is either of the type *my hobby/interest* etc., or *their name* with a mismatch in complement form. These are clear cases since the complement has to be considered as having been given the correct number.

11.5 Pronominal concord

The term pronominal “concord” is not absolutely adequate, since this type of agreement “should probably be considered coreference rather than grammatical concord” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:768). However, it is the term used in this study to denote “agreement between a pronoun substitute and its antecedent” (Thagg-Fisher 1985:104). There are two types of concord: number (*the book...it, the clothes...they*) and gender (*a woman... who... she/her/hers/herself, a man... who... he/his/him/himself* or *the book... which... it/its/itself*).

Altogether, 29 errors of pronominal concord have been found. There are problems with the *who-which* distinction (gender concord), but also with number concord relating to other types of pronouns, as shown in Table 11.6a:

Table 11.6a Types of pronominal concord.

Relative pron. <i>who-which</i>	Personal pron.	Reflexive pron.	Indefinite pron.	Total
18 (62%)	5 (17%)	4 (14%)	2 (7%)	29

Almost two thirds of the errors consist in mixing up the relative pronouns *who* and *which*. *Who* is replaced by *which* eight times, as in (657), and the reverse, *which* being replaced by *who*, occurs ten times as in (658)²⁰⁰:

²⁰⁰ In four of the cases where *who* is replaced by *which*, and in all cases where *which* is replaced by *who*, *that* could have been used instead.

- (657) I maybe meet a friend witch I can come and live with... [who(m)] (S 3953)
(658) My name is N N and I live in a small village who is called X. [which/that] (S 992)

There are also five errors of incorrect choice of personal pronoun. In two of them, the antecedent is *money*, as in (659), which means that the pronoun should be *it*:

- (659) But I dont think I could get them. [it] (S 5457)

In one instance, (660), the pronoun refers back to the collective noun *the jury*, and so should be either *it* or possibly *they*. In two other instances the antecedent is a regular plural noun, as in (661):

- (660) ...the jury is mad he's chosen me on a free tripp to norway but... [it/they] (S 1487)
(661) If you whan't me to describe my self with three words it would be.. [they/those] (S 758)

In the remaining instance alternative interpretations are possible within the given context, either *youngster* - *her/his* or *youngsters* - *their*:

- (662) Perhaps the scholls schould turn in the USA example an be more free and let the youngster to choise there own way in the school. [youngsters - their] (S 4617)

Four errors appear with reflexive pronouns, all of them without the necessary plural ending *-es*, as in (663)²⁰¹ :

- (663) can't they anderstand that they hurt, that they hurt them self. [themselves] (S 5330)

Finally, there are two cases where the singular pronoun *one* is replaced by plural *some*:

²⁰¹ These are considered category errors, not errors in realisation of reflexive pronouns, since the required plural form *-selves* is replaced by the singular *-self*. Furthermore, two of these four errors show a second error: **We must help oss self all the world must help.* (S 4070) and **If we dont we will go like robots and only think about each self* (S 4643). The first part of the pronouns is incorrectly rendered, too. However, these are considered lexical errors and thus not recorded in this study.

- (664) I have no guy here in Sweden but I hope to get some in England. [one]
(S 158)
- (665) I don't know witch but I know that I wan't to se some. [one] (S 1944)

Summing up, most errors with pronominal concord concern the *who-which* distinction. In cases where personal pronouns are involved, there is generally a problem in matching a pronoun with its corresponding antecedent, when it is either a noncount noun (*the money... *they* [it]) or a collective count noun (*the jury... *he* [it/they]).

11.6 Distributive number concord

According to Quirk *et al.* (1985:768), "[d]istributive plural is used in a plural noun phrase to refer to a set of entities matched individually with individual entities in another set", as in *They ran for their lives* or *They shook their heads*. Using the plural in this type of construction is the general rule.

In the material, only five instances have been found where the distributive plural is incorrectly replaced by the singular, as in (666), (667) and (668):

- (666) ... a couple of guys with 10 kilo heroin attached to their body. [bodies]
(S 4686)
- (667) ... it is hard to change their life to a new lifestyle... [lives] (S 3517)
- (668) I wold ask them if they like Madonna and how old they are if they have a girlfrend an how long they have danse. [girlfriends] (S 2379)

Such cases are often regarded as involving the "logical plural", e.g. in contrastive grammars (cf., e.g., Ljung & Ohlander, 1992).

11.7 Summary of concord errors

The total number of errors relating to different types of concord amounts to 633 instances. Five main types have been accounted for: subject-verb concord, internal NP concord, subject-complement concord, pronominal concord, and distributive number concord. The major type of concord error is subject-verb discord, which makes up 72% (n=453) of all the instances, compared to 28% (n=180) for all the other categories. These overall figures are fairly similar to those in Thagg-Fisher (1985), where subject-verb discord

accounts for 77% versus 23% for the “minor categories”.²⁰² The distribution of the five types of concord discussed in the sections are shown in Figure 11.7.i; all errors are category errors.

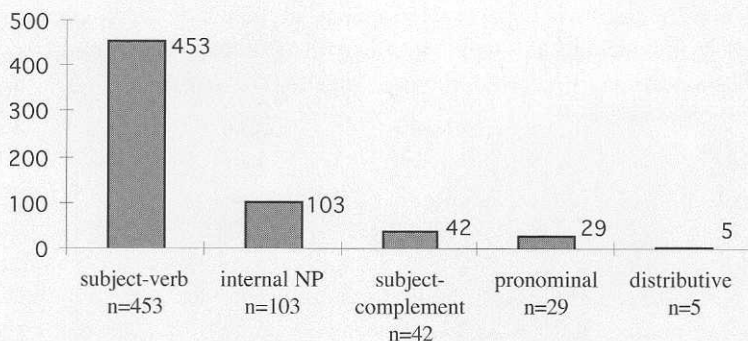


Figure 11.7.i Distribution of five main types of error involving concord.

With the subject-verb cases, the subjects are of several types although an overwhelming majority are personal pronouns and nouns/NPs. In most of these cases, 86%, the subject and the verb are contiguous. Internal NP concord errors is the second most frequent type, accounting for 16% (n=103) of the instances. Here, too, most errors, 89%, occur when the head and the determiner are contiguous. The third category, subject-complement concord errors, makes up 7% (n=42). An interesting fact with this type of error is that in a majority of the instances it is the form of the subject that is incorrect. With pronominal concord, which accounts for 5% (n=29) of the instances, most problems have to do with the *who-which* distinction. Distributive number concord is involved in less than 1% (n=5) of the errors, where the “logical plural” has caused the problem.

Comparing internal NP concord, subject-complement concord and pronominal concord in the present study with the “minor” concord categories in Thagg-Fisher (1985), there is a great difference. In the present study, errors concerning internal NP concord account for 59% of the instances, 24% relate to subject-complement concord and 17% to pronominal concord errors. In Thagg-Fisher (1985), approximately 59% of the minor categories concern

²⁰² Thagg-Fisher (1985) refers to pronominal concord, internal noun phrase concord and subject - complement concord as 'minor categories'. Therefore, these are the three categories compared here although, in the present study, instances of 'distributive number concord' have also been found. However, these are not included in the comparison with Thagg-Fisher's (1985) so-called 'minor categories'. This does not change the figures in any way.

pronominal concord, 32% internal NP concord and only 9% subject-complement concord. Thus, as Figure 11.7.ii indicates, internal NP concord errors are much more frequent in the present study, whereas pronominal concord errors, in second place in Thagg-Fisher's study, come last in the present one.

On the whole, the same division into categories has been made in both studies, so possible reasons for these differences could be the age of the testees, type of composition, topic, style, etc. Furthermore, Thagg-Fisher's figures for these concord types include results from both oral and written material. It could well be that the testees in her study use more complex language, considering the fact that they are considerably older than those in the present study, and so would have been exposed to more complex structures.

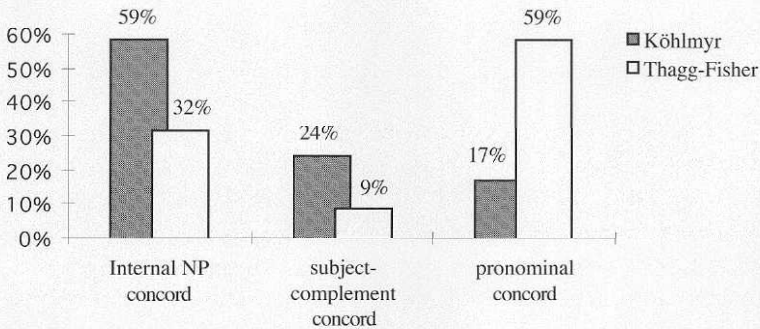


Figure 11.7.ii Comparison of error frequency in the "minor" concord categories in Köhlmyr and Thagg-Fisher (1985).

12 Word order

12.1 Introductory

Word order is a very important device that can be used “as a means of expressing grammatical relations within constructions...” (Crystal 1997:421). In many languages, sentence meaning can be crucially dependent on word order, e.g. *the dog bit the man* vs. *the man bit the dog*. In English, which is often described as a relatively “fixed word-order language” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:51) as far as the basic word order, SVO, is concerned, word order is partially semantic.

Word-order errors are here discussed in three sections: the first dealing with subject-verb order, the second concentrates on adverbial position, and the third section comprises relatively “minor” areas (in this study), such as problems with placement of adjectives, objects and determiners. All word-order errors found in the material are classified as category errors, i.e. functional errors rather than executional errors. Indeed, Quirk *et al.* (1985:1427) refer to word order as a grammatical feature alongside tense, aspect and clause structure. Since word order “is at the heart of syntax, and most of English grammar is taken up with the rules governing the order in which words, and clusters of words, can appear” (Crystal 1995:214), defining word order errors as category errors rather than realisation errors is felt to be the most logical choice. It is a “means of signalling syntactic structure” (Hasselgård *et al.* 1998:298) and, therefore, treated as a syntactic category.

Sometimes it is difficult to decide whether there is actually an error or not. For example, the “position of an adverb [...] is often variable within the verb phrase” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:126). Further, a sentence like *It is a hard school?* (S 1666) could be doubtful. In this case punctuation and context helps — it is a question and thus inverted word order is normally required. But since intonation plays a part, too, and the style of these compositions is often more like written speech (section 1.3), such cases are excluded.

Another problem occurs when fronting complements, as in **A newfoundland dog is he* (S 957) where stress is the decisive factor. Such instances have been excluded from the study, although one might argue that context would sometimes indicate one position in favour of another.²⁰³

²⁰³ Regarding adverbials, Ljung & Ohlander (1992:286) state that in AmE ‘light’ adverbials can appear both between an auxiliary and the main verb (as in BrE) as well as before the auxiliary. Examples of this are e.g. *He will never agree.../He never will agree...* Such cases are also excluded from the study. See also Quirk *et al.* (1985:493-495) on variant ‘medial’ position of adverbials and Swan (1995:26) on “mid-position adverbials” in American English.

Structures like *I and my friend*, which to some people would be unacceptable variants of *my friend and I*, are considered idiomatic or stylistic problems rather than proper word-order errors and so are also excluded.

A total number of 123 word-order errors have been found. The overall figures for different problem areas concerning word order are given in Table 12.1a:

Table 12.1a Types of word-order errors.

Subject-verb order	Adverbial position	Other word order problems	Total
63 (51%)	45 (37%)	15 (12%)	123

As can be seen from this table, half of the errors concern the subject-verb relation, followed by errors involving adverbial position, making up 37%. There are also a few other types, discussed in a mixed category consisting of, among others, problems with the object position and the internal order of adjectives, making up the remaining 12%.

12.2 Subject-verb order

In a simplified description, the “subject” is often described as “the ‘doer’ of an action” (Crystal 1997:369) in a sentence or a clause structure. It is “normally a noun phrase or a nominal clause”, generally appearing “before the verb in declarative clauses, and after the operator in *yes-no* interrogative clauses” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:724), as in *I saw the cat* and *Did you see the cat?*

The rules for basic S+V order are fairly straightforward, but there are some special cases where either partial or full inversion occurs. In the former type the subject is placed between the auxiliary and the main verb (i.e. aux+S+V), as in *Where did she go*. In the latter type of structure the subject “follows all of its verb phrase, i.e. a full (=lexical) verb or copular *be*” (Dorgeloh 1997:23), as in *there lies my book* and *here’s the bus*, or in direct speech, e.g. *That’s it said John*.(i.e. V+S).²⁰⁴

A total of 63 instances involving subject-verb order have been found. With errors of this type, primary verbs are involved in 48% (n=30) and modal auxiliaries in 42% (n=27) of the instances. Full verbs are not as frequent, making up the remaining 10% (n=6) of the instances.

²⁰⁴ See, e.g., Quirk *et al.* (1985:1379-1382), Ljung & Ohlander (1992:290-295), Hasselgård *et al.* (1998) and Swan (1995:287-290).

Among the instances involving primary verbs, *be* clearly dominates. It occurs in 87% (n=26) of the 30 instances, whereas *do* and *have* appear only twice each, making up the remaining 3%. In the group of modal auxiliaries, *can/could* is most frequent with 48% (n=13) of the 27 cases, followed by *will/would* in 26% (n=7) and *shall/should* in 15% (n=4).

The errors found involve mainly basic SVO word order but there is also one case of partial inversion, as indicated in Table 12.2a below. No errors relating to full inversion have been found. Table 12.2a also indicates what types of verbs — primary verbs, modal auxiliaries or full verbs — are involved in the errors:

Table 12.2a Number of errors involving subject-verb word order.

Verb type	Basic SVO order	Partial inversion	Total
primary verb	30	-	30
modal auxiliary	26	1	27
full verb	6	-	6
Total	62 (98%)	1 (2%)	63

An overwhelming majority of the errors are violations of basic word order [S+V], and only one instance (2%) concerns partial [aux+S+V] inversion.

Almost half of the instances involving basic word order (n=30) occur with the primary verbs *be* (n=26), *do* (n=2) and *have* (n=2). With *be*, 16 of the 26 cases concern its main-verb function, as in (669) and (670), whereas the remaining 10 instances occur in the progressive *be+ing* construction, as in (671)²⁰⁵:

- (669) In my family are we happy and nice people. [we are] (S 156)
 (670) On my freetime am I often with friends. [I am] (S 2730)
 (671) When we are home are we speaking english and... [we are speaking] (S 1143)

Examples involving *do* and *have* as main verbs are found in (672) and (673):

- (672) On our holiday do we many things for exampel... [we do] (S 4630)
 (673) Home in Sweden have I a horse... [I have] (S 2565)

²⁰⁵ In several of these cases, the progressive aspect is not the correct grammatical form but in this chapter only word order problems are discussed. Problems with tense and aspect, etc., are discussed in Chapter 5.

Modal auxiliaries *will/would*, *shall/should*, *can/could* and *must* are involved in 42% (n=26) of the basic word-order cases. Most frequently *can* (n=10) and *could* (n=3) appear in these errors, as in (674) and (675):

- (674) If I get a free ticket can I tell everybody here about ... [I can] (S 3608)
(675) So if I win the trip to Britain could I learn to speak a better english. [I could] (S 626)

Some examples of problems with the other modal auxiliaries in basic word-order constructions are found in (676), (677) and (678):

- (676) If I win, would it be fun to go to the “motor show”. [it would] (S 2555)
(677) ...and just because they don’t talk, should we not heart them. [we should] (S 3199)
(678) ...I don’t know what, but something must we do. [we must] (S 3368)

Full verbs are not very frequent in errors concerning normal word order, representing only 10% (n=6) of the instances. The few that have been found are more or less all different: *want*, *like*, *go*, *live*, and *meet*. The first occurs in two instances, as in (679), but the remaining verbs only once each, as in (680):

- (679) And because of that wants i go to the Cruft’s.... [I want] (S 2424)
(680) Guns’n Roses like I best. [I like] (S 946)

Problems with partial inversion are even more scarce in the material. Only one instance has been found, occurring in an interrogative clause²⁰⁶ with the modal auxiliary *can*:

- (681) What I can do about it. [can I] (S 4270)

Another interesting fact is that in 62 of the 63 instances²⁰⁷, the sentences begin either with an introductory adverbial (**When I get to England would I like to go...* (S 567)) or a fronted complement (**The same thing can we do with glas...* (S 3388)), as the figures in Table 12.2b indicate:

²⁰⁶ In spite of the missing question mark, context shows that this is, in fact, a question.

²⁰⁷ The remaining example is an ordinary construction S+V+COMP, where anticipatory *it* functions as subject, **I also think is’t importan to talk abot the school* (S 5940).

Table 12.2b Types of sentence introduction.

Verb type	Introductory adverbial	Fronted complement	Total
primary	26	3	29
modal	21	6	27
full	5	1	6
Total	52 (84%)	10 (16%)	62

In 84% (n=52) of the instances, we find an introductory adverbial (including adverbial clauses). Most frequently these are adverbials of time (n=16) and place (n=16), as in examples (670) and (673) above, but there are also many cases of fronted *if*-clauses (n=11), as in (674). The fronted complements occur in 16% (n=10) of the instances. These are, for instance, pronouns or proper names as in (678) and (680).

An overwhelming majority, 98%, of errors involving subject-verb order occur with basic word order. Primary verbs and modal auxiliaries are most prone to errors, 91% (n=59). A clear majority, 84% of the instances, begin with an introductory adverbial to be further discussed in section 15.5.

12.3 Adverbial position

Compared to other clause elements and their relatively fixed word order, adverbials are different. Adverbial position is a complicated area since the structural realisation, semantic function, position and grammatical function of adverbials interact. Adverbials can be realised by, e.g. adverb phrases (*/just/ then, (very) recently*), prepositional phrases (*in the evening*), noun phrases (*last week*) and clauses.

It is often difficult to decide what is an incorrect adverbial position. Adverbials can occur in several places in a clause, with some restrictions as to type and form of the adverbial, although sometimes “some positions are less likely than others [...] but none is unacceptable” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:490). Further, British and American English differ as regards choice between several positions (section 12.1, fn 203). For example, “light” adverbials (*never, also, etc.*), in addition to the position between auxiliaries and the main verb (in both BrE and AmE), can in American English also be placed in front of auxiliaries and present/past forms of *be*, as in *In the summer we often are in a summer town called Z* (S 2452).²⁰⁸ In such cases, stress and intonation are important factors, and both the position before and the position after the

²⁰⁸ See Ljung & Ohlander (1992:286) and Swan (1995:26). Compare fn. 203.

auxiliary may be acceptable. Very often spoken language gives rise to doubtful cases, like *I've for a year now bin studying the environment all over the worl* (S 5239) or *I hope the family, if I get to Britain have animals, because I love them* (S 2178), where pauses and punctuation would help. Such and similar cases are excluded from the study.

Instances where the wrong adverbial is used in the wrong position are considered lexical errors on the grounds that, had the correct adverbial been used, the error might not have occurred. So-called “split infinitives” are also excluded since they are frequently used, although generally frowned upon by prescriptive grammarians, especially in formal writing.²⁰⁹

Quirk *et al.* (1985:501) talk about adverbials having “four broad categories of grammatical function”, i.e. they can be adjuncts, subjuncts, disjuncts, and conjuncts. However, this section is not divided according to grammatical function. Instead the errors found are accounted for in two subsections: one on single adverbials, the other on internal adverbial ordering, dealing with the relative position of adverbials when there are more than one in a clause. Within these two subsections the adverbials are discussed according to their semantic functions, in this study simplified according to Swan’s (1995:22-25) division into connecting adverbials (*however, anyway*), adverbials of indefinite frequency (*always, usually, sometimes, never*), focusing adverbials (*exactly, even, only*), adverbials of certainty (*certainly, surely, maybe*), adverbials of completeness (*almost, quite, sort of*), adverbials of manner (*happily, fast, softly*), adverbials of place (*in London, upstairs*), adverbials of time and definite frequency (*today, in June, last week, soon, before*), and emphasising adverbials (*very, just, almost, really*).

Furthermore, with regard to adverbial placement, the terms “initial” “medial” and “end” position are used.²¹⁰ “Initial” position means that the adverbial is placed immediately before the subject (*Suddenly, the driver started the engine.*²¹¹), or immediately before the auxiliary or the *wh*-element (*Seriously, do you believe in ghosts?/ Seriously, why believe in ghosts?*). In subordinated or coordinated clauses the adverbial follows the conjunction (*I had scarcely got into the taxi when suddenly the driver...*). “Medial” position

²⁰⁹ See Quirk *et al.* (1985:496-498) and also Aitchison (1997:x), Swan (1995:260) and Ohlander (1999b). In the material three instances of split infinitives have been found, two involving *just*, as in *But it would be great to just see them, talk to them and ...* and one *not*, in *The one important things to talk about are to not begin war between us.*

²¹⁰ The terminology for adverbial position follows that in Quirk *et al.* (1985:490-501). Hasselgård (1996a:36-44) refers to front, mid and end position, whereas Swan (1995:21) uses initial, mid- and end- position and Svartvik *et al.* (1973:54-57) talk about front, preverbal and postverbal position.

²¹¹ This and the following examples are taken from Quirk *et al.* (1985:491-499).

means that the adverbial is placed between the subject and the verb (*The driver suddenly started the engine.*), or between the auxiliary and the main verb (*The driver has suddenly started the engine.*). “End” position means that the adverbial is placed at the end of a clause, after all obligatory elements (*Dr Blackett is in Tokyo/They became teachers in the end.*).

In the material, altogether 45 errors concerning adverbial position have been found, as shown in Table 12.3a:

Table 12.3a Errors concerning adverbial position.

Single adverbial position	Internal adverbial ordering	total
42 (93%)	3 (7%)	45

A vast majority of the errors, 93%, involve the order of single adverbials rather than problems in the relative order among several adverbials, accounting for the remaining 7%.

12.3.1 Position of single adverbials

This section deals with the position of single adverbials, i.e. there is only one adverbial in a clause but it can be either a one-word or a multi-word adverbial. All in all, 42 instances involving single adverbials have been found. Most of these errors, 93% (n=39), concern one-word, so-called “light”, adverbials²¹² such as the adverbs *maybe* or *often*. Only 7% (n=3) of the instances are multi-word adverbials such as *twice a week* and *of course*.

The errors are distributed over five different types according to the terminology used in Swan (1995:22-25), as shown in Table 12.3.1a:

Table 12.3.1a Types of adverbials involved in errors concerning single adverbial position.

Adverbials of certainty	Adverbials of emphasis	Focusing adverbials	Adverbials of time and frequency	Adverbials of manner	Total
19 (45%)	8 (19%)	8 (19%)	6 (14%)	1 (2%)	42

²¹² Quirk *et al.* (1985:493) use the term ‘solitary adverbs’ and in Huddelston (1984:334) we find ‘simple adverbs’. ‘Light’ adverbs is the translated term used in Ljung & Ohlander (1992:285-286). In Svartvik & Sager (1996:401ff) the terms used are ‘korta’ (short) and ‘lätta’ (light) adverbials.

Out of the 42 errors involving incorrect single adverbial position, 45% (n=19) relate to adverbs of certainty, mainly *maybe* (n=17) but also *of course* (n=2). In spite of the medial position being the “normal” position for “light” adverbs, these three are usually placed initially.

In all the cases with *maybe* the adverbial is incorrectly placed in medial position, as in (682).²¹³ As regards *of course*, in one case (683), it should be placed in medial position between the auxiliary and the main verb (...*I will of course write*...). In the other example, (684), the adverbial should be in initial position after the conjunction (...*and, of course, school takes*...), medial position (...*and school, of course, also takes*...) or end position (...*and school also takes a lot of my time, of course*).

- (682) You maybe understand that I also want to go to... [Maybe /you understand.../]
(S 1454)
- (683) In the paper Youth I of course will write a long article... [will of course write]
(S 706)
- (684) I have a lots of intrests to do on my speer time, and shool takes ofcourse
allso a lot of my time. [and of course /school.../](S 3943)

A total of 19% (n=8) of the errors concern the emphasising adverbials *just*, *almost* and *most*. Such adverbials “modif[y] particular words or expressions in a clause, and go just before them” (Swan 1995:25). In the instances found, the adverbials are incorrectly placed, thus modifying the wrong word, as exemplified in (685), (686) and (687):

- (685) But I don’t want to just hear about it. [just don’t want to] (S 399)
- (686) I go in a music school there we almost sing every day and we often give
conserts.[we sing almost every day] (S 4881)
- (687) See the beauty of Britain is the most thing I want to do. [...I most want to
do/...I want to do most] (S 1860)

In another 19% (n=8) focusing adverbs are involved, as in (688). Here, *only* (n=4), should be placed in medial position. End position is the correct choice for *too* (n=3), incorrectly placed immediately after the primary verb, as in (689), and for *either* (n=1), in (690), wrongly placed in medial position after the auxiliary:

- (688) I only have been in Danmark. [I have only been...] (S 1980)
- (689) ...living together is to an important thing to talk about. [..., too] (S 5509)

²¹³ The examples of *maybe* included in this study have been tested on NSs and were not accepted as standard English.

- (690) I wouldn't either have anything against going to Madonnas live concert.
[...either] (S 2896)

Adverbials of time and frequency are involved in 14% (n=6) of the instances. This is where the multi-word adverbials occur. Three of the instances are of this type: *most of the time*, *for the first time* and *twice a week*. This type of adverbial is generally found in end position, but "initial position is also common if the adverb is not the main focus of the message" (Swan 1995:25). However, here it is placed immediately after the main verb, as in (691), or between the auxiliary and the main verb, as in (692). In (693), the adverbial is also placed in medial position, between the subject and the verb, instead of the correct end position:

- (691) We plays to times at weak on fotball and... [football /twice a week/] (S 1467)
 (692) ...that the environmentproblems is what we should most of the time be discussing. [should be discussing most of the time] (S 5242)
 (693) When I was five I for the first time trained swimming. [trained...for the first time] (S 2155)

Medial position is common for adverbs of indefinite frequency, such as *often* and *always*. This is also true of *still* (Quirk *et al.* 1985:579), unless we are dealing with a coordinate or a subordinate clause. However, in the remaining two instances, the adverbials (*very often* and *still*) are incorrectly placed after the verb, as in (694), where it should have a medial position, and after the conjunction in the coordinated clause in (695):²¹⁴

- (694) I listen very often to music. [very often listen] (S 355)
 (695) She is 19 years old and live still home. [still live/s] (S 2132)

Another adverbial creating problems is the one case involving the manner adverb *easily*, in (696). In this instance, medial position after the negated auxiliary is the correct position:

- (696) I easily don't get ill, and ... [I don't easily get] (S 295)

To sum up, it seems that there is considerable uncertainty about how to place adverbials. Four error patterns emerge:

²¹⁴ Sometimes ellipsis occurs, as in (705) *She is 19 years old and live still home* (S 2132) where the subject *she* is not repeated after the conjunction. This is, however, regarded as medial position C(S)AVO. In coordinated clauses, with or without an introducing subject, we get an incorrect construction *C(S)A(aux)VO, as in *My father are from Finland and only can talk finnish.* (S 1498) similar to *SA(aux)VO.

- adverbials in end position are incorrectly placed in iE or M position resulting in examples like (*...*living together is to an important thing...*) and (**I wouldn't either have anything against ...*).
- adverbials in medial position between auxiliaries and main verb are placed in iM position before all verb types (**I only have been...*) or in M position if there is a conjunction (*...*and live still home*).
- adverbials in ordinary medial position are incorrectly placed in iE position resulting in errors like *I listen often to music*. In coordinated clauses this results in errors like *... *and school takes of course also...*
- adverbials in end position are incorrectly placed in M position (*...*we should most of the time be discussing...*).

There are also a few instances where adverbials modify the wrong head, an error identification which is totally dependent on context.

Most prone to errors are adverbials of certainty (especially *maybe*), followed by adverbials of emphasis and focusing adverbials. One reason for this may be that there are more fixed positions with these than with the other types of adverbials.

12.3.2 Internal adverbial ordering

As in the case of adjectives (section 12.4.1), there are certain principles of internal ordering²¹⁵ between individual adverbials. Internal adverbial ordering refers to the order of adverbs in clusters or combinations. For instance, adverbials of place (PP *to London*) and adverbials of manner (*happily*) precede adverbials of time as in *She came to London yesterday./She happily left that day* (Quirk *et al.* 1985:565). They continue to say that the normal ordering of different types of adverbial is: adverb - NP - PP- nonfinite clauses - finite clauses, and Hasselgård (1996:99) suggests set sequences of internal ordering of time and place adverbials occurring in “clusters” and “combinations”. According to Hasselgård (1996:52) a cluster is “a sequence in which two (or more) adverbials occur in the same position in the clause” as in *I went to London three years ago*, where both adverbials occupy the end

²¹⁵ In Quirk *et al.* (1985:Ch 8) this is referred to as 'relative position', whereas Hasselgård (1996a: 52ff) talks about 'adverbial sequences'. However, in this study the term 'internal ordering' is used.

position.²¹⁶ However, deviations from these sets of sequences can sometimes occur due to stress and emphasis.

Only three errors have been found regarding internal adverbial ordering. In the first two cases, adverbials of place are given the incorrect position after an adverbial of time, in (697) and (698):

- (697) my name is N N and i am 16 years old and I was on a holyday at november in England. [in England in November] (S 1477)
- (698) I go five days a week in a school called X. [in a school...five days a week] (S 3310)

The simplest solution is to let the two adverbials change places, so that the adverbial of place correctly precedes the adverbial of time. Another possibility is to put the time adverbial in initial position ...*and in November, I was on holiday in England. / Five days a week I go...*

In the last example, (699) below, the order of the degree adverbials *so* and *very* is incorrect:

- (699) My grams is very so good, so if I win a trip to Britian, maybe I stay in Britian and go to school there. [so very good] (S 1393)

On the whole, internal ordering of adverbials has not given rise to many errors, possibly due to the fact that clusters of several adverbials do not seem to be very frequent in the compositions.

12.4 Other word order problems

In this section, an additional six types of word order problems are dealt with, viz. incorrect positions of adjectives, objects, noun modifiers, determiners and non-finite verb forms. These make up a total of 15 errors, as shown in Table 12.4a:

Table 12.4a Other types of word order problems.

Position of adjective	Position of object	Position of noun modifier	Position of determiner	Position of verb	Total
5 (33%)	3 (20%)	3 (20%)	3 (20%)	1 (7%)	15

²¹⁶ With adverbials of the same type, e.g. two place adverbials, in 'the same' position, the first has a less inclusive reference than the second one, i.e. A2 encompasses A1, as in *They sat at the table (A1) in the dining area (A2)...* (cf. Hasselgård, 1996:74).

One third of the errors involve incorrect placing of adjectives, followed by objects, noun modifiers and determiners at 20% each. These, and the remaining type, are discussed separately below.

12.4.1 Position of adjectives

Problems concerning the position of adjectives mainly involve sequences of adjectives. According to Turton (1995:18), the “normal”, unmarked, internal adjective ordering follows the pattern of adjectives denoting subjective opinion (*nice/unusual*), then size/weight (*big/heavy*) - age (*old/new*) - shape (*round*) - colour (*blue*) - origin (*English*) - material (*wooden*) - purpose (*kitchen/car*).²¹⁷ This results in examples like:

a wonderful long new white Italian silk wedding dress

In the material, five instances of problems with internal adjective ordering have been found. Four of them involve *little* being placed before an adjective of subjective opinion (n=3), as in (700), and in one case, (701), a colour adjective precedes an adjective of size:

(700) Sometimes I wan't to be "the nice little sweet girl" who just... [sweet, little]
(S 596)

(701) ... and they live at home, I live in a red big house. [big red] (S 3491)

There is also one instance where *strange* incorrectly modifies *sort*:

(702) I think that is a sort of strange sport. [...a strange sort of ...] (S 1238)

Most of the problems concerning the position of adjectives occur when several adjectives are involved; generally adjectives denoting subjective opinion, size and colour.

12.4.2 Position of objects

The normal position for an object is after subject and verb (SVO). If there are two objects, direct and indirect, the indirect object usually precedes the direct object, *The girl gave him (IND) a book (DIR)*. However, if the indirect object

²¹⁷ See also Ljung & Ohlander (1992:165) and Swan (1995:8).

is turned into a prepositional phrase the reverse order is preferred: *The girl gave a book (DIR) to the boy (PP)*.²¹⁸

Only three errors have been found involving two different structures: *have something to do with something* and the position of objects with phrasal verbs.

The first type of structure, where the prepositional object *with X* is incorrectly placed in front of the infinitive *to do*, occurs twice, in (703) and (704):

- (703) ...so I don't want to do anything that has whit horses to do. [to do with horses] (S 2046)
- (704) because i hate everything witch have with school to do. [to do with school] (S 37)

The remaining case, (705), involves a phrasal verb where the object is incorrectly placed after the particle, which is unacceptable when the object is a personal pronoun.²¹⁹

- (705) we must take care of the world and each other, because the life must go on, and we are going to take over it. [take it over] (S 5547)

12.4.3 Position of noun modifiers

This type of error has been found in three instances only. As in (706), the modifier should be placed in front of the noun, not after. In the instances found, an incorrect preposition *in* is inserted before the noun *football*:

- (706) I' shoud be happy if I' could se Cup final in football. [football cup final] (S 629)

12.4.4 Position of determiners

Here, too, only three errors have been found. These instances occur with the determiners *all*, *both* and *the whole of* in (707), (708) and (709). In the first two cases, the predeterminer should precede the central determiner, and in the last one *the whole* should be placed immediately before *world*.²²⁰

²¹⁸ See Herriman (1995) for a detailed discussion of indirect objects. Hasselgård *et al.* (1998) use the term 'oblique object' for this type of prepositional phrase.

²¹⁹ See Quirk *et al.* (1985:1154), Huddleston (1984:204-205) and Swan (1995:613)

²²⁰ This could also be classified as incorrect placing of the adjective *whole* rather than of the determiner *the*.

- (707) And i hope with my all heart that i could go. [all my heart] (S 2992)
(708) I live with my both Parents mother and father... [both my parents] (S 5916)
(709) If we dono't do anything soon whole the world will tear apart. [the whole world] (S 3912)

12.4.5 Position of verbs

One error concerns a non-finite verb form and its position in the clause. The *to*-infinitive is incorrectly placed in front of the S+V pattern, as in (710):

- (710) To watch I like football and basket. [I like to watch] (S 23)

12.5 Summary of word order errors

This chapter accounts for the 123 errors found relating to word order. The commonest type involves subject-verb order, where primary verbs and modals create most problems, mainly *be* and *can*. This type of word order problem makes up 51% of the instances, followed by errors involving adverbial position, 37%. The remaining 12% are made up of minor word-order categories. All errors are classified as category errors.

In Carlbom's (1973) study, subject-verb order problems account for 24% of the errors, whereas adverbial position makes up the majority of 63%. Similar results are found in Stenström's (1975) study, where adverbial position is again in a clear majority (66% of the instances), subject-verb order accounting for only 19%. A complete comparison of the results from these three studies is given in Figure 12.5.i.

In all three studies the position of adverbials is most problematic. The percentage is lowest in the present study but at the same time we may note that when the percentage of adverbial position errors decreases, the number of errors in subject-verb order increases. This may be due to differences in age, maturity and number of years of English studies in the three studies.²²¹ With the older testees, subject-verb order seems to improve whereas problems with adverbial position increase. Furthermore, word order is closely linked to transfer from L1, and other studies (e.g., Taylor 1975) show that transfer decreases as proficiency in general improves (Ch. 19).

²²¹ In this study, the testees make up a relatively homogeneous group of 16-year-olds with very few, if any, exceptions, whereas in Carlbom's (1973) and Stenström's (1975) studies the participants are university students with previous studies of English ranging from one (non-Swedish students) to 10 years.

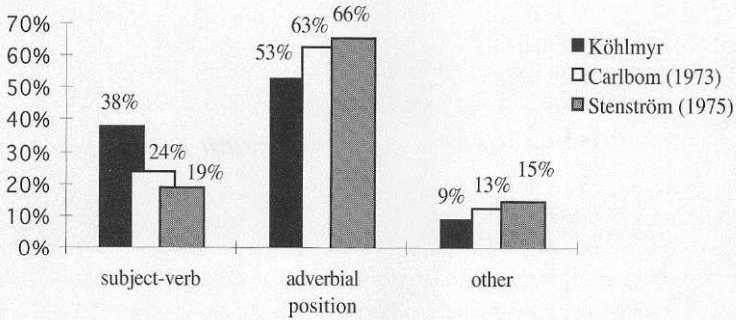


Figure 12.5.i Comparison of frequency of word-order errors in Köhlmyr (this volume), Carlbom (1973) and Stenström (1975).

Within the minor error groups (“other”), in this study, errors relating to adjective position are the most frequent, accounting for 40% of the instances in this group, followed by object and noun modifier position at 20% each. Determiner and verb position make up 13% and 7%, respectively. This corresponds roughly with the figures in the two other studies.

PART THREE: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF ERRORS

“We might say that it is, at least partly, by locating errors that pupils learn to learn and teachers learn to teach”

(Svartvik, 1973:9)

13. Analysis of errors found: some perspectives

13.1 Introductory

In Part II, errors were discussed basically in terms of frequency of occurrence. There is no comparison between the frequency of individual categories of errors in relation to the frequency of the total number of occurrences (both correct and incorrect instances), since this is beyond the scope of this study. It is also difficult and extremely time-consuming to carry out such investigations with free written material trying to count the possible number of occurrences for every grammatical feature investigated. Also, certain features are not very frequent due to the nature of the assignment itself, e.g., there are relatively few progressive forms but numerous future tense structures. In this chapter the major results as regards the main error areas, category versus realisation errors and types of operation are discussed. All 3 525 errors found are distributed over the ten major grammatical categories (Ch. 3-12), as shown in Figure 13.1.i:

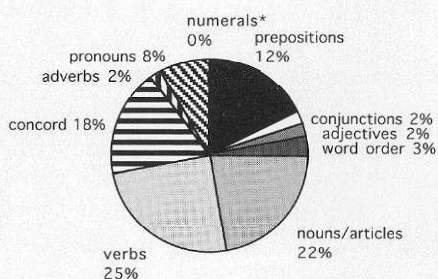


Figure 13.1.i Total frequency of errors as distributed over the major error categories. *Errors relating to numerals account for less than 1% (n=13/3525), which is automatically displayed as 0% in the pie chart.

Errors involving verbs are most frequent, accounting for 25% of the instances, followed by noun-related errors (including articles) at 22%. To these two error categories, parts from Chapter 11 on concord could be added: subject-verb concord, internal NP concord, subject-complement concord, and distributive number concord, i.e. another 18% of the errors. This means that 65% of the instances relate to these three areas, a result which is not particularly surprising, bearing in mind that the compositions are generally made up of simple sentence structures, a kind of 'written spoken language' (section 1.3), and that most simple sentences consist of S-V-O, where nouns, verbs and concord relations play major roles. What is more surprising, perhaps, is the relatively large number of errors in basic forms, such as confusion of word classes, coordination, and confusion of the forms *am*, *are* and *is*, and also tense mixing. This, and the possible reasons behind the errors, are discussed in Chapter 15-18. Following these major areas are errors relating to prepositions, making up 12%.

Other studies show similar results. In Stenström's (1975) investigation the four most common error areas are the VP (25%), the NP (19%), prepositions (18%) and concord errors (13%). Ruin's (1996) findings reveal that, in compositions, errors mainly involve concord, the zero article and prepositions. This can be compared to studies where the L1 is not Swedish. Mukattash (1978), for instance, found that, for Arabic speakers, the four most common areas are 'nominals and articles' (38%), while 'verbals' rank second (29%), prepositions third (15%), followed by pronouns (8%). On the other hand, Dafu (1998) predicts that for Chinese speakers, verbs, nouns and adjectives, being 'notional words' are more frequent in sentence construction and, thus, are most prone to errors. His findings, viz. that 78% of the errors involve these areas, confirm the hypothesis. In Politzer and Ramirez (1973), 51% of the errors made by Mexican-American children involve tense and only 10% prepositions. Larsen-Freeman (1983), cited in Bardovi-Harlig & Bofman (1989:25-26), found that, for Spanish speakers across five levels of proficiency, a majority of the errors involved articles, prepositions and verb tense.

In the present study, within the VP, the most frequent errors (except subject-verb concord) involve tense and nonfiniteness. There are very few problems with the progressive, the *do*-construction and the passive voice, for reasons mentioned earlier (sections 5.3, 5.4 and 5.6, respectively). A clear majority of the noun-related errors display difficulties in handling the articles and the number distinction. The most common concord errors, on the whole, are connected to subject-verb agreement, in particular to the incorrect combination Npl+*Vs. As regards prepositions, most errors appear in PPs functioning as adverbials. As mentioned in Part II, errors have been classified

as either category or realisation errors (Ch. 3). The former are functional errors, dealing with problems in choosing the correct grammatical category at many different levels, as exemplified in Figure 3.2.i (Ch. 3). The latter are executional errors, relating to the actual rendering of a correctly chosen grammatical category, e.g. the present perfect or the indefinite article. Concord and word order errors occur only as category errors. In general, category (functional) errors may be regarded as more serious, since such errors are likely to reveal basic problems in the command of grammatical functions and structures. The distribution of category and realisation errors over the major error categories, in order of frequency, is illustrated in Figure 13.1.ii:

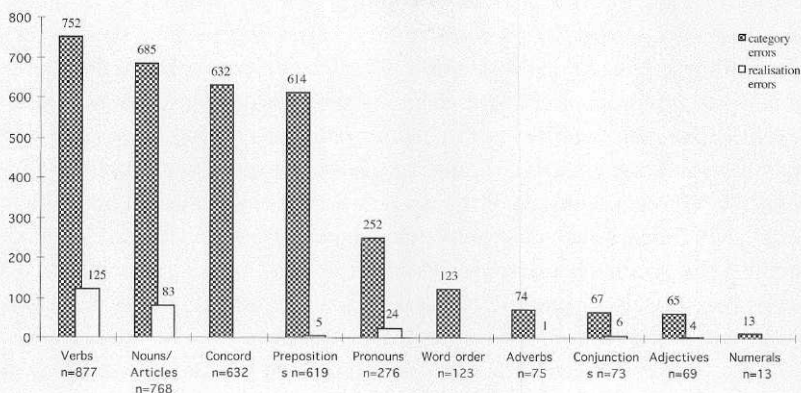


Figure 13.1.ii Distribution of category and realisation errors over major grammatical categories.

On the whole, category errors vastly outnumber realisation errors, by 93% ($n=3277$) to 7% ($n=248$). They appear most frequently in the four areas involving verbs (23%, $n=752$, mainly tense, complementation and nonfinite forms), article usage (21%, $n=685$), concord (19%, $n=632$), and prepositions (19%, $n=614$). As regards realisation errors, these are of three types. First, a majority of 64% ($n=158$) are found in ‘complex structures’. This concept includes structures like the present and past perfect (*have/had+V*), the future (*will+V* and *be going to*), the progressive form (*be+Ving*), the passive (*be+past participle*), and the *do*-construction (*do/did+bare infinitive*), but also complex prepositions (*in front of*, *out of*, *such as*), complex conjunctions (*as...as*, *same...as*, *even if*, *both...and*) and indefinite pronouns (*a lot of*, *a little*, *the whole of*). Second, the distinction between variant forms such as the

indefinite articles *a* and *an* accounts for another 26% (n=65) and, third, the remaining 10% (n=26) are related to the regular-irregular distinction in plural forms, past tense verbs and comparative adjective forms.

At this stage, it is also of interest to find out whether some of the 'operations' — substitution, addition or omission — are particularly frequent, both in overall numbers and in certain contexts. Dulay, Burt & Krashen (1982:150) call this 'modification' of target forms. It is important to remember that (in this study) the term 'operation' does not necessarily, or normally, imply calculated or conscious operations, but is only a descriptive device.

For each type of operation, errors are presented in pie charts showing the different 'sectors' relating to the VP, the NP and the remaining word-class categories. In each sector, there are areas referring to the different sections in Part II. Minor areas are sometimes collapsed into a mixed 'Miscellaneous' sector, for practical reasons. First, the focus is on category errors, followed by a similar discussion of realisation errors. In the discussion that follows, instances of concord and word order errors are included in each relevant sector; e.g., subject-verb concord, subject-verb order and the one case concerning the position of nonfinite verbs are discussed within the VP sector; the NP sector consists of the noun and article sections, deviant NPs in internal NP concord, subject-complement concord and distributive number concord. The sector on pronouns includes the entire pronoun section plus deviant determiners in internal NP concord, pronominal concord and cases dealing with the position of pronominal determiners. Within the adjective sector instances of adjective ordering are found and the sector consisting of adverbs also includes adverbial position. In general, only the most frequent sectors are discussed, illustrated by some typical examples. Sometimes, however, even less frequent error types are included. Thus I have taken the liberty of including particularly interesting or striking error types whenever I find something relevant to the overall discussion of errors.

The causes of error are not dealt with in this chapter, except in a few especially relevant cases. When evaluating the overall results of this investigation it is important also to take into account the effects of category and realisation errors as regards error gravity, intelligibility and their pedagogical implications. This is further developed and discussed in Chapter 20.

13.2 Substitution errors

As explained in Chapter 3, substitution here means that the correct grammatical category has been replaced (category substitution), as in (711), or that a correctly chosen grammatical category has been incorrectly realised, usually replaced by some other item (realisation substitution), as in (712):

(711) I'm playing fottball in a club called X IF. [I play] (S 1695)

(712) I have live here one year soon and... [have lived] (S 173)

A vast majority of the substitution errors, 95% (n=2824), are category errors and only 5% (n=157) reveal problems in the realisation of forms. The three largest sectors involve the VP, the NP and the PP. The 'Miscellaneous' sector includes errors relating to adjectives, conjunctions and numerals. Figure 13.2.i illustrates the total distribution of errors over the sectors:

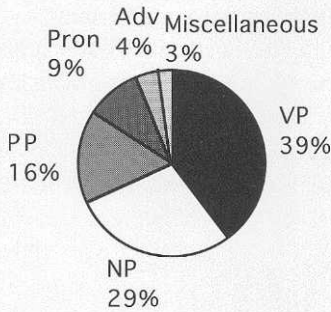


Figure 13.2.i Distribution of substitution errors over grammatical sectors.

Most substitution cases, 39% (n=1175), reveal problems in mastering the VP. The second most common category, NP problems, accounts for 29% (n=857), followed by prepositions (16% n=488), pronouns (9% n=267), and adverbs (4% n=119). The last category, 'Miscellaneous', accounts for the remaining 3% (n=76).

Within the VP (which incorporates subject-verb concord and subject-verb word order) there are three dominant error areas: subject-verb concord, tense and nonfiniteness. A majority of 95% (n=1112) are category errors and the remaining 5% (n=63) are realisation errors. The complete distribution of substitution errors over the different error areas within each sector is shown in Figure 13.2.ii:

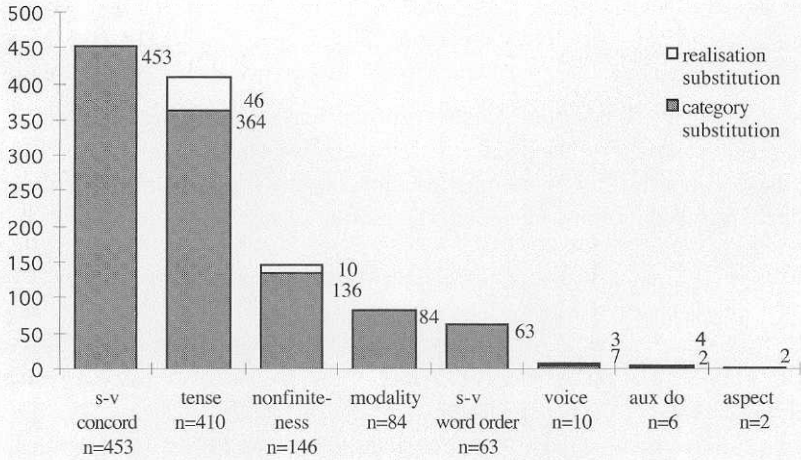


Figure 13.2.ii Distribution of substitution errors in the VP sector.

As Figure 13.2.ii shows, there are very few realisation errors in this sector, one reason could be that the realisation of most of the areas in the different sections is equivalent to Swedish, and, thus, causes very few problems. Some typical examples of category substitution from each section are given in (713) - (720) below:

- | | | |
|-------|--|-----------------|
| (713) | If I <u>gets</u> to Britan I want to test ... [I get] (S 1286) | [concord] |
| (714) | I also LOVE icehockey, I'm <u>playing</u> my self,... [I play] (S 579) | [tense/aspect] |
| (715) | I also <u>want see</u> the country side. [want to see] (S 1978) | [nonfiniteness] |
| (716) | I <u>like to be</u> a hair dresser when I grow up. [I would like] (S 1123) | [modality] |
| (717) | <u>To watch</u> I like football and basket. [I like to watch] (S23) | [word order] |
| (718) | ... live in a small country who <u>calls</u> X. [is called] (S 886) | [passive] |
| (719) | I <u>don't got</u> more to say. [haven't got] (S 439) | [do constr.] |
| (720) | ... and test (in the area we <u>reads</u> about). [are reading] (S 1939) | [progressive] |

Subject-verb concord accounts for a large share of the problems in the material (Ch. 11). It is more common to overuse the 3rd person singular *-s* with subjects that do not take this form, as in (713), than to neglect the *-s* with a 3rd person subject (section 11.2).

As regards tense errors (section 5.2), it is interesting to note that the simple present and the future are the most problematic tenses. However, it is not very surprising to find the majority of instances involving the simple present being replaced by the (progressive) *-ing* form, as in (714). The

reasons for this are further developed in section 16.2. Suffice it to say here that in a majority (57%) of the tense-related category substitution errors, differences between Swedish and English are involved. For similar reasons (cf. the discussion of transfer in section 15.9), nor is it very surprising to find the future construction *will* + infinitive replaced mainly by the simple present. The other cases of tense mixing are not as easy to explain since they occur mainly in tenses which are similar in construction in the two languages.

Within the section on nonfiniteness, keeping apart the three nonfinite forms — the *to*-infinitive, the bare infinitive and the *-ing* form — creates many problems (section 5.7). The *-ing* form, which is most often replaced by the bare infinitive, as in (715) above, is particularly difficult. This error type and parallels to errors with the progressive *-ing* form are discussed in sections 16.2 and 16.6.

These, then, are the three main areas of category substitution. The instances of realisation substitution occur only with tense (section 5.1), including the simple past, the present perfect, the past perfect, and the future. Other areas are the passive voice (section 5.6), *do*-support (section 5.4) and nonfinite constructions involving the *to*-infinitive (section 5.7.1). Some typical examples of these error types are given below:

- (721) I have live here one year soon and.... [have lived] (S 173) [tense]
 (722) ... and was supose to... [was supposed] (S 1751) [passive]
 (723) ...because you don't hav'ed internet,... [don't have] (S 6045) [*do* constr.]
 (724) ...wath's goin to happened in the future. [to happen] (S 4068) [nonfiniteness]

Problems of tense realisation most frequently occur with the present perfect structure, as in (721), but also with the past perfect (section 5.2.2.3), as in **had finance* [*had financed*], and the future (section 5.2.3), as in **will drove* [*will drive*]. This shows that complex tense forms are difficult. So are irregular past forms (section 5.2.2.1), e.g. using **shined* for *shone*. This type of structural error also occurs with the passive voice (section 5.6), as in (722), with some instances of the *do*-construction (section 5.4), as in (723), as well as with nonfinite constructions, especially the *to*-infinitive (section 5.7.1), as in (724).

The second largest sector deals with the NP, consisting of the categories of articles and numbers, but also certain concord types and word order of modifiers. Three areas dominate: the articles, number and concord. Figure 13.2.iii illustrates this:

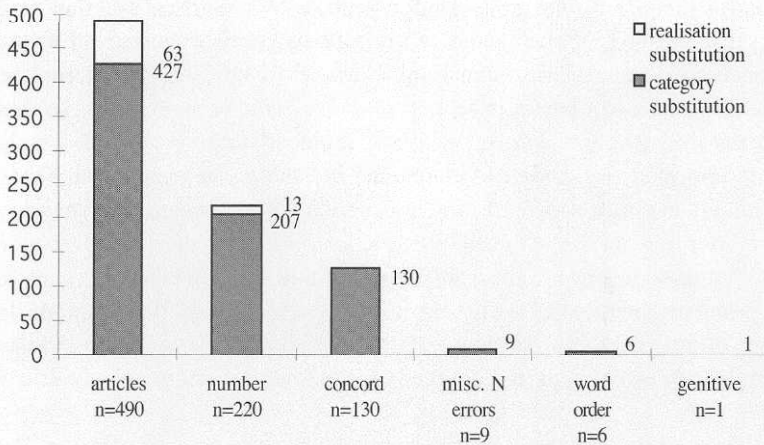


Figure 13.2.iii Distribution of substitution errors in the NP sector.

Again, category errors are in a vast majority, 91% (n=780), with realisation errors making up 9% (n=77). Category substitution errors occur in all areas relating to the NP, though very few involve substitution of the noun itself (section 4.5). No errors of this type occur with the genitive (section 4.4). Some typical examples of category substitution are given in (725) - (728) below.

- (725) I want to go to a conference in Copenhagen... [the] (S 3463) [article]
 (726) ...I want to go and see thing... [things] (S 3000) [number]
 (727) And one little sister who is 2 year old. [years] (S 962) [number]
 (728) ... to come to english to expand my english. [England] [word class]
 (S 1230)

The articles (section 4.3) give rise to many problems. Bearing in mind that the zero article is regarded as a grammatical category, using another item in its place is categorised as substitution, not omission or addition of an item (section 4.3). Substitution of the zero article (section 4.3.3), as in (725), is the most frequent error type, followed by the substitution of the definite article (section 4.3.1).

As regards number (section 4.2), errors consist mainly in mixing up the singular and the plural forms, mostly with count nouns, as in (726), but also with noncounts. However, a clear majority of the cases involve regular nouns in the singular or in the plural.

The concord cases discussed here involve internal NP concord (section 11.3) with a deviant head noun, subject-complement concord (section 11.4) and cases of distributive number concord (section 11.6). The first, internal NP concord, is the most frequent type, and here the deviant form is most frequently preceded by a cardinal numeral, as in (727).

Realisation substitution relating to the NP occurs mainly with the indefinite article (section 4.3.2). The problems consist in choosing between *a* and *an*.

The third largest sector, dealing with prepositions (Ch. 9), accounts for 16% of the substitution errors. There are four types represented: PP adverbials, V+PP, PP modifiers and Adj+PP. Category errors account for more than 99% (n=487) of the cases, as shown in Figure 13.2.iv:

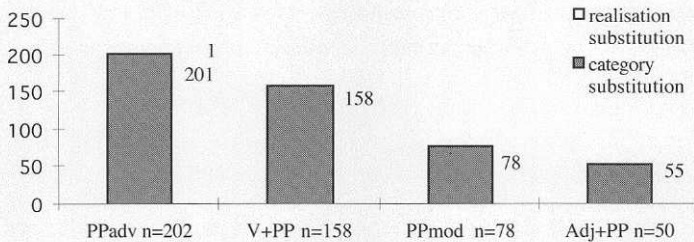


Figure 13.2.iv Distribution of substitution errors in the preposition sector.

Some typical examples from all four sections are given in (729) - (732) below:

- (729) On the conference I think we should ... [at] (S 3508) [PPadv]
 (730) ...would I like to go on a big concert with some... [to] (S 567) [V+PP]
 (731) ...for my knowledges in the English language. [of] (S 2897) [PPmod]
 (732) ...because i am very intressed of racing cars. [in] (S 137) [Adj+PP]

PP adverbials, exemplified in (729), account for 41% and V+PP structures, as in (730), for 32% of the instances involving substitution errors relating to prepositions. Then there is a notable frequency gap to the next two structures, NP+PP, as in (731) and Adj+PP, as in (732).

The only realisation error relating to prepositions involves the complex preposition *out of*, incorrectly given as **out from* in (733):

- (733) And it would be nice to get out from this boring town. [out of] (S 5621)

In the two remaining sectors on pronouns and adverbs, making up the final 23%, some striking substitution cases are worth mentioning. As regards pronouns, a majority of instances of category substitution relate to the *it-there* distinction (section 7.3), as in (734) below. In the adverbial sector most errors consist in the incorrect use of adjective forms for the adverb (section 6.2), as in (735), but also cases of mix-up between the pronominal adverbs *there* and *where*, as in (736).

(734) I hope it's also a lot of girls in England... [there] (S 1058) [it-there]

(735) Them like subjects are very good chosen. [well] (S 3657) [Adv]

(736) There I live now I have 2 km to ... [where] (S 2523) [Adv]

Most of the category substitution cases thus seem to appear where there are alternating forms depending on context and meaning.

As regards realisation substitution, the (few) errors found generally involve complex verb structures, related to the perfect and future tenses, and the indefinite article.

13.3 Addition errors

In Chapter 3, addition is described as an operation where either a category as a whole (category addition) or part of one (realisation addition) is redundantly added to another item, as in (737) and (738):

(737) My dog, a golden retriever, has win a dog show for a few years ago... (S 340)

(738) As I write I'm think I'm the right person. (S 1506)

Most addition errors, 88% (n=146), are cases of category addition and the remaining 12% (n=20) are realisation errors. Addition of both types is most frequent in the VP, 49% (n=81), and with prepositions, 31% (n=52). There are fewer problems with pronouns, 8% (n=13), adjectives, 6% (n=10), the NP, 4% (n=7), and a miscellaneous group consisting of numerals and conjunctions, making up the remaining 2% (n=3), as displayed in Figure 13.3.i:

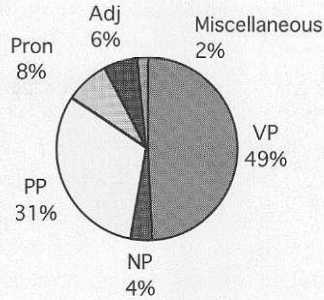


Figure 13.3.i Distribution of addition errors over grammatical sectors.

The largest sector, the VP, accounts for a majority of the errors. Instances of category and realisation addition are distributed as shown in Figure 13.3.ii:

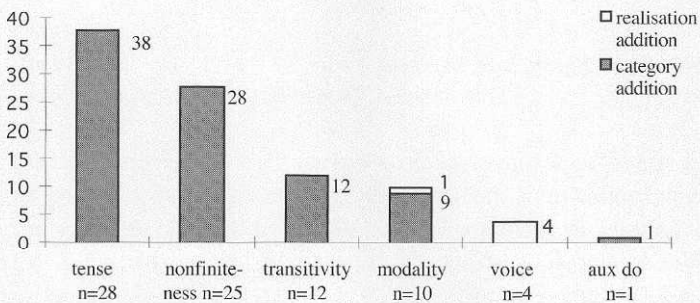


Figure 13.3.ii Distribution of addition errors in the VP sector.

Category addition appears in all areas except the one relating to voice. Realisation errors involve voice and modality. Typical examples of category addition are given in (739) - (745):

- | | | |
|-------|--|-----------------|
| (739) | ...where we <u>lern us</u> to shoot... [learn] (S 769) | [transitivity] |
| (740) | I like <u>to listning</u> to music and ...[to listen/listening] (S 2912) | [nonfiniteness] |
| (741) | ...in a town in Sweden <u>who called X</u> . [called X] (S 5596) | [nonfiniteness] |
| (742) | I <u>m</u> like to lisen to music. [I like] (S 653) | [tense] |
| (743) | I am sorry if I <u>don't kan</u> write good but ... [can't] (S 2026) | [modality] |
| (744) | I think that I <u>m should</u> get... [should] (S 4421) | [modality] |
| (745) | <u>Am don't</u> like to buy things... [I don't] (S 6014) | [do constr.] |

In the nonfiniteness section (section 5.7), most addition errors consist in the *to*-infinitive and the *-ing* form being incorrectly used together, as in (740),

and the addition of a relative pronoun to the past participle, as in (741), **a town who called X*. There are also cases relating to transitivity involving the verb *learn*, as in (739), which does not require a personal object (section 5.8).

The instances dealing with tense problems consist in adding a redundant present tense form of *be*, *do*, *have* or *will* to a clause most often in the simple present (section 5.2.1), but also in the simple past (section 5.2.2.1), the present perfect (section 5.2.2.2) and the future (section 5.2.3.1).²²² Most frequently contracted *am* appears, as in (742). A similar kind of category addition occurs with the modal auxiliaries, where most cases consist in either adding another modal or, again, a form of *be*, *do* or *will*, to the existing verb form, exemplified in (743) and (744). This error type also occurs in *do* constructions where, similarly, a form of *be* is added, as in (745) above.

Realisation addition in the VP occurs only with the passive voice and modality. The errors involve the addition of a regular past *-ed* ending to an irregular verb either in a passive construction, as in (746), or with the semi-modal *be able*, as in (747):

- (746) ... but I'm not borned here. [/was not/ born] (S 313) [passive voice]
 (747) I was abled to work a hole summer... [was able] (S 1962) [modality]

The second largest sector involves prepositions. Here, all errors are category errors. Seven prepositions are involved in these cases, all of them found among the ten most frequent prepositions displayed in Table 9.1b. The errors are distributed over four structural types — \emptyset Prep adverbials, V+PP structures, Adj+NP and determiner+NP — as shown in Table 13.3.iii:

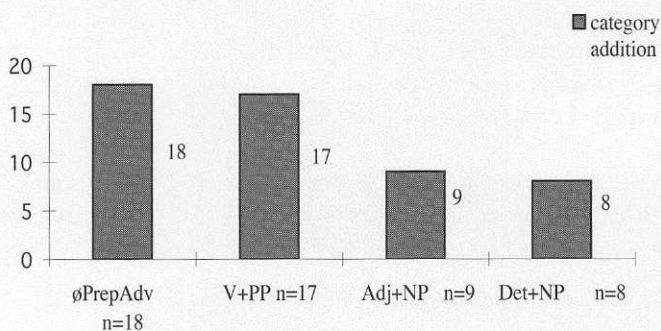


Figure 13.3.iii Distribution of addition errors in the preposition sector.

²²² Compare the discussion in sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2.1, 5.2.3.1, 5.5.4 and 16.1 for a full picture of this error type.

Some typical examples of category addition relating to each of these structures are given below:

- (748) ...i won 30 miljons on Lotto for one week ago. [one week ago] (S 2991) [øPrepAdv]
- (749) ...wanted to hang glide and climb in mountains. [climb sth.] (S 141) [V+PP]
- (750) It's near by a lake called Y. [near a lake] (S 1968) [Adj+NP]
- (751) And what they have for sports. [what sports /they have/] (S 2685) [det+NP]

Most of the cases involve øPrep adverbials. These are mainly instances of time and place expressions like *x weeks/years ago*, as in (748) above. The second type involves verbs incorrectly treated as phrasal verbs, as in (749). The errors relating to Adj+NP involve *more*, *most* (**most of young people*) and *near*, as in (750). Most instances involving determiner+NP structures are of the type where the interrogative determiner *what* occurs with a NP, as in (751).

To sum up, a clear majority of the addition cases occur in the VP sector. Most of the errors are category errors, mainly involving nonfiniteness and tense errors. The relatively few realisation problems mostly occur with passive structures.

13.4 Omission errors

Omission means that either the entire grammatical category is left out (category omission), as in (752), or only a part of it is missing (realisation omission), as in (753):

- (752) My name ø N. [is] (S 1380)
- (753) my sister ø got to one son and two doters. [has got] (S 669)

The majority of the omission cases, 81% (n=307), are category errors and the remaining 19% (n=71) are realisation errors. The distribution over the different sectors is illustrated in Figure 13.4.i:

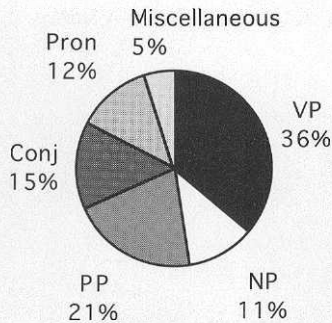


Figure 13.4.i Distribution of omission errors over grammatical sectors.

Most omission cases are found in the VP, 36% (n=137). In second place are errors involving prepositions, 21% (n=79), followed by conjunctions 15% (n=56), pronouns 12% (n=45) and the NP 11% (n=41). There is also a miscellaneous sector comprising adjective and adverb errors making up the final 5% (n=20).

In the VP sector most errors involve tense and transitivity, as Figure 13.4.ii shows:

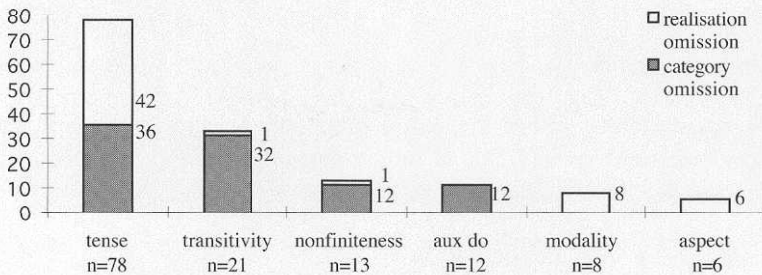


Figure 13.4.ii Distribution of omission errors in the VP sector.

Starting with category omission, the most typical errors are exemplified below:

- (754) This o some of the text. [is] (S 39) [tense]
 (755) Let me tell o a little bit of myself. [/tell/ you] (S 1196) [transitivity]
 (756) ... if I o not get a freeticket. [do] (S 3401) [do constr.]

Errors relating to tense only involve the simple present (section 5.2.1). In all but one case the copula *be* is omitted, as in (754). Other common types of

error relate to transitivity (section 5.8), where most cases concern the structure V+personal object, as in (755), and the *do*-construction (section 5.4), where the auxiliary is left out, mainly in negations, as in (756).

Realisation omission cases in the VP sector involve tense (the simple present, the present perfect and the future), modal auxiliaries, the progressive aspect and, once, nonfiniteness. Typical examples of these are given in (757) - (761):

- | | | |
|-------|---|-----------------|
| (757) | In my hous I <u>ø got</u> many things... [have] (S 433) | [tense] |
| (758) | ... it's the teenagers who <u>ø got to</u> save our planet... [have] (S 5443) | [modals] |
| (759) | If it is possible I <u>ø rader</u> live in a place... [would rather] (S 1708) | [modals] |
| (760) | ... because no body <u>ø helping</u> mee. [is] (S 4069) | [aspect] |
| (761) | ... the car will never be able <u>to ø forword</u> again.[to go] (S 795) | [nonfiniteness] |

The cases involving tense are most frequent. They occur mainly in the simple present (section 5.2.1), where all instances consist in omitting *have* in *have got*, as in (768). The other instances appear mainly in future constructions (section 5.2.3), where the relevant form of *be* in *be going to* (section 5.2.3.2) is left out.

The second largest sector, covering 21% (n=79), deals with prepositional errors (Ch. 9). Category omission dominates very clearly. The errors involve four different structural categories, as illustrated in Figure 13.4.iii:

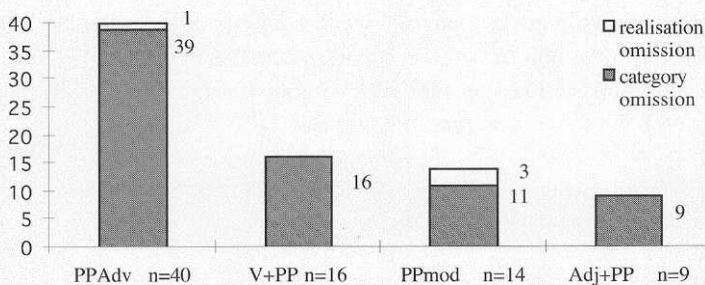


Figure 13.4.iii Distribution of omission errors in the preposition sector.

Category errors appear in all sections, whereas realisation problems are only found in the miscellaneous group. Typical examples of category omission relating to prepositions are:

- (762) I have drem about this trip ø many year. [for] (S 949) [PPadv]
(763) I tink I learn very match ø what ader peopel say [from] [V+PP]
(S 4273)
(764) ... with 10 kilo ø heroin attached to their body. [of] (S 4686) [PPmod]
(765) Education is one step closer ø a better environment. [to] [Adj+PP]
(S 5174)

Most of the category errors, 53% (n=40), appear in PP adverbials, as in (762) and (763), whereas phrasal verbs make up 21% (n=16), mainly of the type found in (763). Example (764) illustrates the N+PP structure, making up 17%, followed by omissions relating to Adj+PPs, as in (765), which account for 12% of the instances.

The very few realisation omission cases in this sector occur mainly in the PPmod category. A typical example is found in (766). There is a part of the complex preposition missing in the instances:

- (766) I sea it on the picture ø front of me. (S 2301) [PPmod]

The third sector involves conjunctions (Ch. 10), making up 15% (n=56) of the instances. Some typical examples are found in (767) and (768):

- (767) I like to watch footballgames, tennis, motorcarrace and I like to play tennis, football, ø basket. [and] (S 995)
(768) I think we schould take the many it caust in a wore and yos it to importat things ø that everyone can get food and... [so] (S 5818)

Category omission dominates completely with the coordinators (section 10.2) and only a few examples appear with the subordinators (section 10.3).

Realisation omission is very rare with conjunctions. Only one case has been found, involving the construction *not just...but also*:

- (769) I think I'm a very cultural person, not just because of my languages ø also because of my bakground... [but also] (S 4495)

The fourth sector involves problems relating to pronouns (Ch. 7), accounting for 12% (n=45) of the omission errors. Six types of pronouns are involved. This distinction is shown in Figure 13.4.iv:

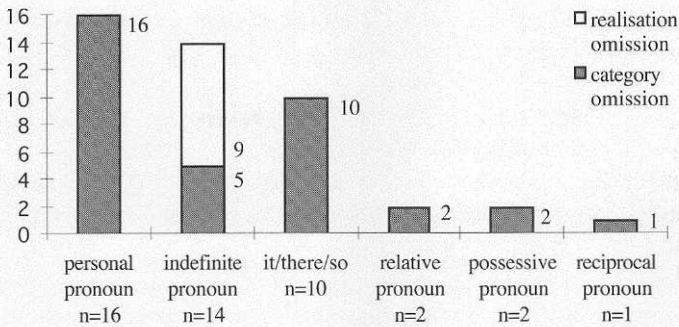


Figure 13.4.iv Distribution of omission errors in the pronoun and pronominal determiner sector.

Typical examples of category omission are given below:

- (770) I'm a girl and ø are fifteen years old. [I /am/] (S 1489) [pers pron]
 (771) ...and think ø is rather fun in school. [/I think/ it] (S 5738) [it]
 (772) ...there is alot off people ø just need any help. [who] [rel pron]
 (S 4074)
 (773) I've got many hobbies but my favourite ø is hunting. [one] [indef pron]
 (S 2918)
 (774) ...will help Mother eart back on ø feet again. [her] (S4248) [poss pron]
 (775) ...and we perhaps to se ø sone. [/will see/ each other] (S 1915) [rec pron]

The personal pronouns (section 7.2) most frequently omitted are the subjective first person form *I*, as in (770). As regards the *it/there/so* distinction (section 7.3), *it*, exemplified in (771), is more frequently omitted than the other two.

Realisation omission appears only with indefinite pronouns (section 7.9). Two types, assertive and universal pronouns, are involved:

- (776) ...and see ø lot of sporst cars. [a lot of] (S 1173) [indef pron]
 (777) ... in the hole ø Scandinavian. [/the whole/ of] (S 283) [indef pron]

Pronouns from the 'assertive group' (section 7.9) are in a majority, mainly *a lot of*, as in (776). In all the cases the indefinite article in the construction is left out. The remaining instances relate to *the whole of*, as in (777).

The fifth sector, relating to the NP, accounts for 11% (n=41) of the omission errors. All of them are category errors, involving the genitive (section 4.4) and other noun errors (section 4.5):

- (778) I live in X and my school name is Y. [school’s] (S 3148) [genitive]
(779) I think the most important o to talk about is ... [thing] [“prop” word]
(S 5097)

The majority of these cases involve the genitive singular (section 4.4.1), as in (778), where the genitive marker *'s* is missing. Most of the remaining instances are cases where the noun *thing* is left out in the construction *the most important thing*, as in (779) above.

To sum up, most omission errors involve category omission. They are especially common in VPs and with prepositions. In comparison, realisation omission is also relatively frequent in the VP but very rare with pronouns, and there are hardly any instances in the other sectors.

13.5 Summary

Summarizing the errors discussed in the previous sections, the results show that category errors are in a very clear majority of all the errors. There is a difference as to the distribution of these two types of errors within each error category. As mentioned before (section 1.5 and Ch. 3), concord and word order errors are treated as category errors only.

The results imply that, on the whole, choosing the correct grammatical category, e.g. a tense or an article, poses a bigger problem to these learners than realising a form correctly once it has been chosen. Since, from a purely grammatical point of view and not always from a communicative one, category errors must be seen as more serious than realisation errors, this has strong pedagogical implications. However, there are also differences in degrees of error gravity within both category and realisation errors. This is discussed in Chapter 20.

When comparing category and realisation errors, the operations seem to follow a pattern which can be observed in Figure 13.5.i:

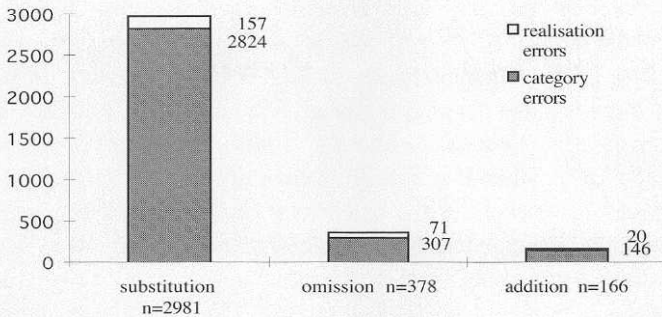


Figure 13.5.i Types of operation involved in the errors.

Out of the total number of category errors ($n=3277$), substitution is the most common operation by far, accounting for 86% ($n=2824$) of these errors. A similar result is found for the total number of realisation errors ($n=248$), where substitution makes up 63% ($n=157$) of the instances. Then there is a huge gap to omission, the second most frequent error operation, making up 9% ($n=307$) of the category errors and 29% ($n=71$) of the realisation errors. In third place these are followed by addition cases, where category addition accounts for 5% ($n=146$) and realisation addition for 8% ($n=20$) of all the cases. Thus, counting both category and realisation errors, the order of frequency of the operations involved is the same: substitution, omission and addition.

In most cases of substitution, it seems that pairs or triplets are involved. There is a tendency to overuse one of the forms in such structures, e.g., the *it-there* distinction, singular-plural, *who-which-that*, or nonfinite structures (*to*-infinitive v. the *-ing* form v. the bare infinitive). In a longitudinal study, these patterns could be properly tested and it could probably be established whether these types of errors are stable over time, i.e. if learners tend to concentrate on one form out of the two/three available (overuse), thus letting the other form/s “suffer” (underuse), a kind of “system-simplification” as described by James (1998:187).²²³ According to Ellis (1994:305), this overuse “can occur as a result of intralingual processes such as overgeneralization” but it can also be due to transfer. He goes on to say that overuse of linguistic features “as a result of L1 influence is probably more common than generally acknowledged” (Ch. 17).

As regards omission, it is usually a question of leaving out required “prop” words or auxiliaries in complex structures. This occurs mainly in

²²³ See the discussion in Chapter 14 on main types of error explanation.

areas where Swedish has a simple structure such as ‘det viktigaste’ (literally *the most important) corresponding to Engl. *the most important thing*, or Sw. ‘jag är 15 år /gammal/’ versus Engl. *I’m 15 years old*. In fact, omission very often results in “reduced” forms, which are even more obvious in forms like: *I going to/I gonna, I got a dog, I not listen and I feeling sad*. James (1998:106-107) claims that high frequency of omission is “typical of untutored learners or learners in the early stages of learning.” In general, function words rather than content words are more frequently involved in the errors, but in the present study there is a balance between these two types. However, if cases here recorded as substitution of the indefinite or definite articles (replaced by the zero article) are included among the omission cases, there is a clear dominance for function words being omitted. Thus, the results can be said to support James’s hypothesis. On the whole, however, the number of omission cases is very low. The reasons for this could perhaps be (1) that the learners in the investigation are not “untutored”, and (2), that, in fact, after six years of English studies, they are perhaps not to be counted as learners in “the early stages” either. In these respects they do not fulfil James’s criteria, and a relatively low number of instances is natural.

Addition, on the other hand, consists of the incorrect (and occasionally inexplicable) inclusion of an item not required in either language. The item added is very frequently a form of the primary verbs, especially *be*. This is where problems with so-called “chunks” like **I’m live* are also found. The addition of an irrelevant item in these areas is surprising, since similar L1-L2 rules would supposedly facilitate the correct choice rather than the reverse, as is further discussed in section 16.1. However, a majority of the instances involve the addition of pronouns to verb structures, i.e. addition of function words. This, in combination with the addition of prepositions and some pronouns, results in function words accounting for a clear majority of the addition cases, too.

Thus, it seems that the very few cases of omission and addition could be explained by the fact that more so-called “advanced” learners use compensatory strategies (or communication strategies), such as paraphrasing or appeal for assistance as exemplified in figure 14.1.i (see e.g. James 1998:107, Kasper & Kellerman 1997:4). Further, since it is not quite clear who should be regarded as a more advanced learner, it is not unlikely that, having had six years of English, at least some of the learners in the present study could fall into that category.

The obvious question raised by these results is, why do these errors occur? Possible explanations are discussed in the following chapters.

14 Error explanation

14.1 Introductory

In various ways, linguists have tried to find answers to where the causes of learners' errors lie, e.g. by comparing L1 and L2 (contrastive analysis) or by looking at L1 acquisition orders to see if there are similar patterns in L2 acquisition (section 2.3). There are differing views on whether L2 acquisition is similar to L1 acquisition or not. Advocates of the L2=L1²²⁴ standpoint (e.g. 1969, Dulay, Burt & Krashen 1982) stress the role of UG, a universal grammar, accessible to all language learners, not only in the L1 but also when learning an L2. On the other hand, there are others who maintain that L2 acquisition is not equal to L1 acquisition, i.e. L2≠L1, partly by pointing to the fact the L1 learners almost always reach native speaker proficiency, whereas the proficiency level of L2 learners varies a lot (see Schachter 1974, Bley-Vroman 1990). The present state of the ongoing debate leans toward the idea of an interplay between transfer (i.e. cross-linguistic influence) and universal processing. In the early days of this debate, such ideas paved the way for research in, e.g., morpheme acquisition (e.g. Dulay & Burt 1973, Bailey, Madden & Krashen 1974, Larsen-Freeman 1975 & 1976, Hakuta 1978, Burt & Dulay 1980, Kohn 1986).

The debate as to the origin of errors has to a large extent focused on what is to be regarded as transfer (interference) errors, as well as to what extent L1 can interfere with L2 acquisition. Since the mid 20th century this debate has gone through three main stages. First, L1 was seen to have a primary role in L2 acquisition:

“We know from the observations of many cases that the grammatical structure of the native language tends to be transferred to the foreign language. ...Those structures that are similar will be easy to learn because they will be transferred and may function satisfactorily in the foreign language. Those structures that are different will be difficult because when transferred they will not function satisfactorily in the foreign language and will therefore have to be changed.”

Lado (1957:58)

This is further supported by Lee (1968:180, cited in Ellis, 1994:307), who claimed that “the prime cause, or even the sole cause, of difficulty and error

²²⁴ In Ellis (1994:105) this is also referred to as the 'identity hypothesis'.

in foreign language learning is interference from the learner’s native language”. These ideas were criticised, e.g. by Dulay and Burt (1974c), who claimed that L1 played only a minimal role. In Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982:5) this view was further developed:

Now, researchers have learned that the L1 has a far smaller effect on L2 syntax than previously thought. Studies show, for example, that only 5% of the grammatical errors children make and at most 20% of the ones adults make can be traced to crossover from the first language. Learners' first languages are no longer believed to interfere with their attempts to acquire second language grammar, and language teachers no longer need to create special grammar lessons for students from each language background.²²⁵

Today the pendulum has swung to somewhere in-between these two hypotheses and recent research is more interested in finding out what is actually transferable, when, how and why. However, such ideas were already dawning in the early 1970s, as shown in Richards (1971:184):

Interference from the mother tongue is clearly a major source of difficulty in language learning, and contrastive analysis has proved valuable in locating areas of interlanguage interferences. Many errors, however, derive from the strategies employed by the learner in language acquisition, and from the mutual interference of items within the target language. These cannot be accounted for by contrastive analysis.

Most linguists today seem to agree that there are indeed “predictable sequences in acquisition such that certain structures have to be acquired before others can be integrated” (Lightbown 1985:176). There is also an increasing recognition that transfer from L1 can explain at least some types of errors (e.g. Bailey, Madden & Krashen 1974, McLaughlin 1987). However, there is divergence as to what kinds of errors, phonological and/or syntactic, can be explained through transfer, and to what extent (see Dulay, Burt & Krashen 1982, Ellis 1994, James 1998). Felix (1980b) pointed to the problems in finding clear principles and undisputable criteria to establish what is to be considered transfer errors. As Braid (1999:42) puts it, “is everything that looks like transfer indeed transfer and how can we tell the difference?”

Error explanation is a field where there are many interpretations and the terminology used varies somewhat in the literature. First, errors can be divided into systematic and non-systematic errors (cf. Littlewood 1984). Systematic errors are then divided into interlingual and intralingual errors. The former type deals with (negative) transfer, and the latter is divided into

²²⁵ Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) also argue that pronunciation is more susceptible to L1 transfer than grammar.

overgeneralisation, simplification (by omission)²²⁶ and blends. Non-systematic errors derive basically from communication strategies and performance errors. Figure 14.1.i shows a system of error description, adapted after Tarone's (1980) typology for communication strategies, combined with Ellis's (1994) and James's (1998) discussion of systematic errors and performance errors. Although there are differences in what exactly is included under each heading and to what extent terminological differences influence the discussion of L2 learning and acquisition, this terminology is widely used in SLA research.

The principles of error explanation used in this study are given and exemplified in section 14.5.

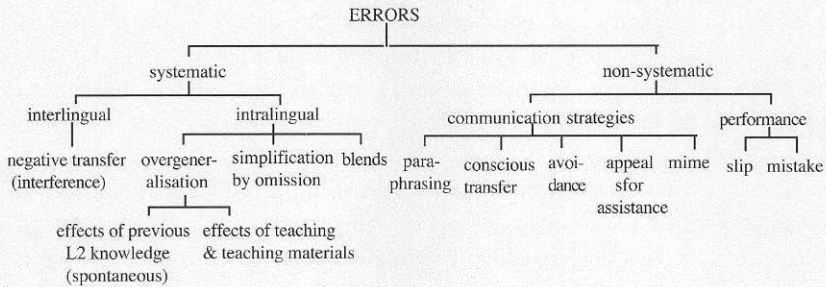


Figure 14.1.i Main types of error explanation

14.2 Systematic errors

In this category there are interlingual and intralingual errors. The former type refers to “(negative) transfer” only, sometimes also referred to as “interference” (e.g. Odlin 1989, Ellis, 1994), both slightly more precise terms. Sharwood-Smith & Kellerman (1986) suggested a “theory-neutral” term to cover all types of mother tongue interference, positive as well as negative, and introduced “cross-linguistic influence”. In this study, however, the term “transfer” is used throughout.

Interlingual errors, “transfer errors”, can be explained as being due to the fact that the learner transfers structures from his/her mother tongue, L1, to some other language, L2. Similar structures are then assumed to be easy to learn (positive transfer), whereas different ones may cause problems (negative transfer). Odlin (1989:27), following Lado (1957:58; p. 187), says that:

²²⁶ Useful outlines are found in Littlewood (1984), Ellis (1994) and James (1998).

“Transfer is the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired.”

By using the phrase “any other language”, Odlin indicates that not only the L1 can lead to transfer, but also other languages that the learner already knows.

There are several types of transfer depending on what “operation”²²⁷ is involved: an item may be replaced, added or omitted, all resulting in a grammatically incorrect sentence. Transfer can occur as both lexical and grammatical transfer. Some linguists (e.g. Dulay, Burt & Krashen 1982) claim that transfer errors occur mainly in pronunciation and vocabulary and even then in a fairly low number, whereas the adherents of the old CAH theory (section 2.3) held that transfer from the mother tongue was involved in all errors. Others have expressed a more balanced view on the importance of transfer and on the relative frequencies involved (e.g. Odlin 1989, Ellis 1994, James 1998).

Since the vast majority of the learners studied in this investigation have Swedish as their native tongue (section 1.3), it is natural to give examples comparing English and Swedish. In the case of negative transfer, a typical error would involve word order in interrogative clauses:

Sw. Sjunger du?	(verb - subject)
Engl.*Sing you? [Do you sing?]	(do - subject - verb)

Other examples are the differences in the use or non-use of the indefinite article, verb complementation, the (sometimes) different distinction between count nouns and noncount nouns, and word order in declarative sentences. In my data, examples of such errors are found in sentences exemplified in (780a - 783a) and the corresponding Swedish sentences in (780b - 783b):

(780a) When I grown up I wants to be a photografe I think. [a /photographer/] (S 74)

(780b) När jag växer upp vill jag bli fotograf tror jag.

(781a) I want to learn me more. (S 903)

(781b) Jag vill lära mig mer.

(782a) We have a very boring weather this time of year... (S 256)

²²⁷ This is, of course, subconscious since none of these 'operations' can be proved to be deliberate. Compare section 13.1.

(782b) Vi har ett väldigt tråkigt väder så här års...

(783a) So if I win the trip to Britain could I learn to speak... (S 426)

(783b) Så om jag vinner resan till Storbritannien kunde jag lära mig tala...

It is reasonable to assume that L1 has played a significant part in the production of the English sentences exemplified in (780a-783a) above. Transfer can also include cases where a third (or fourth etc.) language is involved, as in (784):

(784) Two friends of mein have been in Britain. [mine] (S 396)

Here it is fairly safe to assume that the writer's mother-tongue is German or that s/he studies German as a second L2.²²⁸ This example from the error corpus is treated as a case of spelling error where a third language is likely to interfere with the grammatical production, in the same way as in other cases of transfer involving L1 and L2.

However, there are also cases where Swedish (L1) is not likely to be the main cause of the error. In the examples below, certain grammatical features are overused, i.e. another form is incorrectly assumed to function in the structure wanted, e.g. wrong application of the 3rd person singular -s, as in (785), the incorrect use of the progressive form, as in (786), or overuse of *it*, as in (787):

(785) My 3 brothers and my parents thinks that it is a good job,... [think] (S 76)

(786) I'm playing fottball in a club called X IF. [play] (S 1695)

(787) It's so many things we must help eachother with,... [there] (S 3480)

These are classified as typical cases of intralingual errors of the type "overgeneralisation" of L2 rules and/or realisation of structures. Odlin (1989:glossary) defines it as the use of "a linguistic rule that goes beyond the normal domain of that rule". In the case of overgeneralisation, as opposed to transfer, the learners make use of their previous knowledge of L2 but extend it "to items not covered by this rule in the target language" (Ellis 1994:717). In a longitudinal study or a study comparing correct versus incorrect instances of a grammatical item, the results might show that "this strategy leads to the overindulgence of one member of a set of forms and the underuse of others in the set..." (James 1998:187), as for instance with the English

²²⁸ In the data, there is no information available regarding other languages studied by the learners.

relative pronouns *who*, *which* and *that* corresponding to Sw. ‘som’ (sections 7.7 and 16.7).

Overgeneralization can also give rise to “induced errors”, i.e. errors are made because the learner has recently been taught a specific rule and applies it to instances where it is incorrect. For instance, in example (785) above, it is the third person singular *-s* rule that is overused. This is a basic grammatical feature frequently practised in school and emphasised in school grammars. Some errors may thus be attributed to the effect of teaching or teaching materials. It could be that grammatical rules or patterns distinct from the mother tongue have not been made clear enough or, quite the contrary, they may have been overemphasised and overpractised. “These errors are basically a special instance of overgeneralization”, according to Littlewood (1984:32). In fact, it may be that frequently practised features, especially those contrasting with L1, are perceived as being “typically English” and so tend to be overused as a kind of maximization principle. This could be one reason behind overuse of, e.g., the progressive *-ing* form and the 3rd person singular *-s* form discussed in Chapter 16.

Both transfer and overgeneralisation are related to previous knowledge of L1 and L2, respectively. A third type of error explanation is known as “simplification” or sometimes, more specifically, “simplification by omission”. A necessary grammatical item is omitted and thus an incomplete structure is created. This is defined by Odlin (1989:glossary) as “...any reduction resulting in a linguistic structure simpler than what is considered to be the target language norm”. James (1998) uses the term “omission” only, and Littlewood (1984:28) prefers “simplification by omission”. Simplification occurs e.g. when the learner omits auxiliaries, as in (788), or the main verb, as in (789) and (790):

(788) I \emptyset playing fotball. [am] (S 697)

(789) This \emptyset some of the text. [is] (S 25)

(790) I’d \emptyset very happy if you picked me. [be] (S 358)

A fourth error type occurs when “two alternative grammatical forms are combined to produce an ungrammatical blend” (James 1998:111). This is a kind of mix between overgeneralisation and simplification of parts of structures due to “co-temporal availability of two alternative syntagmas” (Dechert & Lennon 1989:134). Thus, the result looks like “an addition or overinclusion” (Stemberger 1982:319), where parts of two structures, each grammatically correct in the given context, are mixed. Nemser (1991:359) suggests that this is not only possible with structures within L2, but that a cross-mix between structures from L1 and L2 can also occur (Ch. 18). Blends

within L2 can be exemplified by (791) where *to go* and *going* are mixed, and between L1 and L2 by (792) where English *go fishing* is mixed with Swedish ‘gå och fiska’:

(791) ...because I Like to going in the rave disco. [to go/going /to/] (S 4071)

(792) we like to go and fishing togheter... [L2 go fishing/ L1 gå och fiska] (S 2479)

There is often, as we have seen, considerable overlap in the explanation of systematic errors, both in terminology and in the actual classification of errors. It can sometimes be difficult to ascertain precisely what is the cause of an error. Two examples of one particular type of error can be "descriptively identical", as James (1998:201) puts it, but there are different explanations leading up to the resulting error, i.e. one and the same error can be attributed to several explanations or not be explained at all (see Schachter & Celce-Murcia 1977:447, Duskova 1969:15). Or, in Asher's (1994:740) words:

“Assigning errors to clearly outlined, mutually exclusive linguistic categories is not always easy, especially when it is borne in mind that learners may well arrive at the same forms or words by different routes. When one learner omits the English article in a context where it is obligatory, he may have done so primarily because the equivalent construction in his L1 does not use the article, while another learner, whose L1 does not have articles, arrives at the same construction by overgeneralizing an English rule he has mastered. Error explanation is thus a hazardous task.”

Furthermore, Ellis states that it “is not easy to distinguish transfer and intralingual errors, and even more difficult to identify the different types of intralingual errors”, accounted for by Richards (1984:172). The problem is illustrated in the following example from the corpus:

(793a) *...and my parents name is N and N. [names /are/] (S 4586)

(793b) ...och mina föräldrars namn (plural) är N och N.

Should this, as well as other examples like it, be attributed to transfer, overgeneralisation or simplification? All three explanations can interact, i.e. errors can sometimes be due to two or even three explanations, as in (793), where all three are possible. It could be transfer of Swedish zero plural of ‘namn, -ø’ (Engl. *name-s*) or it could be overgeneralisation of the singular form in place of the correct plural form, or it could be a case of simplification by omitting the plural morpheme *-s*. General discussions of these types of error explanation can be found in e.g. James (1998), Ellis (1994), and

Littlewood (1984). A more detailed discussion in relation to the errors found in this investigation is found in Chapters 15-18.

14.3 Non-systematic errors

Non-systematic errors are generally divided into "communication strategies" (CS) and "performance errors". The former reflect an active choice where, for instance, "paraphrasing" is one option to get round a problem in communicating a message. This strategy involves the use of a more general, "approximate", term used to cover a more detailed one, and does not necessarily lead to an error. Other solutions within this strategy involve the invention of new words for the description of the object in question, what Tarone (1980) calls "circumlocution".

There is also the possibility of "conscious transfer", i.e. the learner, facing a problem, chooses to use the L1 equivalent, i.e. a kind of literal translation, or the learner simply resorts to "language switch". Another way is to avoid the problem altogether or simply abandon the subject, by many linguists, including Tarone, referred to as "avoidance". Furthermore, instead of ending the communication the learner may also seek assistance from, say, a NS, a dictionary or perhaps the interlocutor, or perhaps even use "mime" (Scholfield 1987, uses the terms "non-linguistic/paralinguistic language"), i.e. body language and other nonverbal devices to keep communication from breaking down. Some CSs are mainly related to lexical problem-solving, whereas others, such as paraphrasing and lexical substitution, "operate at the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic level" (Kasper & Kellerman 1997:9), e.g. in word formation.

However, finding out whether or not learners have actually used communication strategies is not the purpose of the present study, although CSs may be an underlying reason, conscious or not, for using some forms which turn out to be grammatically incorrect. The different CS types are difficult to detect and pin-point in written material. In order to do so, retrospective protocols (Kasper & Kellerman 1997:7) would be necessary.

Performance errors are subconscious and appear either as "slips" or "mistakes". Slips are quickly detected by the learner without help and they are auto-correctable (Edge 1989:xx), whereas mistakes have to be pointed out but are then self-correctible (James 1998:78). These types of error explanation can only be detected by studying a bulk of material from one and the same learner over a period of time in order to establish whether deviations are recurrent or not.

The different communication strategies are, of course, “interactional” and there is no clear-cut distinction between them. For instance, the criteria behind them have been criticised for being vague and not holding scrutiny (Bialystok 1991, Kellerman 1991) but they provide a simple framework which is sufficient for this study. I refrain from further discussion of these issues since they are not really relevant here. All errors in the present study have to be seen in the light of their occurring in written language, where language is planned and could be checked. Thus, only paraphrasing, conscious transfer and avoidance could possibly be relevant here. However, since lexical errors are not included here, paraphrasing is not really valid and avoidance cannot be traced or proven. This leaves conscious transfer, but how can this be separated from (subconscious) transfer in systematic errors? Slips or mistakes are also impossible to identify in a study of this kind. Only if the learners’ performance is studied over time can such errors be identified. In view of this, non-systematic errors are not discussed in this study. Thus, all the errors found are regarded as systematic in a technical rather than psychological sense.

14.4 Similarity versus difference: L1-L2 systems

An important aspect to consider is whether grammatical structures and/or their realisations are similar or different in L1 and L2. This matter, as well as its effects on SLA, has been a topic for discussion long before Lado’s (1957:2) well-known statement about similar features being easy to learn and vice versa (cf. quotation section 14.1).

There are both similarities and differences between the grammatical systems of Swedish and English, which may influence the output in compositions. Thus, when errors appear, another assumption would be that given similarity between L1 and L2, they are due to factors within the L2, i.e. they are intralingual, whereas errors in areas where there are differences between L1 and L2 occur precisely because of these differences, i.e. they are interlingual.

Similarity operates at two levels: category level and realisation level. At the category level, “similarity” implies that there are corresponding features and rules in both languages as regards grammatical categories and structures. “Difference”, then, means that there are not. There are also different degrees of similarity. There can be either the same (identical), or matching (similar) patterns, correct according to standard Swedish and standard English grammatical norms. Examples of different types of

similarity, both identical (794) and similar (795), as well as difference (796), are found below:

(794a) This is a car.

(794b) Detta är en bil.

(795a) a house/an old house she is - you are I live there - where I live

(795b) ett hus/ett gammalt hus hon är - du är jag bor där - där jag bor

(796a) Joan is a doctor.

(796b) Joan är läkare.

In (794) there is identical article use in both languages, whereas in (796) the rules are different. Identical similarity means both category and realisation are exactly equivalent in the two languages. As regards differences in rules, on the other hand, both category and realisation are different. In examples like these the structures are easy to detect and there is no problem in understanding the system. However, similarity in rules, as exemplified in (795), is a slightly different matter. Here, the grammatical category can be the same in both L1 and L2, but its realisation differs. It seems that non-grammatical transfer errors often belong to this type, e.g. Eng. *a/an* Sw. ‘en/ett’ or Eng. *am/are/is* corresponding to Sw. ‘är’, or Eng. *there-where*, Sw. ‘där’, which do not function according to the same rules.

Instances where there is rule system similarity are in a minority in both category and realisation errors. A logical assumption would be that such similarity should not pose a problem for the learners. Instead, because rules and ways of realisation coincide in the two languages, positive transfer would promote a correct output. However, in 28% (n=988) of all the errors found there is similarity in grammatical rules between Swedish and English. Among these cases, category errors account for 93% (n=922) of the instances, and the rest are realisation errors. It is more obvious to look for possible errors where there is difference in rules and, indeed, different rules are in a clear majority with both category and realisation errors. An overview of the main grammatical categories and the distribution of similarity and difference is given in Figure 14.4.i:

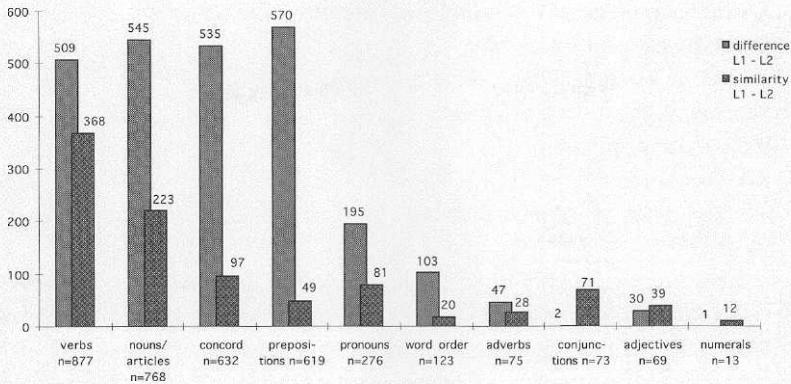


Figure 14.4.i Distribution of all errors over the major error categories according to similarity and difference in rules in Swedish and English.

As regards the different operations in this study, the overall picture shows that rule differences are in a clear majority, 75% (n=2129) in the substitution cases, although the gap between similarity and difference is slightly bigger for category substitution (s=25%, d=75%) than with realisation substitution (s=36%, d=64%). This is illustrated in Table 14.4a below:

Table 14.4a Similarity and difference in rules as distributed over category and realisation errors.

Operation	Similarity	Difference	Total	Subtotal
cat. subst.	695	2129	2824	2981
real. subst.	57	100	157	
cat. add.	56	90	146	166
real. add.	6	14	20	
cat. omiss.	171	136	307	378
real. omiss.	3	68	71	
Total	988	2537	3525	3525

Below, a rough outline of *substitution* where L1 and L2 differ is given, with examples of the most frequent cases:

- the articles: *the-a/an-zero*
- the simple present v. the present progressive
- 3rd person sg verb form *-s* v. *Vø* form
- regular v. irregular past verb form
- modal auxiliaries

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- nonfinite constructions *to*-infinitive, bare infinitive, *-ing* form
- the relatives: *who-which-that*
- subjective vs. objective personal pronouns
- personal v. possessive pronouns
- the *it-there* distinction
- S-V word order
- adverb *used to* in the present tense

These areas are presumably of particular interest in the discussion of transfer (Ch. 15). On the other hand, the errors that appear despite structural similarity between the languages can hardly be attributed to transfer from L1. Instead, other explanations, such as overgeneralisation of certain L2 forms or blends of several L2 forms, seem to be at play (Ch. 16 and 18). Examples of the most frequent areas concerning rules with a high degree of structural similarity are:

- the articles: *the-a/an-zero*
- singular v. plural number
- tense mixing, especially involving the past and the perfect tense
- modal *would+V* versus incorrect simple present tense
- nonfinite constructions: modal+bare infinitive
- internal NP concord
- subject-complement concord
- personal pronouns
- lexical adverbs in *-ly*
- adjective forms
- subordinating conjunctions

As can be seen, some features, e.g., the articles and the number distinction, turn up in both lists. This fact, as well as the exemplified areas, will be further discussed in Chapters 15-18.

Most *addition* errors, 63% (n=104), also appear in areas where Swedish and English differ. Here, the gap between category (s=38%, d=62%) and realisation (s=30%, d=70%) is not as noticeable as with substitution. Structural differences mainly appear in the following areas:

- transitivity
- prepositions in adverbials, det+NP, noun modification structures
- adjectives uninflected for number in L2
- realisation of nonfinite structures
- realisation of indefinite *a lot of*

- realisation of irregular plural

In these areas it is easy to conclude that the rules in L1, which are similar to the erroneous L2 structures appearing here, have triggered the errors and thus that transfer from L1 would explain the problems. This is very likely in cases of verb transitivity, prepositional use and adjectival inflection, but realisation errors are problematic in this respect since they include a kind of “doubling” of forms that are not part of L1 in the first place. One example is the nonfinite structure where both *to* and *-ing* appear. Such cases are referred to as blends in this study (Ch. 18). Similarity between languages as regards addition mainly involves the following structures:

- addition of primary verbs in several tenses, with modals and *do*-construction
- realisation of the structure modal aux + main V, e.g. *can listening*
- realisation of *to*-infinitive

As regards *omission* cases, the difference between similarity and difference in Swedish and English is relatively small (s=46%, d=54%). However, there is a significant difference between category and realisation errors. Among category omission cases the distribution is relatively even (s=56%, d=44%), whereas the difference within realisation omission is huge (s=4%, d= 96%). Errors where differences in L1 and L2 are found are particularly frequent in the following areas:

- nouns: need for head N (*thing, fact, etc.*)
- transitivity
- *do*-construction in negations
- personal pronouns: repeated subject
- prepositions
- adjective *old* in expressions of age
- realisation of verb *have got*
- realisation of *be going to*
- realisation of semi-modals *have /got/ to, would rather*
- realisation of progressive form
- realisation of *to*-infinitive, *go + V-ing*
- realisation of indefinite pronouns *the whole of, a lot of*

Bearing in mind ideas put forward by, e.g., Lado (1957), suggesting that differences complicate L2 learning, it is natural to hypothesize that, in these areas, transfer of L1 structures and rules would be the most frequent (if not

the only) explanation for the errors. This is indeed plausible for the category errors. However, as regards the realisation errors, simplification of the structures seems to be a more appropriate alternative. In cases where similar rules exist, one would assume that positive transfer would facilitate production and, thus, at least minimize the number of errors. However, errors of omission do occur, mainly in the following areas:

- copula *be*
- personal pronouns as subject
- introductory *it* as subject
- prepositions in PPadverbials
- conjunctions

There is also another dimension to the discussion of similarity versus difference, at a more psychological level. Learners have to have a certain perceptive ability to be able to “recognize” similarity in order to (subconsciously) compare structures in L1 and L2. This “recognition” or matching is language specific and it can result in transfer, overgeneralisation or, sometimes, blends. With simplification, i.e. omission of function words, it is a different matter. Here it is more a question of lack of “recognition” — which seems to be a universal feature for both L1 and L2 learners, since all learners simplify structures at some point during language learning. If omission is not a result of underlying transfer from L1, it is more likely to be the result of communication strategies or a “natural” L2 acquisition stage, where a simplified version of a structure is used to get the message across, as in pidgins, children’s talk, telegraphese etc.

14.5 Interlingual and intralingual errors

This being a cross-sectional, not a longitudinal, study, all errors included are regarded as systematic errors (section 14.3). This is a logical approach for the individual, considering the discussion above. It is sometimes difficult to establish whether an error truly reflects a recurring grammatical problem or is part of a communication strategy or simply a performance error. However, by comparing a large number of compositions written by many learners from a fairly homogeneous group, it seems reasonable to assume that similar errors in different compositions are signs of recurrent errors rather than identical slips from a large number of individuals. Furthermore, it seems easier to use the non-systematic terminology and error types about spoken language than about written material. As mentioned in section 14.3, paraphrasing is a clear

example of lexical problems beyond the scope of this study and the other error types are not traceable in a study of this type. Thus, the focus here is on interlingual and intralingual errors.

Considering the general discussion of the main types of explanation in sections 14.2 and 14.3, it is necessary to establish what exactly is included in the different categories of error explanations in this study. Four different categories are used here: transfer, overgeneralisation,²²⁹ simplification by omission and blends. A more detailed description of the terms and what error types fall into each category is given in the chapters that follow. However, general formulas for classifying these types are given and exemplified below.

Cases of transfer are discussed in terms of “grammatical” and “non-grammatical” transfer.²³⁰ Grammatical transfer involves clear, open transfer of grammatical structures and/or realisation of forms. Typically, this type of transfer is found where the grammatical structures in L1 and L2 contrast, e.g. in errors relating to the articles, as in **I will keep the contact with them* (S 823) corresponding to Swedish ‘*kontakten*’ in the definite form, or literal word for word translation resulting in “Swedish” word order, as in Sw. ‘*hemma är vi glada*’ turning up as Engl. **at home are we happy*. However, grammatical transfer can also occur when the basic grammatical structures (categories) are similar but the realisation of the forms differs. This is referred to as similarity in rule/realisation systems in this study (section 14.4). An example of this is plural formation (a grammatical rule), which exists in both Swedish and English, but in some cases it is applied differently (realisation), as with noncounts in English, e.g. *homework* corresponding to Sw. *läxor*, a count noun in plural form, or the zero plural which sometimes applies to different nouns in the two languages, e.g. Sw. ‘*namn -ø*’, ‘*mil -ø*’ and ‘*problem -ø*’, as opposed to Engl. *name -s*, *mile -s* and *problem -s*. Transfer implies following the grammatical rules and/or the realisation principles from L1, applying them to L2 (cf., e.g., Lott 1983, Littlewood 1984, Odlin 1989, Ellis 1994 and James 1998). This can be described by means of the formula below, where the standard L1 structure is not similar to the standard L2 structure, resulting in a transferred incorrect L2 form equivalent to the L1 original:

L1 " L2 --> *L2 equivalent to L1 structure

²²⁹ Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) use the term 'regularization' for overgeneralisation, although they recognize this term to be "more narrowly defined" than 'overgeneralisation'. James (1998) also describes it as a kind of "system-simplification".

²³⁰ Nickel (1981:9) uses the terms 'direct' and 'indirect' transfer.

Grammatical transfer can also be found in cases where a non-standard L1 structure is transferred to L2 with the same ungrammatical form. This can be exemplified by a case like *...*some of us don't like he or she* (S 5124), where it is possible that the non-standard but frequently found L1 structure **han/hon* is used instead of the standard Sw. 'honom/henne' (Engl. *him/her*).²³¹ We here get a formula where both structures are incorrect:

*L1 " L2 --> *L2 identical to *L1 structure

Non-grammatical transfer occurs when phonological and/or orthographic transfer results in grammatical errors like Engl. **s/he are, I are*, very likely due to the similarity of the Swedish verb 'är' in all persons (section 15.3).

The two types of transfer sometimes coincide, as in **the place there I live*. It can be explained either as being due to the grammatical transfer of different grammatical rules where Swedish 'där' (both relative and demonstrative adverb) corresponds to the English demonstrative adverb *there* as well as to the relative adverb *where* (section 6.2), or it may be seen as a case of non-grammatical transfer where the similarity in pronunciation in the two languages leads the learner to use *there*.

Overgeneralisation is also characterised by having several possible explanations. The error is due to the structure of L2 itself. First, the L2 may have two variants of a structure, an unmarked and a marked form. Examples of this are, e.g., subject-verb concord (where the 3rd person singular *-s* is the marked form) and the simple present as opposed to the simple past (the latter being the marked form). In this type of error the learner tends to overgeneralise either of these forms, according to the following formula:

L2 marked form

> *L2 unmarked (or marked) in all instances

L2 unmarked form

This could result in examples like **He go* (unmarked form) or **I/we goes* (marked form). This is further discussed in section 19.3.

Second, the L2 may have two or more variants to choose from, all similar on the surface but with syntactic (and/or semantic) principles governing their respective correct usage. This can be illustrated by the *their-theirs* or the *who-which-that* distinctions, resulting in the following formula:

²³¹ Using the subjective form of the personal pronoun *s/he* Swedish 'honom/han' in objective function for *her/him* Swedish 'hennes/honom' is not acceptable in standard Swedish grammar, although it is widely used in informal language (see Kotsinas, 1994 ; Teleman *et al.*, 1999a).

L2¹
 L2² > *L2¹ (or *L2², *L2³...) in all instances
 L2³

On the surface, for both these formulas it is possible that they are simply examples of overuse of one of the available forms in a set. However, a closer look sometimes also reveals an underlying connection with L1 structures, a kind of covert or underlying transfer. This connection is not identical to the cases of non-grammatical transfer as described above (further developed in section 17.2) but, rather, is due to the fact that there is only one L1 form. Lott (1983:259) calls such cases “interlingual/ intralingual” errors because they are “caused by the lack of a distinction in the native language”. In this study, then, it is reasonable to classify such errors as cases of overgeneralisation possibly “helped” by underlying transfer, not as (non-grammatical) transfer since the L1 form does not indicate which form in the L2 set will be chosen. Very often it seems that errors of this type appear partly as an effect of teaching or textbook and dictionary presentations of grammar and vocabulary. For instance the most frequent translation of Swedish ‘det’ is *it* because this is the first translation taught and generally the first translation given in dictionaries. *There* corresponding to Sw. ‘det’ is regarded as a special grammatical feature. Thus, indirectly, there is influence from the L1 in this “lack of distinction” but this does not mean that the choice of form is squarely based on linguistic or grammatical grounds. However, compare special cases like English *am/are/is* where there are two possible explanations: when *am* or *is* are incorrectly chosen, as in **I is* or **she am*, this is classified as overgeneralisation of either form, whereas the choice of *are* in cases like **I are* or *he are* may be regarded as more closely linked to the Sw. form ‘är’ and is therefore treated as non-grammatical transfer.

Simplification by omission implies that, in such cases, a grammatical word (function word) or part of an L2 structure is left out, as in **I ø girl* or **I ø going to*, generating a formula like:

L2 function word --> *L2 ø

The fourth type of error explanation involves blends, which means that grammatical structures are mixed up and combined. Blends can be of two types: either they are entirely L2 based, as in **I like to sailing*, or they are a combination of L1 and L2 structures, as in Engl. **go and shopping* where Sw. ‘gå och shoppa’ and Engl. *go shopping* result in a “hybrid” (cf. Francis 1994:234):

L2 structure x & L2 structure y --> *L2 part of x + part of y

L1 structure x & L2 structure y --> *L2 part of L1 x + part of L2 y

The important difference between blends and overgeneralisation is that both parts involved in a hybrid are each correct, separately, in the given context, whereas in overgeneralisation a feature is used that is not correct in the given context.

As already emphasized, transfer, overgeneralisation and simplification are notoriously difficult to distinguish clearly. It is important to remember that these explanations frequently overlap. For example, how should a case like **she's 4 years* [*she's 4 /years old/*] be defined? It could be grammatical transfer of Sw. ‘*hon är 4 år*’ where the adjective *old* ‘*gammal*’ is optional but not obligatory in the L1. It could also be a case of simplification by omission of *old*, due to indirect transfer. Considering the age of these writers and their relatively limited linguistic experience, errors of these types are classified as grammatical transfer in this study. This agrees with Taylor’s (1975) view that the less proficient a learner is, the more s/he relies on transfer when her/his knowledge of the target language fails.

Thus, bearing in mind that errors can be “descriptively identical” but that, in spite of this, there can be different explanations leading up to the resulting error (e.g. different L1s or simply different levels of proficiency), the categorisation into error explanation types in this study can lay no claim to being the only correct one. A simplified description with examples of the four explanatory categories used in this study, as well as the operations involved are given in Table 14.5a below.

Table 14.5a General description of typical examples of the error explanation categories used in this study.

EXPLANATION CATEGORY	OPERATION INVOLVED	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
transfer	substitution	correct L1 structure transferred to L2 incorrect or nonstandard L1 form transferred to L2	- L1 'få (någon) att skratta > L2 *make (someone) to laugh (to-V for bare V) - L1 *dom for [de]> L2 *them [they]
	addition	part of L1 structure transferred by adding item to L2 structure	- L1 'for two years ago'> L2 *för två år sedan
	omission	part of, or full, L1 structure transferred by omitting a necessary L2 item	- L1 'jag är 15 år'> L2 *I'm 15 years ø
overgeneralisation	substitution	one L2 structure incorrectly overused for another L2 structure	- progressive aspect for simple present *I'm playing myself [I play myself]
	addition	redundant L2 item added to L2 structure	- *I'm understand. - *childrens (regular + irregular plural)
simplification	omission	L2 structure incorrectly simplified by omitting part of it	- *I ø going
blends	substitution	parts of L2 structure replaced by another	- *very lot of (very much/a lot of) - *without no doubt (without a doubt/no doubt)
	addition	parts of two or more L2 structures combined parts of L1 and L2 structures combined	- *a lots of (a lot of/lots of) - *to listening (to-inf+ -ing form) - *go and shopping (L1 gå och shoppa 'go and shop' + L2 go shopping)

Transfer can involve all three operation types: substitution, addition and omission. The first is characterized by the transfer of complete L1 structures, grammatically correct or incorrect (nonstandard), to L2. Thus, L2 structures are replaced by L1 ones. Addition of an L1 structure, or part of a structure, involves incorrectly attaching it to the chosen L2 structure. Omission can

occur if L1 does not have the required L2 item. As Ellis (1994:312) points out, L1 zero forms can also be transferred into L2.

Overgeneralisation "cooperates" with simplification in that the former only involves substitution or addition, and the latter involves only omission. This is a logical conclusion if overgeneralisation is also regarded as a kind of simplification of the grammatical system, although of a different kind. This shows that different error explanations are indeed very closely related. Blends are special with respect to operations since these forms are combinations of two (or sometimes more) grammatical structures, each of them correct in their own right. It is difficult to state clearly whether a part is added to or replaced by another. However, following the minimal correction principle (section 1.4), it seems reasonable to assume that substitution occurs in cases where a part is taken out of structure *x* and replaced by another, as in **without no doubt*. Here, the MCP stipulates that the sentence is correct until we reach *no*, which must then be regarded as having replaced the expected correct form *a*. Similarly, it is reasonable to assume that one grammatical form too many has been added in the structure **I like to listening*. It is impossible to decide which is the intended structure and the MCP does not help since neither the infinitive marker nor the *-ing* ending can be separated from the verb. Thus, this is referred to as addition. The other type of blend, the mixing of L1 and L2 structures, is more obvious and more readily assumed to be a case of addition.

In the chapters that follow, the errors found are discussed in terms of similar types of error explanation. Infrequent errors occurring less than ten times are regarded as possible nonce errors (see e.g. Dúskova 1969) and so are not included in the main discussion unless they resemble other errors and thus can be fitted into a broader structural pattern. Examples of such patterns are instances like **I'll will* and **I've have*, discussed in section 16.1, which occur only once each but which, in a wider perspective, are interesting in connection with errors of a similar kind (**I'm live*, **I've have been* etc.) discussed as "chunks".

In the following chapters an attempt is made to suggest possible reasons why errors occur and why they take the forms they do. First, possible transfer errors are investigated. We then go on to overgeneralisation, followed by simplification and blends. The word-class focus in Part II is broken up into another set of areas, where errors that can be traced back to the same or a similar explanation type are discussed together, regardless of word class. Thus, errors are sometimes discussed in groups according to word class, sometimes according to other criteria, depending on error type; e.g. plural *-s* incorrectly used with nouns and adjectives is found under "plural form". The different explanation types are presented in order of frequency.

This is why identical (or similar) headings used to denote error areas are not necessarily found in the same order in the four chapters.

When trying to explain errors, transfer takes precedence over, e.g. overgeneralisation, i.e. where there is contrast between Swedish and English there is transfer — otherwise there is overgeneralisation, simplification, etc. This decision may be supported by examples like the choice of *are* for 'är' (section 15.3), the Swedish zero plural (section 15.4), e.g. Sw. 'år, ø vs. Engl. *year*, *-s*, or tense differences (section 15.9). The zero plural is more frequent in Swedish (with nouns in the neuter) than in English where the cases are relatively few, and also listed in grammars, so it seems more likely that instances like **five year* would derive from transfer of the Swedish system rather than the English one (cf. Bergh 1986). The same applies to tense usage in cases where Swedish uses the present tense in future meaning to a greater extent than English where this is subject to certain conditions, as in 'jag går till mormor i morgon' which would be *I will go to granny tomorrow* in English. This implies that where there are contrastive differences, exceptions to a main rule can not be regarded as giving rise to overgeneralisation. Furthermore, if contrastive differences were to be ignored there would be no transfer and all errors would be cases of overgeneralisation or simplification.

15 Transfer errors

Using the criteria outlined in section 14.5, errors labelled “transfer” account for 40% (n=1408) of all errors in this study. They are distributed over the word class areas in Part II as follows from Table 19.1c. The three major areas are: nouns and articles 29% (n=409), prepositions 27% (n=376) and verbs 12% (n=172), exemplified by cases involving definiteness, prepositional usage and subject-verb concord. In this chapter, errors involving nouns and articles are treated in several sections, focusing on definiteness, plural form and word class confusion.

Transfer errors are discussed in terms of grammatical and non-grammatical transfer (section 14.5). Grammatical transfer is the more frequent category, making up 71% (n=1000) of all transfer cases. It is clearly connected to grammatical rules and structures and it occurs in areas relating to article usage, plural formation, word order, verb complementation, tense, “prop” word usage, pronouns, adverbs and negation. Non-grammatical transfer accounts for the remaining 29% (n=408) of the transfer errors. These cases deal with a kind of “literal translation” of an item, due to semantic, phonological and/or orthographic similarity between the two languages, also resulting in grammatical errors. This type comprises problems with prepositions (**look on*), verbs (**s/he are*), pronouns (**them who...*), adverbs (**I will go how fast I want...*) and modal auxiliaries (e.g. **you must not love everyone*).

15.1 Prepositional usage

On the whole, when the nouns/articles and verb categories are split up into several smaller areas, prepositions make up the largest area of transfer, 27% (n=376). Non-grammatical transfer is in a clear majority, accounting for 82% (n=309) of the preposition errors. “Literal translation” of prepositions implies that what is perceived as the closest semantic equivalent to the L1 preposition (e.g. *to* for Sw. *till*, *on* for Sw. *på*) is chosen for all uses. The errors involve both “ordinary” PPs and phrasal verbs (Ch. 9). Strictly grammatically, positive transfer is to be predicted in these cases vis-à-vis the grammatical structure itself, but there is also a second, more “lexical” step, where the required preposition may not be identical in the two languages, e.g. English *listen to* corresponds to Swedish ‘lyssna på’.

Six Swedish prepositions are most frequently involved in the errors: ‘på’, ‘i’, ‘med’, ‘av’, ‘till’ and ‘för’. Their closest counterparts in English given as the first choice in dictionaries and textbooks generally used at this level are: *on*, *in*, *with*, *of*, *to* and *for*, respectively. This gives rise to errors

both in PPs, as in (797), and in phrasal verbs, as in (798) below, where the choice of preposition is most likely due to the translated semantic equivalent:

(797a) *... I have much to say on the conference. (S 4659)

(797b) ... jag har mycket att säga på konferensen.

(798a) *I go in school at Z in X. (S 5688)

(798b) Jag går i skolan i Z i X.

In the instances found, “literal translation”, based on the false assumption of a one-to-one correlation between Swedish and English usage of prepositions does not help. For instance, in the cases where Swedish has ‘på’ English requires *at*, *for*, *in*, *of* or *to*, but instead, in all the cases in the corpus, we find **on*. The problems occur mainly in V+prep structures, as in **looking on* the translation (S 2083) Sw. ‘titta på översättningen’ or **go on* disco (S 2777) Sw. ‘gå på disco’. We also find **listen on* Sw. ‘lyssna på’ and **hope on* Sw. ‘hoppas på’. The second most common structure involves PPs functioning as adverbials of time, space and manner, such as **on the summer* Sw. ‘på sommaren’, **on the countryside* Sw. ‘på landet’ and **on Swedish* Sw. ‘på svenska’.

As regards Swedish ‘i’ (Engl. *in*), the problems are almost as frequent as with ‘på’ (*on*). In the cases found, English requires either *of*, *at*, *for*, *to* or *with*. Instances with time and space adverbials are most frequent, e.g. **in* 3 years (S 5471) Sw. ‘i tre år’, where context shows that English *for* (3 years) is the correct form. There are also examples like **children in* my age (S 2278) and **good in* English (S 1129) corresponding to Swedish ‘barn i min ålder’ and ‘bra i engelska’, where English uses *ø* or *of* and *at*, respectively.

Out of the four remaining Swedish prepositions, ‘med’ (Engl. *with*), ‘till’ (*to*), ‘av’ (*of*) and ‘för’ (*for*), errors relating to the first two involve mainly phrasal verbs (section 5.7), as in **counting with* you (S 808) Sw. ‘räknar med er’ or **married with* (S 4670) Sw. ‘gift med’, where English requires *on* and *to*, respectively. Where *with* is incorrectly used, transferred from the Swedish equivalent ‘med’, the correct choices are *about*, *by*, *in* or *to*. English *to* appears instead of *of*, *at*, *for*, *in* or *until* where Swedish has ‘till’, as in *...*scream to* him (S 4090), ‘skrika till honom’, *...*get the money to* something (S 1962, ‘få pengar till något’, or *...*come back to* the summer (S 1756), ‘komma tillbaka till sommaren’.

As regards Sw. ‘av’, most cases occur with Adj+PP structures, as in **intressed of* (S 339) Sw. ‘intresserad av’, but also **I’ve have learn more english of* my friends then in school (1650) and **I’m rather happy of* my nature and... (S 2123), whereas the instances with Sw ‘för’, Engl. *for*, involve

expressions like **be sad for something* (S 4831) Sw. 'vara ledsen för något', **close their eyes for* (S 5770) Sw. 'stänga ögonen (blunda) för', and **mean a lot for me* (S 5815) Sw. 'betyder mycket för mig'. The correct alternatives for Swedish 'av' in these and the other instances found are *in*, *from* and *by*, and for Swedish 'för', they are *to*, *about*, *of* and *because of*. The incorrect use of *of* and *for* for Swedish 'av' and 'för' may be further boosted by the phonological similarity between the words.

Other typical cases of phonological similarity resulting in "literal translation" appear with Sw. 'vid' incorrectly given as Engl. **with the name* in the Swedish sense 'med namnet' (Engl. *by the name of*), Sw. 'över' Engl. **over* meaning 'oroad över' (Engl. *worried about*), and Swedish 'under' given as English **under* in time expressions like 'under fem år' (Engl. *during 5 years*). Thus, in some cases, both the standard translation equivalent and phonological similarity seem to lie behind the choice of preposition. This result supports Arabski's (1979) suggestion that "underdifferentiation" is the main factor in the misuse of prepositions. Each of the most frequently involved Swedish prepositions has several translation equivalents and, as Arabski (1979:74) found, "one of these equivalents will be selected to act as a primary counterpart", i.e. as the "standard" equivalent.

Grammatical transfer of prepositional usage making up the remaining 18% (n=67) involves two interrelated types of errors. First, there is the type where Swedish has a preposition and English does not, i.e. the pattern is L1 prep = L2 zero prep, as in 'heja på' (S 2218) becoming Engl. **cheer on* for *cheer (a team)* or 'gå runt på gatorna' (S 1792) L2 **walk around in* the *streets* for *walk around the streets*. Other examples of this type are (799) and (800):

(799a) *My father die in a car accident for 2 years ago. [ø 2 years ago] (S 3081)

(799b) Min far dog i en bilolycka för 2 år sedan.

(800a) *I want to climb in mountains and...[climb ø] (S 2539)

(800b) Jag vill klättra i berg och...

The instances of the type found in (799) involve mainly as adverbials of time but also interrogative constructions, resulting in **what they have for books* (S 2683) 'vad de har för böcker' for *what books they have*.

Second, there are cases where Swedish does not require a preposition but English does, i.e. the formula is L1 zero prep = L2 prep:

(801a) *She is 19 years old and live still ø home. [at home] (S 2132)

(801b) Hon är 19 år gammal och bor fortfarande hemma.

- (802a) *I think that she very kind ø private. [in private] (S 2365)
(802b) Jag tror/tycker att hon är mycket trevlig privat.
- (803a) *... to go to England ø at least 1 week. (for...a week) (S 2781)
(803b) ...att åka till England åtminstone en vecka.

Thus, with prepositions, non-grammatical transfer is most frequent, accounting for 82% of the cases, whereas the remaining 18% are instances of grammatical transfer relating to the differences in the use, or non-use, of prepositions in the two languages. All of these errors are more or less predictable. Furthermore, they occur in many common expressions and idioms likely to be pointed out and especially noted in teaching.

15.2 Definiteness and indefiniteness

Problems with article usage account for 22% (n=312) of the transfer cases. Most errors here are cases of grammatical transfer. In fact, this is the area where, on the whole, most grammatical transfer appears, 29% (n=290) of the 1000 recorded instances of grammatical transfer. Errors involving the use or non-use of articles mainly occur where Swedish has the definite (end) article²³² whereas English requires the zero article. In many cases the situation is the reverse, i.e. Swedish has no article whereas English takes the definite article. Both languages have indefinite articles, in Swedish the non-neuter form *en* and the neuter form *ett*, whereas English has the forms *a* and *an*, depending on whether the following word begins with a vowel sound or not.

The cases of transfer of L1 definiteness involve mainly noncount nouns having generic reference as in (804a), but there are also nouns denoting “human activity” (section 4.3.3), as in (805a). The corresponding L1 sentences are given in (804b) and (805b):

- (804a) *A typical problem in Sweden’s is the unemployment... [unemployment] (S 4522)
(804b) Ett typiskt problem i Sverige är arbetslösheten....
- (805a) I don’t like the school so very much, ... [school] (S 5270)
(805b) Jag tycker inte om skolan så mycket, men vi bara måste gå i skolan.

²³² ‘End article’ is the term used by Holmes & Hinchliffe (1994:49ff). Lindberg (1990:29) also uses the Swedish term ‘(Engl. ‘end article’) alongside the terms ‘bestäm’d form’ (Engl. ‘definite form’ and ‘definiteness’) in her discussion of nouns.

Other frequent noncount nouns appearing in instances of the type found in (804) are, e.g., *racism*, *nature*, *violence*, *poverty*, *pollution* and *reality*. There are also cases involving nouns like *people* and *life*. Thus it seems that very often individual words make up a large part of the errors.

With the second type of nouns, those denoting “human activity”, as in (805) above, a majority of examples involve the noun *school*. In all of them, Swedish uses the definite form either in the singular, *gå till skolan* (*go to the school), or in the plural, Sw. ‘*skolorna*’ (in English *the schools*, etc.), where English has no article, e.g. *Schools in England*..

The remaining instances occur in miscellaneous structures including adverbials of time, place and means of transport, as in (806a) and (807)²³³, as well as nouns modified by indefinite pronouns, where *most /of /*, as exemplified in (808a), creates most problems, or by adjectives, as in (809):

(806a) *...how she/he lives and what they do at the nighs. [at night] (S 180)

(806b) ... hur hon/han bor och vad de gör på kvällarna .

(807a) *...it takes 7 (seven) minutes withe the car... [/by/ car] (S 5316)

(807b) ...det tar 7 (sju) minuter med bilen...

(808a) **The most* of my time goes to home works and test... [Most of] (S 1939)

(808b) *Den/Det mesta av min tid* går åt till läxor och prov...

(809a) *...it is about one mil to the central Y. [to central Y] (S 206)

(809b) ...det är omkring en mil till centrala Y.

Definiteness in Swedish can also be expressed by a combination of a front article (singular ‘den’, ‘det’, plural ‘de’) and the definite end article, corresponding to a single article in English (Holmes & Hinchliffe 1994:93-94). This “double definition” occurs mainly with adjectives, as in Sw. ‘den röda bilen’/ ‘de röda bilarna’ (*the red car/ cars*). Errors also appear with determiners like *most* in *most of* where Swedish has the front article (Holmes & Hinchliffe 1994:204). This can lead to errors like **the most of my time*, as in (808a), as well as **the most of them*, in Swedish ‘de flesta av dem’.

In all these cases, then, Swedish grammar allows for the definite form, which may be the more frequent form in spoken and informal language (cf. “written spoken language”, section 1.3). Ljung & Ohlander (1992:51) state that in English, noncount nouns and count nouns in the plural with generic reference do not take the definite article, whereas in Swedish they are often

²³³ In this example there is also a preposition error, **with* should be *by*. This is likely to be another case of transfer, literal translation of prepositions, see section 15.1.

given the definite form. In view of the informal style used by the learners in general, it is natural to assume that they are more ready to use such informal forms in their own language and are thus also inclined to mistakenly transfer them to English.

In other frequent cases, the Swedish zero form is transferred to English. This occurs with names and abbreviations,²³⁴ as in (810a) and (811a), where English requires the definite article but Swedish generally does not take the definite form:

(810a) *And I also want to go over to ø Isle of man and see some MC race. (S 2736)

(810b) Och jag vill också åka över till Isle of Man och se några MC-race.

(811a) ...and when I'm old enough I'm going to move to ø USA. [the USA] (S 2619)

(811b) ...och när jag är gammal nog ska jag flytta till USA.

The same formula applies to instances of specific reference where the nouns are modified by a proper name, as in (812), where a specific motor show is intended (in accordance with the test instructions²³⁵), and other instances involving the superlatives *youngest*, *best* and *same*, exemplified by (813). There are also examples of sporadic reference, as in (814):

(812a) *... i would like to go to ø Earl Courts Motorshow ... [the Earl's Court motor show] (S 137)

(812b)...jag skulle vilja gå på Earl's Court motorshow...

(813a) They are older than me so I'm ø youngest in the family. [the youngest] (S 5105)

(813b) De är äldre än jag så jag är yngst i familjen.

(814a) I will see hole Britain and go to ø Cinema,... [the cinema] (S 178)

(814b) Jag vill se hela Storbritannien och gå på bio...

In Swedish, these types of structures do not require the definite form.

Problems also occur with adverbials of time and place, as in (815) and (816). The instances found involve seasons and cardinal points only:

²³⁴ If these abbreviations are read out in full, the Swedish form has the end article and English the preposed definite article: 'Förenta Staterna' (*the US*) or 'Europeiska Unionen' (*the EU*). However, since the abbreviated form is actually used in the text, and these forms are frequent in both spoken and written language, I have chosen to see them as being read out as the abbreviated forms where the definite form is not used in Swedish.

²³⁵ See Appendix 2 for the instructions and the page with fake tickets to events and places to visit.

(815a) ... without going to you in ø summer, it will be... [in the summer] (S 247)

(815b) ...utan att åka till er i sommar kommer det att vara ...

(816a) ... and I live in ø south of Sweden. [the south of] (S 2529)

(816b) ...och jag bor i södra Sverige.

There are also errors relating to the indefinite pronominal determiner *all*, as in (817) and (818). In Swedish the noun following the corresponding pronouns *alla* and *allt* can be given the indefinite form:

(817a) Well, first I hope to go on all ø "artgalleries". [all the] (S 3050)

(817b) Nåja, först hoppas jag kunna gå på alla konstgallerier.

(818a) We just have to do something about all ø violence,... [all the] (S 3285)

(818b) Vi bara måste göra något åt allt våld.

There are several other instances where the case for transfer seems strong. Most of them involve the English appositive genitive structure *by the name of*, which in Swedish is equivalent to *vid namn*, as in (819) below. But there are also expressions like Swedish *Slut* corresponding to English *The End* in films. Another example is Swedish *byta (samtals)ämne* corresponding to English *change the subject*.

(819a) I'm a 16 years old swedish girl with ø name N. [/by/ the name /of/] (S 1930)

(819b) Jag är en 16-årig svensk flicka vid namn N.

This type of error could be classified as the combined effect of grammatical (L1 no article=L2 article) and non-grammatical (L1 prep *vid* "L2 prep *with*) transfer (section 15.1).

A large number of errors occur where Swedish has no article but English takes the indefinite article, i.e. L1 no article=L2 indefinite article, as exemplified in (820a), (821a) and (822a):

(820a) *My hobbies are: riding ø racerbike, be in the stable... [riding a racerbike] (S 722)

(820b) Mina hobbies är: åka motorcykel, vara i stallet...

(821a) *When I grown up I wants to be ø fotografe I think. [be a photographer] (S 74)

(821b) När jag växt upp vill jag bli fotograf.

(822a) *I'm going to ø concert... [to a concert] (S 5848)

(822b) Jag ska gå på konsert...

In (820) the indefinite article is not required in Swedish with the verbs *drive* ‘köra’ and *ride* ‘åka, rida’ as in *åka cykel*, *köra bil*, and *rida häst*, which correspond to English *ride a bike*, *drive a car* and *ride a horse*. Furthermore, no article is required in Swedish with nouns in a classifying function after *be*, as in (821a). Other examples of this type are Sw. ‘jag är student’ and cases like *work as*, where transfer results in the incorrect **I’m ø student* and **my mother works as doctor*.

The structure *go to* + NP in (822) is also a common problem where L1 and L2 rules differ. In all the instances exemplified by (820), (821), and (822) above, Swedish takes no indefinite article, whereas English does.

Another type of error occurs where Swedish requires the indefinite article. In these cases English takes either the zero article, i.e. L1 indefinite article=L2 zero article, as with noncount nouns like *work* in (823), or the definite article, i.e. L1 indefinite article=L2 definite article, with expressions like *at the age of* in (824):

(823a) *...and even if it’s very fun, it’s a hard work. [it’s hard work] (S 2412)

(823b) ...och även om det är mycket roligt är det ett hårt arbete.

(824a) *In an age of 5 months i was adopted by my parents... [At the age of] (S 2800)

(824b) En ålder av 5 månader adopterades jag av mina föräldrar...

Non-grammatical transfer is a plausible explanation for errors where *an* is used instead of *a* (n=22). Swedish *en* corresponds to both indefinite forms, *a* and *an*, and the difference between the usage of *a* and *an* in English is not the same as with ‘en’ and ‘ett’ in Swedish. This type of error occurs mainly with words beginning in consonants, as in (825), but also with a few instances with semi-vowels, as in (826):

(825) My English is rother good but my speeling is an disaster. [a] (S 117)

(826) ...Glasgoranger has an European cup match to play... [a European] (S 126)

The results with regard to transfer of definiteness or indefiniteness show that most errors occur where Swedish has the definite form but English requires the zero article. This transfer type accounts for 59% of the instances in this group. The second most frequent type involves Swedish zero articles being used for English definite or indefinite articles in a total of 29% of the instances; the former type is the more common of the two (73%). Another 4% are made up of cases where the problem consists in keeping Swedish indefinite usage distinct from English definite usage.

Finally, the remaining 7% represent a different kind of transfer problem, very likely due to phonological and orthographic similarity: “literal translation” of Swedish ‘en’, resulting in Engl. *an* being used for *a*. This should be compared to cases of overgeneralisation of *a* in section 16.7.

All the cases discussed in this section are more or less predictable errors, i.e. they can be foreseen by CA. They are also well-attested areas in pedagogical grammars and other teaching materials, and familiar to all English teachers in Sweden.

15.3 Verb form: subject-verb concord and auxiliaries

Errors in verb forms include L2 subject-verb concord and instances involving auxiliaries, accounting for 11% (n=148) of the transfer errors. The concord errors are of the type where *Vø* is incorrectly used with 3rd person subjects. This is transfer at a “system level”, involving only the *Vø*. Concord errors involving *Vs*, as in **we sings*, are here treated as overgeneralisation because there is no 3rd person verb inflection in Swedish (section 16.1).

Problems relating to this type of subject-verb concord, as in (839) and (840) below, are very frequent (n=107). The likely reason for these errors is the fact that Swedish verbs do not inflect for person or number, unlike English verbs. Thus, all forms in Swedish are the same regardless of person or number. In this study, this type of concord error is attributed to transfer due to the Swedish verb system. Stenström (1975:31) labels this “lack of attention” even though she states that the “primary cause...[is] the Swedish verb system without personal endings”, whereas Thagg-Fisher (1985:188) puts them down as “slips or performance errors” due to “the simplification strategy of using the less complex, unmarked form of full verbs...”.²³⁶

Pronominal subjects are involved in a majority of the cases found (sections 11.2.1 and 11.2.6). This can be compared to Ruin’s (1996) study, where there are virtually no errors with pronominal subjects. Instead, the majority of concord errors involve “contrastive difficulties in terms of number in the subject” (Ruin 1996:31), e.g. with *people*, noncounts like *knowledge*, and the pronoun *everybody*. In fact, in her study, *Vø* errors are rare, on the whole. All subject-verb concord errors of this type are classified as grammatical transfer, resulting in examples like (827) and (828), where the

²³⁶ In both these studies the informants are older than those in the present one. In fact, in Stenström (1975) they are teacher trainees at university level. Thus, errors could be expected to occur for slightly different reasons since the language awareness of adult learners is probably higher than for 16-year-olds.

English 3rd person *-s* is incorrectly left out and the unmarked, or less marked, form *Vø* is used because it is more similar to the Swedish structure:

(827a) *My mother deliver the post... [delivers] (S 3457)

(827b) Min mamma levererar posten.

(828a) *My sister have just learn to drive... [has] (S 1140)

(828b) Min syster har just lärt sig köra...

There are several issues to consider here. First, full verbs and primary verbs are almost equally frequent in these cases. This coincides with the results in Thagg-Fisher (1985) but not with Ruin (1996), where most errors involve full verbs. Of the primary verbs, *be* is more frequently involved in the errors. It is also the most frequently used primary verb. Second, errors in concord occur mainly in contiguous structures, contrary to what Thagg-Fisher (1985) and Ruin (1996) found. However, it is important to remember that her study is based on more advanced learners, likely to use more complex sentences.

Non-grammatical transfer is exemplified in errors where *are* or *were* appears in all persons (n=41). This may be due to the fact that Swedish has only one form in the simple present, ‘är’, and one in the simple past, ‘var’, which happen to be phonologically and orthographically similar to *are* and *were*, respectively:

(829a) *My father are from Finland... [is] (S 1498)

(829b) Min far är från Finland...

(830a) *He are a very good tennisplayer. [is] (S 2679)

(830b) Han är en mycket bra tennisspelare.

(831a) *Everybody are all the same. [is] (S 3534)

(831b) Alla är lika.

(832a) *I were in London last weekend... [was] (S 2193)

(832b) Jag var i London förra helgen...

The choice of *are* instead of *is* or *am*, or *were* for *was*, may thus be triggered by the superficial similarities between the L1 and L2 forms. In (831) it could also be that *everybody* is regarded as a “semantic plural”, and treated accordingly.

There is also transfer involving modals, consisting in “literal translation”. The English modals *shall/should* are used where Swedish has

‘ska/skulle’, as in (833); *must* is used as if it corresponds to Sw. ‘måste’ in all senses, as in (834):

(833a) *If evolution shall continue, it can't be stopped by wars,... [is to] (S 5181)

(833b) Om utvecklingen ska fortsätta kan den inte stoppas av krig...

(834a) *I mean you must not love everyone but... [don't have to] (S 3312)

(834b) Jag menar, man måste inte älska alla men...

The meaning of the Swedish and English modals is not necessarily a one-to-one correlation as it may seem. There are several forms in English with different meanings covered by one Swedish form, e.g. Engl. *shall* corresponding to Sw. ‘ska’ and, even more obvious, Engl. *must*, in Sw. ‘måste’, especially in the Swedish negation ‘måste inte’, as in (834) above.

For learners at this level, the similarities as well as the differences between *should/would* and Swedish ‘skulle’ are generally discussed and explained, whereas *must*, if mentioned at all, is only briefly exemplified by different Swedish equivalents and the more subtle differences are often avoided.²³⁷ In a contrastive perspective, however, these are predictable errors.

15.4 Number distinction

Transfer may also explain difficulties with plural formation in English, accounting for 9% (n=121) of the transfer errors. Most of the problems are found with nouns (n=111), where the grammatical rule requires a plural form in both languages but the realisation of the forms differs, e.g. L1 ø plural = L2 regular -s plural. Thus, it looks as if the singular form is used in English. Examples of this involve nouns like ‘år’ (Engl. *year-s*), ‘mil’ (*mile-s*) and ‘namn’ (*name-s*). Here the Swedish ø form is transferred to English:

(835a) *I have drem about this trip many year. [years] (S 949)

(835b) Jag har drömt om den här resan i många år.

(836a) *And my parents name is N and N... [names] (S 3141)

(836b) Och mina föräldrars namn är N och N.

There are a number of other typical nouns appearing in these erroneous instances, e.g. Swedish ‘problem’ (Engl. *problem-s*), ‘krig’ (*war-s*), ‘liv’ (*life-*

²³⁷ See, e.g., the grammar sections in Glover *et al.*, 1984 (*Faces*), Odeldahl *et al.*, 1985 (*Umbrella*) Bermheden *et al.*, 1987 (*Team9*) and McClintock & Miller, 1990 (*Challenge*).

lives), and ‘språk’ (*language-s*). In these cases, the English singular forms are likely to appear due to the Swedish forms being zero plurals.

The second type of error involving number relates to the Swedish regular plural. Here the pattern is either L1 regular plural=L2 no plural, with nouns that are count nouns in Swedish but noncount nouns in English, as in (837a), or L1 regular plural=L2 unmarked plural, especially *people*, as in (838a):

(837a) *The most of my time goes to home works and test... [homework] (S 1939)

(837b) Mesta tiden går till läxor och prov...

(838a) *I want to go and meet many difrent Peoples. [people] (S 3664)

(838b) Jag vill åka och träffa många olika människor.

Errors of the type exemplified in (837a) are also found with other noncount nouns such as *knowledge* and *pollution*. All of these can take the plural in Swedish. Either there are differences relating to the countability distinction, as in Swedish ‘läxor’ in Engl. *homework*, Sw. ‘kunskaper’ versus Engl. *knowledge* or Sw. ‘föreningar’ versus Engl. *pollution*, or the problems occur with the Swedish noun ‘människor’, as in (838a) above, corresponding to *people*, i.e. the unmarked plural in English.

These are all predictable errors, since there are clear differences as to what is treated as count and noncount nouns in the two languages and also what nouns are regular, irregular or invariable plurals. All these cases are instances of grammatical transfer and only noted in pedagogical grammars for Swedes.

Another type of problem with plural forms concerns adjectives (n=10). Swedish adjectives inflect for number, which is not the case in English. Thus, errors appear where a plural *-s* is added to the adjective:

(839a) *...the differents country’s are devoloping new weapons...[different] (S 4416)

(839b) ...de olika länderna utvecklar nya vapen hela tiden...

(840a) *... becuse i like meeting news friend, and... [new /friends/] (S 5885)

(840b) ...för jag tycker om att träffa nya vänner...

There are only three instances like (840a) above and it could be argued that the plural *-s* of the noun has simply been misplaced. But since there are other cases where the *-s* is in fact attached to both noun and adjective, they are treated in this section as likely grammatical transfer of Swedish adjective forms, i.e. structural transfer of a grammatical category, plural. The fact that

adjectives are inflected in Swedish but not in English is a feature not generally emphasized in grammars at this level.²³⁸

15.5 Word order

Word order errors, 7% (n=100) of the transfer errors, involve mainly subject-verb order (section 12.2) and the position of adverbials (section 12.3) and adjectives (section 12.4.1). In both Swedish and English, SVO is the normal word order in declarative sentences but when sentences are introduced by non-subjects differences appear. In such cases, English retains the SVO order whereas Swedish requires inverted word order. This gives rise to transfer of the type found in the examples below:

(841a) There can you read papers, books and magazines. [there you can] (S 2729)

(841b) Där kan man läsatidningar, böcker och tidskrifter.

(842a) And there meet I a lots of new friends. [I /meet/] (S 5985)

(842b) Och där träffar jag många nya vänner.

(843a) The same thing can we do with glas and... [we can...] (S 3388)

(843b) Samma sak kan vi göra med glas och...

This type of error accounts for 63% (n=63) of the word order errors due to transfer. In the majority of these cases, there is an introductory adverbial, as in (841) and (842), and in the remaining cases there is another fronted complement, as in (843) above, triggering the errors.

Placing adverbials in the right position is notoriously difficult, as shown in (844) and (845) below. This error type accounts for 25% (n=25) of the errors discussed in this section. The Swedish norm for adverbial position is used for the correct English one. Problems are most common with “light” adverbials such as *maybe*, *too*, *often* and *only*, which are frequent and semantically similar in both languages. Only a few relate to multi-word adverbials like *of course*.

(844a) *I maybe have some good ideas. [Maybe I have] (S 3464)

(844b) Jag kanske har några goda ideer.

(845a) *...that was back in 1984, when I only was 8 years old.[was only] (S 2705)

(845b) ...det var 1984, när jag bara var 8 år.

²³⁸ Glover *et al.*(1984:230, *Faces 3s*) has a good overview of the structural differences in English and Swedish.

In (844) a possible alternative position in Swedish, ‘Kanske jag har...’, could have resulted in the correct *Maybe I have...* (positive transfer) but this is not the structure chosen by the learner. Example (845) may be an example of transfer of Swedish word order in subordinate clauses, where the adverbial is placed between the subject and the verb. This type of error, however, is not very frequent in the data.

Other cases of word order transfer are those which have to do with the internal order of adjectives (n=6). In such cases, the two languages usually have the same order but in Swedish it is easier to change the internal order of the modifiers depending on emphasis. In normal cases, without special stress, English is stricter in following the pattern²³⁹ given in section 12.4.1: subjective opinion - size/weight - age - shape - colour - origin - material - purpose. This results in errors of the type found in (846) and (847):

(846a) *Sometimes I wan’t to be “the nice little sweet girl” who... [sweet little]
(S 596)

(846b) Ibland vill jag vara den trevliga lilla söta flicka som...

(847a) *Why I’m writing to you are that I’m a little poor kid and... [poor little]
(S 5289)

(847b) Varför jag skriver till er är för att jag är ett litet fattigt barn...

There are also errors involving the object position, noun modifiers, the indefinite predeterminer *both* and the adjective *whole* :

(848a) *...anything that has whit horses to do. [has to do with horses] (S 2046)

(848b) ...någonting som har med hästar att göra.

(849a) *...and we are going to take over it. [take it over] (S 5547)

(849b) ...och vi ska ta över den.

(850a) *I live with my both Parents... [both my parents] (S 5916)

(850b) Jag bor med mina båda föräldrar...

(851a) * If we dono’t do anything soon whole the world will tear apart. [the whole world] (S 3912)

(851b) Om vi inte gör något snart kommer hela världen att gå sönder.

In (848) and (849) *with horses* and *it*, respectively, are placed according to Swedish word order. As regards (849), the phrasal verb *take over* is treated

²³⁹ See Ljung & Ohlander (1992:165), Turton (1995:18); and Swan (1995:8).

differently in English and Swedish. In Swedish *den* (Eng. *it*) has to be placed after the verb particle. The example in (850) is another fairly straightforward case of “literal translation”. In (851) the incorrect position of *whole* could be explained by the Swedish ‘hela’ = *whole* + ‘världen’ = *the world*, where the definite adjective ‘hela’ corresponds to *the whole* and ‘världen’ is equivalent to *the world*. Since, in Swedish, ‘hela’ takes no front article, this is a factor likely to trigger the error.

Of the instances involving word order problems, 63% are related to subject-verb order. The remaining 37% are made up of several minor types, e.g. adjective ordering and object position. These are errors frequently made by Swedish (and certainly by other) learners, largely predictable by contrastive analysis. The differences between the two languages are also emphasised in pedagogical grammars.

15.6 Verb structure: nonfiniteness and transitivity

Verb structure errors involve nonfiniteness and verb transitivity as well as passive constructions. These areas account for another 7% (n=101) of the transfer cases. In this section, however, only the first two types are discussed since there are very few passive errors in the material. Transfer of verb complementation structures occurs mainly where the learner uses the wrong nonfinite construction (n=69) or where there is a difference between Swedish and English in the need for a personal object (n=26).

There are two Swedish structures most often involved in the transfer errors relating to nonfiniteness: the Swedish bare infinitive (e.g. ‘titta’, Eng. *look*) and ‘att’+infinitive (e.g. ‘att titta’, Eng. *to look*). Transferring the bare infinitive to English is the more frequent of these error types.

In Swedish, using the bare infinitive form as an alternative to the full form with the infinitive marker ‘att’ is often grammatically possible. This Swedish alternative structure is transferred into English in three types of structures: (1) where English requires the *-ing* form in subject or subject complement function, (2) where English requires the *to*-infinitive after the verb *want*, and, (3) where an English verb can take either an *-ing* form or a *to*-infinitive as complement (*try stopping/try to stop*).

The first type accounts for most of the cases involving transfer of the Swedish bare infinitive structure, resulting in errors where the bare infinitive appears instead of the *-ing* form:

- (852a) Going to London and stay there for a week is... [staying] (S 2885)
 (852b) Att åka till London och stanna där /i/ en vecka är...

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- (853a) My hobbies are party's, play soccer, listen to music... [playing, listening]
(S 852)
(853b) Mina hobbies är fester, spela fotboll, lyssna på musik...

The bare infinitive also, very often, replaces the *to*-infinitive following the verb *want*, as in (854), a verb form which is grammatically correct in Swedish:

- (854a) *I want talk about how we can... [want to talk] (S 4151)
(854b) Jag vill tala om hur vi kan...

Other errors involving *want /to/ 'vill'* may occur because Swedish *vill* can take an adverbial of direction without a mediating infinitive verb, which is normally impossible in English (apart from cases like *I want out*):

- (855a) *I also want ø to the exiting aktivitets... [want to go to] (S 973)
(855b) Jag vill också till de spännande aktiviteterna...

There are also cases where English can have either the *-ing* form or the *to*-infinitive. They all involve verb combinations with *try*, *stop*, *start* and *continue*:

- (856a) We must try stop it. [try stopping/try to stop] (S 3403)
(856b) Vi måste försöka stoppa det.
(857a) ...we maet stop unlike people from other countries. [might| stop disliking]
(S 3954)
(857b) ...vi kanske kan sluta ogilla folk från andra länder.
(858a) And if we continue destroy the world... [continue to destroy] (S 5545)
(858b) Och om vi fortsätter förstöra världen...

In these cases the learners seem to have transferred either the Swedish use of two combined bare infinitive forms, e.g. ‘försöka+stoppa’, resulting in, **try+stop* or a present tense+the bare infinitive ‘försöker stoppa’. In (857), only the *-ing* form can be used, or the meaning is changed (cf. example (861) below).

There are also instances requiring the full Swedish infinitive form *att* +infinitive, corresponding to English *to* +infinitive. In the cases found, English takes either the bare infinitive because the verb *make* is involved, or the *-ing* form is required after verbs like *enjoy* or *stop*:

- (859a) *...I can make nearly everybody to laugh! [laugh] (S 937)
 (859b) ...jag kan få nästan alla att skratta!
- (860a) *I should enjoy to stay by a British family... [staying] (S 2839)
 (860b) Jag skulle tycka om att bo hos en brittisk familj...
- (861a) *...and the forests who have stopped to grov. [stopped growing] (S 3162)
 (861b) ...och skogarna som har slutat /att/ växa.

In some cases, like (861a), the meaning changes if the *to*-infinitive is used. The full infinitive ‘att’ +infinitive also appears after a preposition in accordance with the Swedish rule, as in (862) and (863), and there are also cases with Adj+Prep followed by ‘att’+infinitive, where the English *-ing* form should have been used, as in (864):

- (862a) *...it’s important to talk about to make new friends ... [about making] (S 3674)
 (862b) ... det är viktigt att tala om att skaffa nya vänner...
- (863a) I look forward to drive to England... [driving] (S 1914)
 (863b) Jag ser fram mot att köra till England...
- (864a) *...I’m very intrested of to get there... [interested in getting] (S 4143)
 (864b) ...och jag är intresserad av att komma dit ...

Using ‘att’+infintive after prepositions is perfectly correct in Swedish, which of course is a difference that may give rise to errors. The cases involving the expression *look forward to* are somewhat special. It is likely that learners do not realize that *to* is here a preposition and not the infinitive marker. Thus, they believe that using the *to*-infinitive is correct, as in (863). In fact, there is no mention of this particular expression in any of the textbooks referred to in this study.

Verb transitivity also differs between the two languages. Certain verbs need a personal object in one language but not in the other. In Swedish, the verb ‘lära sig’, Engl. *learn*, is reflexive, which is not the case in English. The reverse is true of Sw. ‘berätta’ (*tell*), where no personal object is required in Swedish but is necessary in English. For Swedish learners, these two verbs are usually emphasised in teaching. However, the contrast gives rise to errors like the following:

- (865a) *I also would like to learn me about the countre. [learn about] (S 2763)
 (865b) Jag skulle också vilja lära mig om landet.

- (866a) *Now I have told ø about my interests... [told you] (S 1244)
(866b) Nu har jag berättat om mina intressen...

A clear majority of the errors relating to verb complementation, 80%, are likely to be due to structural differences between Swedish and English. Thus they are cases of grammatical transfer and, consequently, more or less predictable errors. In the remaining 20% L1 and L2 rules are similar and positive transfer could be expected, but in these cases similarity did not help.

15.7 Word class confusion

Confusion of words belonging to different word classes, as well as problems within word classes, where there are related words, are perhaps not as frequent, 4% (n=60), as they are interesting. The major type of error in this section deals with cases where Swedish has one word corresponding to two or more English forms, either within the same grammatical category or belonging to different word classes.

The most frequent error (n=23) involves the Swedish interrogative adverb ‘hur’, which may correspond to English interrogative *how*, as in Engl. *How are you*, Sw. ‘Hur mår du’. However, it is sometimes equivalent to interrogative *what*, as in (867) below, and also to the degree adverb *as...as*, and this gives rise to yet another area of transfer:

- (867a) *...go to Lincoln school to look how a english school looks like. [what] (S 1065)
(867b) ...åka till Lincoln-skolan för att se hur en engelsk skola ser ut.
(868a) *... because I can stey there how much I want. [as much as] (S 5300)
(868b) ...för jag kan stanna där hur mycket jag vill.

Here, semantic correspondence plays a great part in causing the errors. It is likely that *how* is what first comes to mind when the writer is looking for an equivalent to Swedish ‘hur’. Thus, there is an element of L2 mixture here; maybe it is more a problem of poor command of idiom than of grammatical category.

A similar error type relates to another type of adverb transfer (n=10). In Swedish, ‘där’ is an adverb that can be both a relative adverb, as in ‘ett ställe där man kan äta’, in English *a place where you can eat*, and a demonstrative adverb, as in ‘Jag bor där’, corresponding to English *I live there*. Because Sw. ‘där’ has both these functions the distinction is difficult for Swedish learners of English, who often employ *there* in all functions. This choice is likely to be

triggered by the phonological similarity, resulting in non-grammatical transfer:

(869a) *...I will go in a english shoool ther i can leaurn me english,... [where]
(S 3096)

(869b) ...jag ska gå i en engelsk skola där jag kan lära mig engelska...

(870a) *How they work, how it is in school there they live,... [where] (S 4938)

(870b) Hur de arbetar, hur det är i skolan där de bor...

Another type of problem involves some Swedish adverbs having the same form as the corresponding adjectives, e.g. 'bra' *good-well*, and 'fel' *wrong-wrongly*.²⁴⁰ Grammatical transfer of such forms (n=13) occur in cases like (871) and (872):

(871a) I am sorry if I don't kan write good but i trye my best. [well] (S 2026)

(871b) Jag är ledsen om jag inte kan skriva bra men jag gör mitt bästa.

(872a) ...and (if I don't remember wrong)... [wrongly] (S 1601)

(872b) ...och om jag inte minns fel...

Apart from these, instances with Sw. 'tyst' (*quiet-ly*) and 'lugnt' (*calm-ly*) also occur. Here, the learners are likely to have assumed that English forms function in the same way as in Swedish since the adjective versus adverb distinction through orthography is much less clear in Swedish than in English. Generally *-ly* signals an adverb in English, although there are some adjectives like *friendly* and *heavenly*. A similar situation applies for Swedish, where the *-t* ending does not necessarily signal an adverb but also an adjective. However, very often this applies to different words in the two languages, e.g. Sw. 'Ett tyst hus' (adj)- 'De talar tyst' (adv), corresponding to Engl. *A quiet house* (adj)- *They speak quietly* (adv) (section 16.8).

There are also problems with the Swedish word 'svensk' (n=5), as in (873) and (874), where English has two corresponding words: the noun *Swede* and the adjective *Swedish*:

(873a) *Of course a swedisch shall win. [Swede] (S 2498)

(873b) Naturligtvis ska en svensk vinna.

(874a) *I think other swedish want the world to bee free to. [Swedes] (S 5099)

(874b) Jag tror att andra svenskar vill att världen ska vara fri också.

²⁴⁰ However, *wrong* may also be an adverb.

In general, it seems that, in these cases, the learners have opted for the English form closest to the Swedish one in meaning, pronunciation or spelling.

15.8 Pronominal form and usage

Pronouns and pronominal determiners make up 4% (n=58) of the transfer errors. This type of error is subject to both grammatical (n=30) and non-grammatical (n=28) transfer. In this section, only some of the most interesting pronominal errors are discussed. First, we will look at the English indefinite determiners *much/many*. The use of the corresponding Swedish determiners ‘mycket, många’ differs somewhat. Generally, the rule says that a singular uncountable noun requires *much* (Sw. ‘mycket’) and a plural noun requires *many* (Sw. ‘många’) in both languages. However, Swedish usage does allow ‘mycket’ to appear with nouns that are collective plurals, as in ‘mycket folk’ (Engl. **much people*) but also other plurals: ‘mycket äpplen’ (Engl. **much apples*). Swedish ‘många’, equal to Engl. *many*, appears with nouns treated as count nouns in Swedish but as noncounts in English, e.g. ‘många läxor’ resulting in Engl. **many homework(s)* (cf. Holmes & Hinchliffe 1994:20, Svartvik & Sager 1996:252). This occurs in examples like the following:

(875a) *I like to do mutts difren fings. [many /different things/] (S 652)

(875b) Jag tycker om att göra många/mycket olika saker.

(876a) *...we get to many homeworks and so long school time. [much] (S 5862)

(876b) ...vi får för många läxor och så lång skoltid.

These errors probably occur due to grammatical transfer with a possible booster in the fact that *much* ‘mycket’ and *many* ‘många’ are seen as each other’s equivalents in all instances regardless of noun type. In (876) the determiner *many* is in fact “correct” in relation to **homeworks*, which is the “real” error, i.e. treated as a count noun.

Other transfer errors, both grammatical and non-grammatical, involve the Swedish personal pronouns ‘de’, ‘dem’ and ‘det’. As regards ‘de’, Engl. *they*, the problem is likely to arise because the Swedish subjective form ‘de’ is generally pronounced ‘dom’, exactly like the objective form ‘dem’, equivalent to English *them*. Furthermore, it seems that the choice between *they* or *them* can perhaps also be explained by the position of the pronoun: When a preposition follows, *them* is used, whereas in subject position the learner more often seems to opt for *they*. Thus, we find examples like (877) and (878), where the Swedish grammar in combination with the similarity in

pronunciation enhanced by the spelling ‘dem’, /dom/ similar to English *them* is transferred to English. In most of these cases, *them* incorrectly appears for *those* in *those who*, (Sw. ‘de som’), in (877), whereas **they who* occurs only three times, as in (878). *Them* is also used for *they* ‘de’, as in (879). In all these cases, Swedish ‘de/dem’ are read as ‘dom’:

- (877a) *I really hope I will be one of them who can go to England. [those who] (S 2089)
 (877b) Jag hoppas verkligen att jag är en av dem (dom) som kan åka till England.
 (878a) They who win the war have not right... [those who../win the war/] (S 4748)
 (878b) De (dom) som vinner kriget har inte rätt...
 (879a) *But not even them can always tell you. [they] (S 1071)
 (879b) Men inte ens de (dom) kan alltid berätta för dig.

Swedish ‘det’ may have several English equivalents: *it*, *there*, *that*, *what* and *so* (section 16.7). In the following instances, *that* is used for all of them:

- (880a) I think that’s important to have good friends .. [it’s] (S 5873)
 (880b) Jag tycker det är viktigt att ha goda vänner...
 (881a) ...but that’s nothing more exciting then... [there’s] (S 1019)
 (881b) ...men det är/det finns inget mer spännande än...
 (882a) That I would like to do is something to the pets... [What] (S 2970)
 (882b) Det jag skulle vilja göra är något för husdjuren...
 (883a) I don’t think I will win this competition but i hope that. [so] (S 36)
 (883b) Jag tror inte /att/ jag vinner den här tävlingen men jag hoppas det.

The closeness in phonology and orthography (Sw. ‘det’ - Engl. *that*) is likely to trigger transfer from Swedish in cases like these.

15.9 Tense

Tense errors, 4% (n=57) of the transfer errors, involve tense mix-up due to different rules in L1 and L2. In Swedish, the simple present is frequently used to indicate the future. This is also possible in English, although only under certain conditions. In main clauses, the future expressed by the simple present in English is used mainly to describe events that will take place according to a set plan or timetable. In Swedish, on the other hand, it is possible to use the

simple present without the notion of a plan or timetable. Out of the 57 tense errors, 24 instances are related to this difference, exemplified by (884) and (885):

(884a) *I'm think the jury select me becuese I'm the best. [will select] (S 1174)

(884b) Jag tror att juryn väljer mig eftersom jag är bäst.

(885a) *Perhaps the Swedish people help me and the ather ... [will help] (S 3370)

(885a) Kanske svenska folket hjälper mig och de andra ...

The simple present in Swedish is also clearly transferred to English in the expression **I am born in X* (section 5.6), in Swedish ‘*jag är född i X*’ for *I was born in X*.

Another frequent error involves the Swedish verb *bruka* (*göra något*), expressing what one usually does. In Swedish, this verb has all tense forms. In English, however, there is no present tense form; instead adverbs like *usually* and *generally* have to be used. This creates problems. Instead of the correct English adverb, an incorrect equivalent of the Swedish verb is used, resulting in examples like (886). In Swedish there is an adverb, *vanligtvis* or *vanligen*, equivalent to *usually*, but it is more formal than the frequent Swedish verb *brukar*, and so it is very common to find the incorrect verb form used instead:

(886a) *In my spare-time I use to go dancing. [usually] (S 833)

(886b) På min fritid brukar jag gå och dansa.

Broadly speaking, the tense systems in Swedish and English are fairly similar. The errors attributed to grammatical transfer are examples of the relatively few differences that do exist. The incorrect use of present tense **use to* is a well-known problem to teachers of English in Sweden, especially at this level.

15.10 “Prop” word usage

“Prop” word usage is also an area where language differences cause errors, 4% (n=51) of the transfer errors. There are three types involved: a noun, an adjective or a pronoun has to be inserted in English in order to make a complete phrase. Only the two most frequent types, the addition of *thing* and *old*, are discussed here.

In Swedish, nominalized adjectives having specific reference are much more frequent than in English. Head nouns, which are necessary in English

are very often not required in Swedish, which, of course, can create problems. Most errors of this type in the material, occur with the expression *the /most /important thing*, as in (887) and (888), where the corresponding Swedish form is a nominalised adjective, ‘det viktiga’, ‘det viktigaste’, not requiring the head noun necessary in English. This is what Ljung & Ohlander (1992:171) refer to as “independent adjective use” (my translation) in Swedish.

(887a) *The most important \emptyset in my life is... (S 6049)

(887b) Det viktigaste i mitt liv är..

(888a) *I think the important \emptyset we most speak about is Alcohol and drugs... (S 4706)

(888b) I tycker att det viktiga vi måste tala om är alkohol och droger...

There are also a few other nouns missing in English in the same type of structure: *man*, as in *...*let the best* \emptyset *win* (S 2527), Sw. ‘låt den bäste vinna’, and *grade* or *form* in **When I quit the 9th* \emptyset *I go*... (S 4656), corresponding to Sw. ‘när jag slutar nian’.

Expressing age can also be difficult when Swedish and English structures differ. Another “prop” word problem consists in not using the adjective *old* properly. In Swedish it is grammatically correct to say ‘jag är tio /år/gammal/’, where both ‘år’ and ‘gammal’ are optional. The English equivalents are *I am ten /years old/*, i.e. only two ways are possible, either with or without *years old*. It is thus incorrect to use only *...*ten years*. However, the most frequent error here is precisely this:

(889a) *She’s 4 years \emptyset . [she is 4 years old] (S 3428)

(889b) Hon är fyra år.

Using “prop” words in English and Swedish is subject to different rule systems which may create problems for learners, as indicated by the instances of grammatical transfer in this section. Swedish rules and forms are transferred to English, as may be expected, since this is a well-known problem that is stressed in grammars and teaching.

16 Overgeneralisation errors

“Overgeneralisation” refers to the overuse of a certain linguistic rule or item in L2. In this study 50% (n=1775) of all the errors are of this type. The three major areas of overgeneralisation (as given in Part II) involve verbs (30% n=531), concord (24% n=433), and nouns and articles (20% n=336). These errors result in, e.g., using the plural *-s* morpheme on irregular nouns, resulting in deviant plural forms like **mans* and **childs* or **childrens*. Where there are two or more members in a set, as with relative *who-which-that*, overgeneralisation can also occur, due to the fact that informal Swedish has only one equivalent form ‘som’. Unless the form chosen is phonologically and/or orthographically similar to the L1 form, this is not transfer since there is no way to know or predict which form in the set will be chosen. James (1998:187) talks about “overindulgence” in one particular form in a set:

- overuse of certain L2 forms which are nonexistent in L1
- overuse of certain L2 forms even though L1 has the same system
- overuse of certain L2 forms where the application of similar forms differs from L1

Examples of overgeneralisation found are, e.g., the overuse of the progressive form, *do*-insertion with modals/auxiliaries, regular past tense morphemes used for irregular forms as in **geted*, and adjective comparative formation with *-er/-est* or *more-most*.

Some of the cases of overgeneralisation can be traced back to contrastive factors as an underlying source of the error, in this study referred to as “covert” transfer (section 14.5). An example of this is the overuse of the 3rd person singular *-s* verb form in **I likes*. Overgeneralisation of a morpheme like this, which does not exist in Swedish, could perhaps be said to occur precisely because of its nonexistence in the L1 system. It could also simply be a kind of overcompensation where teaching plays a part. Lott (1983:257) refers to this as “interlingual/intralingual errors”.

As mentioned earlier, due to the overlap of different explanations it is important to remember that errors involving different members in a set can have different explanations. For instance, the incorrect use of *am* or *is*, as in **I is*, is seen as overgeneralisation of these forms, whereas it is difficult to disregard the possibility of transfer in the incorrect use of *are* in a case like **I are* in Sw. ‘jag är’. The latter error type is referred to as transfer due to phonological and orthographic similarity between Sw. ‘är’ and Engl. *are*, resulting in grammatical errors.

16.1 Verb form: subject-verb concord and auxiliaries

In this section, errors concern subject-verb concord in the 3rd person singular and the overuse of certain auxiliary forms. Together they account for 20% (n=351) of the overgeneralisation errors. Concord errors are most frequent (n=306). In these cases of overgeneralisation, the 3rd person *-s* is overused. This is not a form transferred from L1 since Swedish verbs do not inflect for person (section 15.3). Rather, a likely reason for this type of error is that the learner knows the *-s* form and perceives it as “typically English” and thus uses it too generously, as a kind of maximization of special L2 forms and structures (cf. the progressive aspect in section 16.2).

In the case of subject-verb concord, the *-s* form is incorrectly used with full verbs (n=145), as in (890) and (891), as well as primary verbs (n=161), exemplified in (892) and (893):

- (890) ...because if I forgets something... [forget] (S 4400)
(891) We goes on movies and goes on discos. [go] (S 617)
(892) ..I doesn't (drink) or (smoke) and... [don't] (S768)
(893) ...I has been driving about 500 km. [have] (S 2989)

This is the most frequent type of subject-verb concord error both with pronominal and N/NP subjects (Ch. 11). In cases with a plural N/NP subject, the errors could be attributable to “perseveration” of the *-s* (Thagg-Fisher 1985:45), as in **my friends says*. However, this cannot explain errors with plural pronouns as subjects, where there is no *-s* to influence the verb. In such cases, “the marked verb form is likely to be triggered by the ‘one *-s* principle’, i.e. the learner’s interlanguage hypothesis that at least one, but not more than one, of the agreeing elements should be marked with the *-s* morpheme” (Thagg-Fisher 1985:45). This is also in accordance with the maximization principle, *-s* being a very “English” present-tense ending, assumed always to be present somewhere in a SV clause (section 14.2).

There are also a number of cases (n=45) where auxiliaries are overused in the material. A majority of these, 93%, involve contracted forms of Pr+V where the verb is unnecessarily added to a simple present form, as in **I'm like to listen to music* (S 653). In most of the examples found, the subject is *I*. Only a few instances have *it*, a noun or an NP, *you*, *they* or *that* instead.²⁴¹ This is particularly obvious in examples like the following:

²⁴¹ There are six examples where *I'm* is spelt **am* without the apostrophe (and without *I*). In these examples it is clear through the context that *I'm* is the intended form. This misspelling is probably a result of the mispronunciation of the letter *a* as a long /Z:/, i.e. *I'm* becomes something like /Z:m/.

- (894) I'm like to watch sport "live", but I'm not very good at it myself. [I like]
(S 1726)
- (895) By,by I'll hope you take me! [I hope] (S 101)
- (896) As I'd said I'm like music. [I said/ I like] (S 1197)

Here Swedish has the same structure as English, which means that the correct forms *I like* and *I hope* expected in (894) and (895) and the second part in (896) correspond to Sw. 'jag tycker om' and 'jag hoppas'. All the errors are supposed to be in the simple present except for the first part in (896), where the correct simple past *I said*, equivalent to Sw. 'jag sade', is the correct form. It is puzzling to find these errors, where there is no reason to insert a form of *be* or any other auxiliary in either language. One possible explanation is that the contracted forms are perceived as forming a unit with one meaning, rather than two separate words and meanings, i.e. forming a "chunk" corresponding to Sw. 'jag' (Engl. *I*) rather than 'jag är' or 'jag ska' (Engl. *I am, I will*), etc.

The explanation of the phenomenon of chunks of the type **I'm live*, **I'm is a boy* and **I'll would like*, "well documented in literature on L1 English" (Bahns 1991:215), could be that they occur as "a result of the child's difficulty with segmenting the speech stream" (Kuczaj 1976:425). In Kuczaj's investigation, *I'm*, *it's*, *that's* and similar forms are seen as allomorphs of the "corresponding" *I*, *it* and *that*, etc. This seems to be a possible explanation for the phenomenon in L2, too. The contracted forms, Pr+primary verb or Pr+modal, are taught and practised from a very early stage in English teaching in Sweden. They are also frequent in texts. This is consistent with the curriculum, where the focus is on the spoken language at the introductory stages. This problem in "segmenting the speech stream" could perhaps explain other, possibly related errors of the type found in **...they will may not get a work...* (S 4150) or **I am will Journey to Wembley stadium...* (S 1033), even though the full verb form is given.

Another type of overgeneralisation of auxiliaries relates to negation in English. There are cases of negation with modals where the learner also adds *do*, as in **people might don't* (S 3167). This kind of error is likely to be caused by the *do*-construction being wrongly associated with negation on the whole.

16.2 Tense and aspect

Mixing up tense and aspect is a frequent error type in the material, making up 16% (n=288) of the cases of overgeneralisation. This type of error is surprising since Swedish has basically the same tense formation and

application as English. Tense mixing includes the tenses proper, i.e. the simple present, the simple past, the present and past perfect, and the future, as well as the conditional constructions. Only cases which have equivalent L1-L2 rules are included here. Thus, examples of the simple present used for the future is not dealt with here since this error has to do with transfer of L1 rules (section 15.9). On the other hand, with the progressive aspect there are 149 instances that are indeed considered to belong to this area of "mixing". There are instances where the progressive aspect both replaces and is replaced by the tenses.

Looking first at tenses proper, the simple present and the simple past most frequently appear in each other's place. They are also used instead of other tenses, but to a much lesser extent. The most common error consists in using the simple past as a replacement for other tenses, especially for the simple present (n=54). This type of error occurs mainly with irregular verbs (70%). Most often primary verbs (*be*, *have*, *do*) are involved, but also ordinary irregular verbs like *go*, *come*, *send*, and *meet*. It is equally impossible to use the past form in these cases in both languages, and yet there are errors of the type exemplified in (897) and (898) below:

- (897) ... and if I didn't get a job as a reporter, I will be an actor. [don't get] (S 1022)
(898) I went to school five days a week and I think it's almost fun but ... [go]
(S 3296)

In the above cases the writer has picked the wrong form of *do* and *go* to represent the simple present tense. Regular verbs are also involved in this tense mixing, mainly *want* and *call*, two very frequent verbs. Other ordinary regular verbs that occur are *promise*, *ask*, *play*, *exist*, *live*, and *die*. Again, the tense systems are quite similar in the two languages. This also goes for the treatment of the verbs, except for *die*, which is regular in English whereas the corresponding Swedish verb, 'dö', is irregular. But why is the past form of the verb used in such cases?

- (899) If we hav time i wanted to see the hoole England. [want] (S 2463)
(900) I'm a nice girl, and I promised you that... [promise] (S 1159)

In (899) one possible explanation could be that the Swedish form 'ville', equal to 'skulle vilja', is behind the erroneous choice of English verb form. The simple past of *promise*, in (900), is more difficult to understand.

The simple past is also used in conditional constructions, the present perfect and the future:

- (901) ...a glad teenager who loved to meet new people so I look forward to stay with the family and... [would love to] (S 343)
- (902) Now I told a little about myself. [have told] (S 3048)
- (903) In the summer I became 16 years old. [will /be/] (S 1867)

In all these cases, the interpretation is dependent on context, which shows that *would love*, *have told* and *will become* and their L1 equivalents are the expected correct forms in both languages. Here regular L2 verbs are the most frequent, making up 60% of all the instances. However, there are individual differences. With the first type, *would+verb*, regular verbs are in a clear majority, whereas irregular verbs are more frequent in the present perfect and the future tenses.

The second most frequent switch (n=37) involves using the simple present for the simple past, the future and the present perfect, also grammatically incorrect in both languages. In an overwhelming majority of the cases where the present replaces the simple past, English irregular verbs (including the primary verbs *be*, *do* and *can*), frequent verbs in both languages, are involved. These verbs are mostly irregular in Swedish, too. In all examples, the simple past should have been used, as in (904) and (905):

- (904) When I saw this words I think that it was my chance and... [thought] (S 1278)
- (905) I read about the international conference wish will be in Copenhagen in Denmark, and I get interested about it. [got] (S 3805)

None of the instances discussed can be attributed to transfer of an underlying L1 grammatical rule or form. Why do these errors appear, then? Arabski (1979:74) attributes this type of tense error to “lack of automatization” when not triggered by L1 transfer. It is assumed that learners at this stage know the principal parts of the verbs. This may be so as regards principal parts as mere patterns, but what about application of the forms in real context, e.g. compositions? Ellis (1994:310) suggests that “fill-in-the-blanks” exercises, features practised at a certain given time, etc., could lead to a higher awareness of L2 norms, whereas in free writing, as in free conversation, the learner is more likely to be more focused on “getting the message across” and then pays less attention to form. The question then follows whether good communication is actually achieved. Could it simply be that the principal parts of the verbs have been learnt by heart but there has not been enough training in how to apply the forms in running text or conversation (cf. Stenström 1975)?

Incorrect mix-up of simple tense and aspect is mainly a question of using the present progressive for the simple present, as in (906) and (907). Only a few instances have been found where the present progressive appears

instead of the future (908), the past progressive instead of the simple past, as in (909), and the present perfect progressive instead of the present perfect, as in (910):

- (906) I also LOVE icehockey, I'm playing my self... [play] (S 579)
(907) She is coming from Irland and is 9 years old. [comes] (S 1840)
(908) ... as I am staying with a real english family, I would love to... [will stay] (S 2082)
(909) ...when we where in London was the time running away..[ran] (S 1845)
(910) I have never been seeing a “live” match in tennis. [have seen] (S 2941)

The use of the progressive for the simple present accounts for an overwhelming majority of these cases (94% n=138). This is a predictable error considering the fact that Swedish has no equivalent form. Thus, there is an “indirect” contrastive (transfer) background. What is more surprising is that it replaces other tenses, too, albeit not in equally large numbers. Again, it seems as though a kind of “maximization” is at play (section 16.1).

According to Wolfram (1985:229), “tense unmarking” is a very prominent structure in English L2 acquisition regardless of L1 background (cf. Dulay & Burt 1974a & 1974b, Bailey, Madden & Krashen 1974). In this study, however, using marked forms for the unmarked simple present (n=196) is more frequent than using the unmarked simple present for other marked tenses and the progressive aspect (n=49).²⁴² This suggests that it is not simply a question of system simplification through omission of morphemes; rather, forms are added to a simple grammatical form.

16.3 Number distinction

In this section not only errors involving singular and plural noun number are included, but also number errors relating to pronouns/determiners such as *other/s* and *this-these*.

Overgeneralisation of singular and plural number is frequent in the data, making up 15% (n=260) of the total number of overgeneralisation cases. Most frequently the singular form is used for the plural (n=135), generally with regular plural nouns both in an ordinary plural context, as in (911), and in sentences where the plural is determined by, e.g., a numeral, as in (912), a quantifying determiner, as in (913), or where there is a quantifying noun, as in (914):

²⁴² The terms 'marked' and 'unmarked' and their use in this study are explained in Ch. 19.

- (911) ...I want my parent to trust me ... but they dont... [parents] (S 4554)
 (912) Last summer I were in England for three week. [weeks] (S 5984)
 (913) My dog have wan many show. [shows] (S 959)
 (914) ..but there's a hundred or thousand of them just in Sweden. [/there are/hundreds/thousands of them] (S 1194)

There are similar rules in both languages in these and similar instances. So what are the reasons behind these errors? Only a few of them could be attributed to misplacement of the *-s* morpheme as in **others thing*, and even fewer examples could be explained by differences in the use of the “logical plural” (**their body*), nominalized adjectives (**the black*), or problems with plural formation of compound nouns (**point of views*, **pairs of twin*). In fact, most of the errors involve ordinary count nouns occurring in contexts that require the plural form (**do thing*, **I also like cars and motorcycle*) and nouns preceded by determiners like *all*, *some*, *many*, *much*, *a lot of*, and *other* (**all kind*, **many friend*, etc.), or by numerals (**three week*). In all of these, Swedish requires the plural, too, so why does not positive transfer work here?

The situation is reversed in the instances where the plural is used for the singular (n=96). This also occurs mainly with ordinary count nouns, both in general singular contexts, as in (915) and (916), and with compounds (917) as well as numerals (918), but also with noncounts (919):

- (915) My best friends is N. [friend] (S 615)
 (916) My dreams is to be a football stars like Lothar Matheus... [dream / a ..star] (S 5967)
 (917) My name is N and I'm a 15 years old boy. [15-year-old] (S 525)
 (918) The inhabitants is about 90 thousands. [thousand] (S 2787)
 (919) Because I'm a girl who want exeitments. [excitement] (S 1077)

As regards cases like the ones in (915) and (916), nothing in Swedish could have triggered the errors. Possibly, the writers' pronunciation could play a role in these and similar cases. In (915) the expression *be best friends with* could perhaps influence the form. However, this type, — also exemplified by the first error in (916) — is not a very frequent type of error in the data. More frequent are cases like the second error in (916) and others like it (**a girls*, **a cousins*). Now, why do such errors occur? Again, there is nothing in Swedish that could lie behind them. In (917) and (918), the numeral is likely to trigger the plural *-s* being incorrectly attached to the noun. The fact that this is not acceptable in compounds of the kind appearing in (917) is apparently not clear to the learner. As for the few cases in this group involving noncounts

like *excitement*, *progress* and *trouble*²⁴³, as well as zero plurals like *sheep*, the latter three are likely to appear due to their being perceived as plurals but mistakenly given the regular plural form, resulting in **progresses*, **be in big troubles* and **sheeps*. The Swedish forms are not likely to be the cause of error, since the corresponding forms are ‘framsteg’, ‘problem’ and ‘får’, all zero plurals, although there is probably an element of influence from regular plural formation that might trigger the wrong associations. Instead of simply transferring the plural meaning and copying the Swedish zero plural, a regular plural *-s* is used to display the plural form. With *excitement*, corresponding to Sw. ‘spänning’, which is usually a noncount noun, this type of transfer is even less likely. Still, there is a connection to errors referred to as transfer of Swedish plural formation (section 15.4), although, it is perhaps transfer at a more abstract “system level”, rather than concrete transfer of grammatical form.

There is also confusion concerning the indefinite pronouns/determiners *other* and *others* (n=15). In the instances where *others* is used for *other*, it is more common to find a (correct) plural noun head, as in (920), than an incorrect singular noun head, as in (921). The situation is reversed in cases like (922), where *other* appears for *others*:

- (920) ... intressted in others countrys like the USA and Africa... [other countries]
(S 4767)
- (921) In the future we have to test cosmetic on others way! [/in/ other ways]
(S 5354)
- (922) Think about other and all people who are... [others] (S 3753)

Errors of the type found in (920) could occur because the plural *-s* is “contagious” and accidentally added to the determiner, a kind of overuse of the *-s* morpheme. However, it could also be that *others* is actually chosen because the independent form, as in *I’m interested in others*, corresponds to Sw. plural ‘andra’. In examples like *other countries*, *other* also translates as ‘andra’. This could indicate transfer from Swedish, similar to cases with adjectives given a plural form (section 15.4). As we have seen before (cf. *it-there*), confusion is a possible explanation in cases like these. Although it is likely that there is boosting due to the L1, it is impossible to say definitely which is the best explanation. Overgeneralis-ation seems the most reasonable, perhaps most “neutral” choice.

Cases similar to (921) could be explained as simple misplacement of the *-s* morpheme mentioned above. This is how errors like **he come backs*

²⁴³ *Trouble* can be both count and noncount. In the cases found, however, only the noncount use is correct.

are explained in Thagg-Fisher (1985), and it is a possible explanation for errors of this type, too. However, since there are two forms in English (*other-others*) the result is a grammatical error where the wrong form of the pair seems to have been chosen.

Turning now to the demonstrative pair *this-these* (n=14), there is a similar mixing of forms, as in (923) and (924):

- (923) ...how to provote this problems an... [these] (S 4905)
 (924) ...becors it's my last term in these school. [this school] (S 4259)

Phonological and orthographic similarities once again provide a possible explanation, but this time only between the two English forms.

16.4 Definiteness and indefiniteness

Overgeneralisation of article usage accounts for 11% (n=184) of all the errors found. Although Swedish and English have similar article systems, there is one major area that creates problems: the zero article. Some cases where there is a difference between Swedish and English are described in section 15.2 as cases of transfer relating to definiteness and indefiniteness. It is more difficult to find a reason for the overgeneralisation errors discussed in this section, especially the use of the zero article, which, on the surface, looks like simplification by omitting the article. However, referring to this type of error as overgeneralisation is in line with my decision to treat the zero article as a grammatical category in its own right (section 4.3.3).

Thus, all cases where a required definite or indefinite article is not used are regarded as overuse of the zero article. Most errors, 49% (n=91), are of this type and in all of them the L1 and L2 rules are the same. In the majority of them, the definite article should have been used in both languages, Swedish having a postposed definite article in all the cases found.

- (925a) *...the name of ø school is Xskolan. [of the school] (S 944)
 (925b) ...namnet på skolan är Xskolan.
 (926a) *If a was in britain at ø summer I' should... [/in/ the summer] (S 632)
 (926b) Om jag var i Storbritannien på sommaren skulle jag...

Here, both Swedish and English require the definite form, yet there is no article. Thus, the error cannot be due to transfer from L1. In (925) there might be influence from sentences of the type *I hate school*, which might be a more likely explanation.

There are also errors, as in **to city* (Sw. ‘till sta’n’/ till staden), where, again, the postposed definite article in Swedish is apparently not perceived as the equivalent of the definite article in English, thus, no positive transfer occurs. The different positions of the definiteness markers are obviously problematic.

The zero article also replaces the indefinite article and, again, there is a good deal of similarity between the two languages. The errors below involve NPs, but also the indefinite expression *a lot of*:

(927a) *I live in ø suburb, just outside X. [in a suburb] (S1714)

(927b) Jag bor in en förort, precis utanför X.

(928a) *...I like to see ø motor show. [a motorshow] (S 2680)

(928b) ...jag skulle vilja se en motorshow.

(929a) *I live in ø Swedish town cald X. [in a ...town] (S 4413)

(929b) Jag bor in en svensk stad som heter X.

(930a) *I have ø lot of friends and... [a lot of] (S 5968)

(930b) Jag har många vänner och...

(931a) *...it should meen ø lot for me ... [/mean/a lot/to me/] (S 5815)

(931b) ...det skulle betyda mycket för mig...

Errors of the type exemplified in (927), (928) and (929) are interesting, although relatively few in this study, because there are languages with either a different application of, or lacking, the indefinite article (e.g. Chinese, Russian, Arabic). However, only in two learners is there an indication that they may have another (unidentified) L1 than Swedish, all the others being regarded as “Swedish learners”.²⁴⁴ Thus, these errors cannot be attributed to L1 transfer. Whether these are true grammatical errors or simple slip-ups is difficult to decide, as always.

As regards “omission” of the indefinite article in *a lot of*, this is likely to have been triggered by the similarity with the closely connected *lots of*. Leaving out *a* in *a lot of* is not regarded as a blend, since the two forms are not mixed (cf. **a lots of*, Ch. 18). The Swedish equivalents in these cases are ‘många, en massa’ in (930), and ‘mycket, en mängd’ in (931).

In some cases, 21% (n=39), the definite article appears in areas where there is no article in either language, with proper names, as in (932), or with noncount nouns having generic reference, as in (933):

(932) ...Madonna live in concert in the London. [London] (S 208)

²⁴⁴ Compare the discussion of learners’ backgrounds in section 1.3.

- (933) ...intrested in the motorcycle history and sports... [motorcycle history]
(S 1987)

This is the only type of overuse of the definite article found in the material.

Overuse of the indefinite article *a* accounts for 29% (n=54) of the problems involving the articles. This is a slightly different kind of overuse, where *a* appears for *an* in cases like (934):

- (934) I hope that all my questions get a answer... [an] (S 1669)

There are no signs of *a* being used solely for one of the Swedish corresponding forms, ‘en/ett’, although ‘en’ outnumbered ‘ett’ in the Swedish equivalents of the instances found here. Thus, the English rule that *a* is used only with words beginning in a consonant (*a girl*) or a semi-vowel (*a young girl*) seems to be not yet fully acquired or understood. This should be compared with the cases where *an* appears with words beginning with a consonant, which are likely cases of non-grammatical transfer due to the similarity between Swedish ‘en’ and English *an* (section 15.2). In most problems involving the articles, positive transfer would have eliminated the errors.

16.5 Prepositions

Prepositions account for 11% (n=184) of the overgeneralisation errors. Most of these errors are cases where the wrong preposition is used. In these instances, there is no obvious connection to Swedish in the choice of wrong preposition, so transfer is not a likely candidate here. Five prepositions — *at*, *in*, *of*, *to*, and *about* — account for 75% of the errors where the wrong preposition is chosen.

A majority of the instances with *at* appears to correspond to Swedish *på* equivalent to Engl. *of*, *on* and *in*, as in (935), (936) and (937). Why *at* is chosen is difficult to say but it could be that it is perceived as a very “English” preposition. In combination with justified doubts about large-scale similarities between the two languages as regards prepositional use, its use may be incorrectly “maximized” (sections 14.1 and 14.2).

- (935) I am a boy at sixteen summers... [of] (S 1952)
(936) On Saturdays I use to watch english footballmatches at Tv. [on] (S 1339)
(937) Because I haven’t been at a british football before. [to] (S 1977)

With English *in*, all cases but one can be translated into Swedish ‘på’, corresponding to Engl. *at*, as in (938), and the *of*-cases are mainly equivalent to Sw. ‘på’, in these cases equivalent to Engl. *at/to/about/with*, as in (939), (940), (941) and (942), and to Swedish ‘om’, equivalent to L2 *about*, exemplified in (943):

- (938) i want to go to the cup final in Wembley Stadium... [at] (S 2465)
- (939) I'm best of everything. [at] (S 2692)
- (940) ...is to write answers of a lot of stupid questions ... [to] (S 770)
- (941) ... insted of complaining of what I not want to do. [about] (S 2048)
- (942) ...they have asked if I am angry of them. [with] (S 1884)
- (943) I've taken part of this information of the conference... [about] (S 3880)

English *to* is incorrectly used instead of *for*, *on* and *in* corresponding to Swedish ‘för’, ‘på’ and ‘i’, as in (944), (945) and (946):

- (944) I think it's very important for our kids, and their kids to know that we did something to them. [for] (S 6032)
- (945) The most thing i want to do is going to Adventure holidays. [on] (S 3001)
- (946) I was to England last summer and I enjoyed it very much. [in] (S 248)

In instances of the type found in (945) and (946), analogy with the similar constructions *go to (a concert)* and *I've been to England* could perhaps explain the errors. In Richards (1971) analogy is the main explanation for errors involving prepositions. However, this type only accounts for 3% (n=6) of the preposition errors in this study.

Finally, *about* appears mainly where *in* is the correct choice, corresponding to Swedish ‘av’ in the Adj+PP combination *interested in*, as in (947):

- (947) I'm wery interested about other cultures... [in] (S 3810)

In these cases, Swedish *av* would trigger *of*, not *about*, so this is clearly not transfer from L1. In fact, apart from *in*, Swedish *av* can also correspond to, e.g., *of (made of)*, *by (written by)*, *from (get sth. from sb.)*, *off (take off)*, *for (cry for joy)*.

There seems to be confusion as to which preposition to use, and in these cases, there is a clear over-representation of instances where Swedish *på* is involved. In fact, the same prepositions as in the cases related to transfer are involved here, too (section 15.1). Contrary to Richards's (1971:176) findings, most cases of overgeneralisation of prepositions in the present study cannot be attributed to analogy. Rather, they seem to be caused by

underdifferentiation, i.e. the incorrect choice of one preposition, a “primary counterpart”, corresponding to a whole set of prepositions in English, as argued by Arabski (1979:52). This primary counterpart is not, however, chosen because of any phonological or orthographic similarities between the Swedish and the English preposition at play. Instead the choice seems to fall on what could be felt as the most frequent or “very English” preposition in the set (section 15.1).

16.6 Verb structure: complex and nonfinite

Under this heading problems relating to complex and nonfinite verb structures are discussed. They make up 11% (n=153) of the overgeneralisation errors. Only the most frequent or most interesting types are dealt with here.

In English, complex structures are used to form the perfective (*have*+participle), the progressive (*be*+V-ing), the passive (*be*+participle) and modal constructions (cf. Quirk *et al.* 1985:151). Errors discussed deal with the form of the main verb only and, thus, problems with the auxiliaries²⁴⁵ (e.g. *I had lived* [*I have lived*]) are classified as tense errors (sections 15.9 and 16.2). The only error types relating to the progressive found in the present study concern the auxiliary *be* and they are treated as tense problems (section 16.2) or as simplifications, i.e. reduced progressives (section 17.1). Thus, in the sum total of errors concerning complex structures (n=101), the perfective, the passive and modal constructions are included. To these the *do*-construction is added, since, just like the other complex structures, it consists of an auxiliary and a main verb making up a grammatical structure.

With the perfective structures, the most common error involves the present perfect. Only a few cases relating to the past perfect have been found. With the former type, the main verb is given the infinitive (or base) form, as in (948) below. In some irregular cases with *go* and *forget*, the past form is incorrectly used, as with the present perfect in (949). With the past perfect, as in (950), the main verb is given the present tense form:

- (948) In school I have write a work about Agility,... [have written] (S 60)
 (949) ...but I have never went to some of her concerts. [have never gone] (S 338)
 (950) We had live in X for over 10 years now,... [have lived] (S 3191)

²⁴⁵ In cases like **I had live*, where the correct form should be [*I have lived*] there are two errors, involving (1) tense (**had* for *have*), and (2) incorrect verb form following the auxiliary (**live* for *lived*).

With the passive construction, in (951), the same incorrect structure auxiliary+infinitive is displayed, as in (950) above:

- (951) My brother is eighteen year old and was suppose to go to... [was supposed]
(S 1751)

The use of the infinitive form could be analogous to the *do*-construction, *do* (aux)+infinitive, spilling over into other auxiliary structures. Thus, learners seem to assume that all auxiliaries behave similarly, i.e. *Do I write/I didn't write* may be thought equivalent to **I have write*, **I was suppose to* and **I had live*. Then the question arises why we find instances like **I have went*. It is possible that the learners are aware that the auxiliary and main verbs should take on different grammatical forms, but the choice falls on the wrong irregular form of *go*. However, this points towards confusion of principal parts of verbs, a well-known phenomenon.

Modal auxiliary constructions form the future tense (*will+V*) and also express modality (*can/may/must*) by using a modal with a main verb in the infinitive (or base) form. Errors involving the future mainly consist in using a main verb in the past, as in (952), but there are also cases with conditional *would+V* with an incorrect *to*-infinitive, as in (953), and modal structures with the *-ing* form, as in (954):

- (952) And I will drove a dubble deckers a red bus. [will drive] (S 2296)
(953) ... the young people must to have something to do... [must have] (S 5139)
(954) ...I just can't beeing inside. [can't be] (S 1301)

It is difficult to see why the past form of the main verb is used with *will* in (952) and cases like it. However, irregular verbs tend always to be confusing. As in (949) previously, the ability to use the principal parts fully seems to fail.

As regards the use of *to+V* forms with modals, as in (953) above, it is possible that this is another type of “chunk” learning (cf. overuse of auxiliaries, section 16.1). There are also examples of errors like **they would to show me*, where the Swedish equivalent is ‘de skulle visa mig’ and ‘skulle visa’ is the modal+bare infinitive form. The correct English product has the same form, *would show*, and, if anything, it would be natural to expect positive transfer to boost the correct choice. Strangely enough, however, in quite a few instances this does not occur. Here, it is worth noticing that there is also a certain similarity in form (and, to some extent, pronunciation) with the *would to* in **would to show* and structures like *want to* and *were to* which might also trigger the wrong choice of form.

The overuse of *-ing* with modals, as in (954), is a possible analogy to the progressive construction, *aux+ing*. It could also be attributed to excessive drill practice since the *-ing* form, having no exact equivalent in Swedish, is frequently practised, thus possibly giving rise to overuse, i.e. “maximization” of the *-ing* form.

Overgeneralisation of nonfinite structures (n=52) involves mainly the bare infinitive (n=42), but in a few cases the *to*-infinitive appears incorrectly. Overuse of the bare infinitive form occurs mainly in three types of structure. First, most of these sentences require the *to*-infinitive, as in (955). Second, it is used instead of the *-ing* form, as in (956), and, third, there are also cases where either the *to*-infinitive or the *-ing* form is correct, as in (957), (958) and (959):

- (955) ...travel around in Britain just see... [to see] (S 817)
 (956) I'm very interesting about meet people... [/in/ meeting] (S 5277)
 (957) Talk about living together is to an important thing... [talking/to talk] (S 5509)
 (958) But even if I like watch tennis... [watching/to watch] (S 743)
 (959) I think that the most important is the peace try to help people... [trying/to try]
 (S 3683)

In all these instances, Swedish has the full ‘att’+infinitive which, supposedly, would facilitate the use of at least the *to*-infinitive form. It does not, however. This type of error could be due to teaching, and/or teaching materials. It is not unusual to find word lists of verbs with the Swedish form given without the infinitive marker ‘att’, e.g. ‘gå’, in Engl. *go*, as the translation of *to go* (Sw. ‘att gå’) possibly making for confusion. The problem in errors like (956) is further enhanced by the differences in verb form after prepositions in the two languages. Where English requires *-ing* form after a preposition, there is no corresponding form in Swedish. Instead, the Swedish equivalent is Prep+‘att’+infinitive. In most errors of this type, the learners have used the Swedish equivalent in English, the *to*-infinitive, and this is classified as transfer. However, in errors where the bare infinitive is used, it must be overgeneralisation. Cases exemplified by (957), (958) and (959) involve certain verbs requiring either the *to*-infinitive or the *-ing* form. In the material, such cases involve the verbs *like*, but also *try* and *love*.

The *to*-infinitive appears instead of the *-ing* form and the bare infinitive, although not very frequently compared to the incorrect use of the bare infinitive discussed above. The few examples found involve the verb *let* and *go+Ving* structures, as in (960) and (961):

- (960) ...and let the youngster to choose there own way... [choose] (S 4617)
 (961) I will go to swim in a sea. [go swimming] (S 2302)

It is difficult to find a plausible explanation for these forms. For instance, in (960), Swedish ‘välja’ is matched with English *to choose*. If learners had made the connection between the Swedish form ‘välja’ and the English bare infinitive in examples like this, such errors might not have occurred. As regards (961), the *go+Ving* is a more special structure that may not yet have been automatised by learners at this stage.

16.7 Pronouns and determiners

In this section are discussed the three most frequent types of pronoun errors, i.e. the *it-there* distinction, indefinite pronouns and relatives. The total number of pronominal errors accounts for 7% (n=125) of the overgeneralisation errors. All three types involve “split” forms, i.e. forms where Swedish has only one word corresponding to several options in L2. This should be compared to “coalesced” forms, i.e. several forms in the L1 coalesced into one form only in the L2 (cf. Ellis 1994:307).

Problems with the *it-there* distinction account for a majority of the errors (n=77). Swedish ‘det’ can be realised in several ways in English, for instance *it, there, that, and so*, as the examples show:

(962a) What is this? It is a dog.

(962b) Vad är det här? Det är en hund.

(963a) What is this? That is a dog.

(963b) Vad är det här? Det (där) är en hund.

(964a) There is a dog in the garden.

(964b) Det är en hund i trädgården.

(965a) Would you do that for me?

(965b) Skulle du vilja göra det för mig?

(966a) I will do so.

(966b) Jag ska göra det.

When Swedish ‘det’ functions as subject, there are two main counterparts in English, *it* and *there*, depending on context. Both correspond to ‘det’, although *there* is also similar to Sw. ‘där’ (section 15.7), which may in some cases dissuade learners from opting for that form in subject position. In fact, *there is/are* is often taught as Sw. ‘det finns’ in order to facilitate understanding of how it is used. So what makes the learner choose *it*? In Dúskova (1969) the incorrect use of *it* is attributed to transfer, since her

informants never use *there* for *it*; nor do the learners in this study. In the present study, however, this is not a valid criterion for transfer. Since we are dealing with split forms, it is more interesting to see what the other possible choices are. In the case of equivalents to Sw. 'det', it could perhaps be argued that it is more likely to refer to L1 transfer if Engl. *that* had been used instead of *it*.²⁴⁶ The fact that the choice falls on *it* seems to be due to other factors. First, when 'det' is looked up in dictionaries or in textbooks, the "standard equivalent" given is *it*. Thus, this is the most likely word chosen by learners, especially at this age, when asked to find the English word for Sw. 'det'.

Furthermore, *there* is not the natural choice (perhaps because of the close connection between Engl. *there* and Sw. 'där', both in meaning, pronunciation and orthography).²⁴⁷ This is why this error type is referred to as overgeneralisation of *it* rather than as a case of transfer of Sw. 'det'.

The confusion of the split forms leads to errors of the type found in (967) and (968):

(967a) *Beacuse in Sweden it's wery little of Jobs.. [there /are very few/] (S 3700)

(967b) För i Sverige är det väldigt lite jobb.

(968a) *It moust be an end on that war. [there /must/] (S 3550)

(968b) Det måste bli ett slut på det kriget.

Similar problems occur with *some* and *any* (n=19). Swedish has only one word, although inflected for number, 'någon', 'något', 'några', corresponding to these two English words. This is a well-known problem area for Swedish — as well as other — learners and, accordingly, discussed in most contrastive grammars and textbooks.

In most of the cases found the writer opts for *some* or *something* instead of *any/anything*, as in (969) and (970), but *some* is also used for *one*, as in (971):

(969) ...they don't do it in some other land... [any other] (S 582)

(970) ...but I don't believe that I could do something about it. [anything] (S 5112)

(971) Some of my ideas are that we, teenagers should do a lot more. [one of.../is that/] (S 4319)

²⁴⁶ Compare this with errors involving the *am-are-is* distinction, where overuse of *are* is classified as transfer due to similarities with Swedish 'är', whereas overuse of *am* or *is* (though scarce) is seen as overgeneralisation.

²⁴⁷ It should be mentioned that in the south of Sweden 'där' is used much like Engl. *there*, e.g. in 'Finns där några äpplen kvar?' corresponding to *Are there any apples left?* This use of 'där' could facilitate the use of *there*. See Teleman *et al.* (1999b:54).

Again there seems to be confusion as to forms and their application. Some kind of systematicity seems to occur in using *some* and its compounds, e.g., *something*, *somebody*, for *any*, *anybody* etc., and *one*. Apart from this there is minor confusion among the forms *everything* etc., *no* and *a* and the *some-* and *any-* forms.

Relative pronouns (n=29), are also split forms, i.e. Sw. ‘som’ corresponding to Engl. *who*, *which*, *that*, and sometimes *what*. The majority of errors in this group consist in *who* and *which* being used interchangeably, as in (972) and (973):

(972) ...and the forests who have stopped to grov. [which] (S 3162)

(973) But I know someone wich ar older. [who /is/] (S 2721)

It is slightly more common to overuse *who* in this way. Again, this shows that where there are split L2 forms corresponding to a single L1 form, there is often confusion. Learners are generally taught the general rule that *who* is used about human beings and *which* about animals and objects, but this has not been of help in these cases.

In these errors, then, there seems to be an underlying contrastive cause. However, apart from the assumption that instruction may play a part in the actual choice of form in these sets, it is impossible to know which form will be used. This is why the errors are classified as being due to overgeneralisation rather than to transfer from Swedish.

16.8 Word class confusion

Confusion between and within word classes accounts for 5% (n=87) of the errors referred to as overgeneralisation. In this section errors relating to the four major types will be discussed: nouns for adjectives, adjectives for adverbs, adjectives for nouns, and adverbs for adjectives. There are also cases where different forms within the word class are confused, as with adjectives ending in *-ing* and *-ed* (*interesting* v. *interested*). This type of error is included in this section as overuse of forms since they are distinct grammatical forms with separate meanings.

Most of the errors involve the incorrect use of adjectives for adverbs (n=25), as in (974), or adjectives for nouns (n=5), as in (975) and (976):

(974) I could go to concert's particular concert's with Depeche Mode...
[particularly] (S 1040)

(975) ...tell me a little about your family, your interesstings, and... [interests]
(S 1457)

- (976) ...we will talk about is the violent and war all over the world. [violence]
(S 3402)

The majority of such errors involve **real* [really], which is not very surprising since this form often occurs in informal speech, especially in AmE. However, since it is not considered appropriate in good writing, it has here been regarded as an error (section 6.2). The remaining errors are clearer examples, involving adjectives such as *positive*, *near*, *slight*, *particular*, and *serious*, forming adverbs by adding *-ly*. In Swedish the adverb is formed from the corresponding adjective by adding *-t*, *positiv-positivt* [*positive-positively*], which also happens to be an adjective ending for gender inflection (cf. Ruin 1996:83). Thus, the distinction between adjectives and adverbs is much less transparent in Swedish than in English. In spite of this, indicating a possible element of underlying transfer, it is difficult to say, with certainty, that the learner is actually transferring the adjectival *-t* form (e.g. Sw. 'allvarligt', resulting in *serious*), rather than the adverbial *-t* form (Sw. 'allvarligt' resulting in *seriously*). This uncertainty is the reason for treating errors of this type as cases of overgeneralisation rather than transfer in this study.

One explanation for these errors could be that these fairly young writers do not, in fact, understand the adjective-adverb distinction, i.e. they do not realize that an adverb is required. On the other hand, it might be that they simply do not know how to make the adjective into an adverb, in which case more or different teaching might be needed. Two cases could support this last point: when using the incorrect forms **unfortunated* and **beautifulfed*, it seems that the writer knows something should be attached to the adjective. However, there would have to be more cases pointing in the same direction before any firm conclusions can be drawn.

A few times adjectives are also used to replace nouns, as displayed in (975) and (976) above. We find *English* for [England], *high* for [height], *violent* for [violence], and **interestings* for [interests]. The only case that has a fairly simple solution is probably the *high-height* pair, which is likely to have been triggered by the similar pronunciation of the words. But why *English* and **interestings* (which is also given a plural *-s*)?

The reverse occurs in quite a few instances where nouns appear for adjectives (n=17), as in (977), (978) and (979):

- (977) ... I want to have the address to my "Britian fimaly". [British] (S 1670)
(978) ...want to go to Britain and see the beauty country... [beautiful] (S 1861)
(979) I am most intresst in motorcycls... [interested] (S 1987)

The majority of the words are frequent and useful ones: *interest* v. *interested*, *Britain* v. *British*, *beauty* v. *beautiful*, and *bore* v. *boring*.

Other errors involve adverbs being used where adjectives are required (n=7), as in (980) and (981):

(980) ...But I think that is only naturly, I mean... [natural] (S 3312)

(981) ...it is a pretty normely famely and we are living in ... [normal] (S 4978)

How can this overuse of adverbial forms be explained? Possibly it is the effect of teaching the adjective - adverb distinction. There is only one case of irregular adverb formation, *well*, the remaining six instances being regular *-ly* forms. Compare this with the reverse situation, adjectives used for adverbs, which is much more frequent (n=25).

In some cases there are two different forms, with separate meanings and/or areas of usage within the word class. Typical examples of this are the adjectives *interesting-interested*:

(982) I am interessting about mopeds, music, girls and... [interested /in/] (S 1447)

There seems to be confusion between the adjective forms in *-ing* and *-ed*. With the corresponding L1 forms there is a similar distinction between the adjectives ending in *-ant* and *-erad*: L1 *intressant* equals L2 *interesting*, and L1 *intresserad* corresponds to L2 *interested*. Therefore no major problems are to be expected in making the distinction.

It thus seems that adjectives and adverbs constitute a problem area as regards forms and usage, although there is similarity in rules and application in an overwhelming majority of cases. Differences between the languages involve, basically, the realisation of the forms involved.

16.9 Case form

In this section overuse of case forms is treated. Such errors make up only 2% (n=39) of the total number of overgeneralisation errors. They are of two types: incorrect use of the genitive case instead of the common case (n=20) and vice versa (n=19).

The errors where the genitive case is overused all occur with pronouns. One type of error involves overuse of a non-existent genitive similar to “regular” genitive formation, as in (983) and (984):

(983) I also have a rabbit and he's name is N. [his] (S 2566)

(984) ...they's name is N and N. [their /names are/] (S 3140)

In all of these instances there is a correct – and frequent – form, the possessive pronoun. Why this form is not used in individual cases is difficult to say. Possibly, *he's* is a misspelling of *his*, but what about *she's*? Could it be analogous to *he's*. On the other hand, it could perhaps be transfer of the incorrect Swedish form 'hons' for 'hennes'. There are also instances where *-s* is overused with the possessives, as in (985) and (986):

- (985) I got one sister and hers name is N and she is 19. [her] (S 4622)
 (986) ...it's important to speak about theres background's... [their] (S 5843)

In half of the instances, the explanation could be *-s* contamination from a following plural noun. That leaves the other half to be explained, however. Instead, it could be that the genitive form is believed to be consistently expressed by the *-s* form only, thus it is used in all genitive situations.

In all the instances where the genitive is replaced by the common case form, Swedish and English rules are similar, i.e. the genitive form is required in both languages. Furthermore, the forms are more or less identical: in Swedish *-s* is added to the noun in both the singular and the plural, and in English we find *-s* in the singular and *'s* in the plural. In spite of this, there are errors like the following:

- (987a) ... I've heard so much about Madame Tuossoe ... [Mme Tussaud's] (S 2316)
 (987b) ...jag har hört så mycket om Madame Tussauds...
- (988a) My school name it's Y-school. [school's name] (S 4255)
 (988b) Min skolas namn är Y-skolan.
- (989a) My father name is N and... [father's] (S 6006)
 (989b) Min fars namn är N och...
- (990a) I also want to borrow my horse mother NN... [horse's] (S 2573)
 (990b) Jag vill också låna min hästs mamma NN..
- (991a) In this year snowmobile season... [this year's] (S 2989)
 (991b) I årets snowmobilsäsong...

It is difficult to find an explanation for this type of error. In (987), it seems that the problem lies mainly in simply not knowing the exact form of the name, whereas in errors like those in (988) - (991) it is more of a mystery why the genitive *-s* is not transferred from Swedish.

17 Simplification errors

Simplification accounts for 8% (n=278) of the errors found in this study. Here, the term refers to “simplification by omission” only, i.e. simplification by omission of function words, not grammatical morphemes. Ellis (1994:89) distinguishes between “structural” and “semantic” simplification, the former dealing with omission of grammatical functors such as auxiliary verbs, articles and bound morphemes (plural *-s*, past tense *-ed*), the latter involving omission of content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs). In this study, omission of function words is referred to in terms of simplification (sections 14.2 and 14.5). The term is a crude interpretation of Odlin’s (1989) definition which is discussed in section 14.2. Only omission of the indefinite article, as in **I am very good fellow*, fits the interpretation used here (Odlin 1989:3). This means that replacing the correct plural number in *two boys* by the incorrect singular number **two boy* is not included as simplification but rather as a case of overgeneralisation (section 16.3). This interpretation corresponds more to Littlewood’s (1984) definition of the term.

Most cases of simplification occur in connection with verbs, making up 55% (n=154) of this type of error. The second most frequent type involves conjunctions (20% n=56) and prepositions (16% n=44). There are also instances relating to pronouns (8% n=23), and one case involving adverbs. The following sections focus on the four main areas of simplification.

17.1 Verb forms

The majority of simplification errors, 55% (n=154), are made up of missing verb forms. These cases generally involve omission of *be* and *have*, but also a few cases of *would /should*. With *be*, the structures that are “simplified” mainly involve the copula, as in (992) and (993), or the auxiliary function, resulting in forms like the reduced progressive in (994), or the incomplete future time expression in (995):

- (992) It ø a nice school. [is] (S 2024)
- (993) My name ø N, I’m 16 years old and lived in X. [is] (S 5284)
- (994) ... but I hope they ø working on it. [are working] (S 3302)
- (995) ...what ø going to hapen with the world .. [is going to] (S 3850)

In most of these cases there are similar L1 and L2 rules and structures. The rule in instances like (992) and (993) is similar in both languages: the copula is needed. Differences involve the progressive forms, where there is no Swedish equivalent.

The omission of *have* occurs mainly with two forms, most of them in *have got*, as in (996), but also some with the semi-modal *have got to*, as in (997). There are also errors of omission with the present perfect construction, as in (998), where only the past participle is employed:

- (996) I ø got a dog, a Gordon Setter,... [have got] (S 2423)
(997) ...someone ø got to listen. [has got to] (S 3934)
(998) I' ø never been i britain, but... [have never been] (S 631)

The first type, *have got*, is of course common in informal speech, but it may give rise to problems: does the writer actually intend *I got a dog* (e.g. as a present), or is the intended form in fact *I have (got) a dog*. Context shows that the latter interpretation is the correct one. These types of errors have nothing to do with L1 since both structures are different in Swedish and English. However, the simplification of the verb structure *have got* can probably be explained simply by the fact that the informal forms are very frequent and that, again, these young learners use a kind of written spoken language in their compositions (section 1.3). The second type, *have got to*, could be perceived as following the same pattern, i.e. learners incorrectly assume that it is possible to leave out *have* in this context, too. This is also found in informal nonstandard English, e.g. *I gotta go*. The third example, (998), involves the present perfect where both languages are similar in structure: the corresponding Swedish form of this example is *Jag har aldrig varit i Storbritannien, men...*

The modals are left out in the *would+V* (or possibly *should +V*) structure, as in (999) and (1000), resulting in the use of another tense. Again, context reveals that the simple present is not correct. In a majority of these instances, the main verbs *like* and *love* are involved. There are also a few cases where *would* is omitted from the semi-modal *would rather*, as in (1001):

- (999) ...I meen if I come, I ø like to see Cruft's. [would like] (S 2390)
(1000) I just ø love to see Liverpool against Arsenal if it is possible. [would love]
(S 2164)
(1001) If it is possible I ø rader live in a place outside the city... [would rather]
(S 1708)

The corresponding Swedish structure *skulle+V* is exactly like the English one, and so should not interfere. Instead positive transfer is to be expected. Nevertheless, problems do occur. A possible reason for the omission of *would* could perhaps be traced back to the frequent use of contracted forms. If this is the case, it is likely that 'd is not perceptually salient, i.e. it easily

“gets lost” in pronunciation and so is easily missed by the listener. This could explain why it is not used in written language, either.

17.2 Coordination and subordination

By and large, rules for coordination are the same in Swedish and English (cf. Svartvik & Sager 1996:324, Holmes & Hinchliffe 1994:416). A coordinating conjunction is inserted between two coordinates and before the last item in enumerations of more than two coordinates. Only for stylistic effect can Sw. ‘och’ (Engl. *and*) sometimes be omitted. However, the material studied here is hardly of the kind where such effects are intended. Therefore, omitting the conjunction is regarded as erroneous. This type of simplification error accounts for 20% (n=56) of the instances. The majority of errors are related to coordination with *and*, and errors are almost equally frequent with two coordinates, as in (1002) and (1003), and in enumerations, as in (1004) and (1005):

(1002a) *I am happy to be out if it, ø to start on college. [and] (S 5121)

(1002b) Jag är glad att sluta där och börja på gymnasiet.

(1003a) *My hobbies is ligt teater light, ø disco light. [and] (S 1519)

(1003b) Mina hobbies är ljus, teaterljus och discoljus.

(1004a) *...and I like to play tennis, football, ø basket. [and] (S 995)

(1004b) ...och jag tycker om att spela tennis, fotboll och basket.

(1005a) * My hobbies are, playing tabletennis, dancing, ø football. [and] (S 5652)

(1005b) Mina hobbies är att spela bordtennis, dans och fotboll.

In all these instances, Swedish also requires a coordinator in the same position as in English, which leads to the question of how well these learners master coordination in their L1. The subordinators also function according to similar rules in Swedish and English.

The instances found ought therefore to include conjunctions identical to Swedish, but they do not, as shown in (1006), (1007) and (1008):

(1006a) *...not just becaus of my languages ø also because of my bakground... [but also] (S 4495)

(1006b) ...inte bara på grund av mina språk utan också på grund av min bakgrund...

(1007a) * And ø I have a chanc to meat her... [if] (S 2376)

(1007b) Och om jag får en chans att träffa henne....

- (1008a) *I look forward to drive to England o that a can speake English... [so that]
(S 1914)
- (1008b) Jag ser fram emot att köra till England så att jag kan tala engelska...

Why this type of error occurs is very difficult to say. It could be that they are mere slips, i.e. performance errors, or the learner does not know the full expression and strategically simplifies it to get the message across anyway. It could also be due to a generally poor command of dependent clauses and/or subordinating conjunctions.

17.3 Prepositions

Omission of a preposition required in both languages accounts for 16% (n=44) of the cases of simplification. Here both “ordinary” PPs (Ch. 9) and phrasal verbs (section 5.7) are represented. As long as the grammatical category is required, the rules are considered equal in the two languages. Most errors involve the Swedish prepositions ‘i’, ‘på’, ‘till’, ‘om’, and ‘med’, in this order.²⁴⁸ However, in these cases the preposition is omitted in the English text.

In the instances found, Swedish *i* should have been realised mainly by English *in*, but also by *for* and *to*, as in the examples below:

- (1009a) *I live in Sweden, o X, and I like it. [in X] (S 5918)
- (1009b) Jag bor i Sverige, i X, och jag gillar det.
- (1010a) *I have drem about this trip o many year. [for /many years/] (S 949)
- (1010b) Jag har drömt om den här resan i många år.
- (1011a) * ...because i have never bin o an English-talking country. [/been/ to, in]
(S 421)
- (1011b) ...för jag har aldrig varit i något engelsktalande land.

As these examples indicate, most errors relating to Sw. ‘i’ occur in adverbials of time and place. Only once is a phrasal verb involved. With Sw. ‘på’, the English prepositions that should have been used are all different: *of*, *about*, *in*, *on*, *to*, and *into*. These are exemplified by (1012) and (1013). Here, again, time and place adverbials are most frequently involved, but phrasal verbs are also represented:

²⁴⁸ Compare this with the results in Chapter 9, where the semantically corresponding prepositions are also involved in a majority of the cases found.

(1012a) *...you never think \emptyset how much work the person has put down to it. [think about] (S 266)

(1012b) ...man tänker aldrig på hur mycket arbete personen har lagt ner på det.

(1013a) *...and what they used to do \emptyset there's holiday. [on] (S 4628)

(1013b) ...och vad de brukade göra på sin semester.

Swedish 'till' seems to cause problems mainly in different types of adverbials and phrasal verbs, as in (1014), (1015) and (1016), where *to* and *for* would have been correct:

(1014a) i wont to go \emptyset Holliwod... [go to] (S 3763)

(1014b) Jag vill åka till Hollywood.

(1015a) ...sent money to the poor but not \emptyset niggers. [to] (S 4660)

(1015b) ...skicka pengar till de fattiga men inte till negrer.

(1016a) ...thing they don't know about Sweden \emptyset exempel. [for /example/] (S 5930)

(1016b) ...saker de inte vet om Sverige till exempel.

Errors related to Sw. 'om' mainly appear with the phrasal verbs *read*, *talk* and *learn about* something, exemplified by (1017). There is also one case involving an adverbial of time in (1018).

(1017a) ...when I have to read \emptyset it in school... [read about] (S 2834)

(1017b) ...när jag måste läsa om det i skolan.

(1018a) ...is komming to me in Sweden \emptyset about two weeks. [in about] (S 1484)

(1018b) ...kommer till mig i Sverige om ungefär två veckor.

Finally, errors involving Sw. 'med' occur in PPs, as in (1019) and (1020), and once in an English phrasal verb, in (1021). In these instances, the correct equivalents are *by*, *to* and *with*:

(1019a) I thought I schould start \emptyset telling you a bit ... [by] (S 190)

(1019b) Jag tänkte jag skulle börja med att berätta lite för dig...

(1020a) I think it's terrible \emptyset all the animal-tests. [with] (S 3198)

(1020b) Jag tycker det är hemskt med alla djurtester.

(1021a) ...have somebody to be with and somebody to talk \emptyset ... [talk to] (S 5225)

(1021b) ...ha någon att vara med och någon att tala med...

In a few examples, e.g. (1015) and (1017) above, there is a possibility of omitting the preposition in Swedish. In the first type, (1015), this can be done because there is already a preposition, *to the poor*, and this could possibly serve both conjoins (*the poor but not niggers*). In the other case, there is a slight shift in meaning if the preposition is omitted. English *read something* or *read about something* are not equivalent and the same difference holds for Sw. ‘läsa något’ and ‘läsa om något’. In all other instances there is no simple explanation as to why the preposition is left out. Arabski (1979:51) states that omission of prepositions is similar to children’s L1 learning, where functors tend to be ignored at certain stages.

17.4 Pronouns and determiners

Pronouns/determiners account for 8% (n=23) of the simplification errors. They include leaving out L2 *it/there* functioning as subject, the personal pronoun *I* in subject position, as well as the indefinite pronoun *all* and the “prop” word *one*. The instances where *it* is left out, together with omission of *there*, make up the majority of these errors. In Swedish, *det*, corresponding to both *it* and *there* (section 16.7), has to be included, as in (1022), (1023) and (1024); thus, the rules are similar in Swedish and English:

(1022a) *...I think it is important to meet people... [it] (S4535)

(1022b) ...jag tycker det är viktigt att träffa människor...

(1023a) * \emptyset is better than marijuana.[It] (S 4213)

(1023b) Det är bättre än marijuana.

(1024a) *...and in front of the motorbike \emptyset is two skis. [there /are/] (S 3102)

(1024b) ...och framtill på motorcykeln är det två skidor.

There are languages where this type of instances would be regarded as clear cases of L1 transfer. Although, subject personal pronouns “are largely unnecessary in Spanish/Catalan” (Swan & Smith 1987:85), as well as in several other languages (e.g. Italian and Greek), in this case this is not a valid explanation. The learners who produced such errors all have Swedish as their first language.

18 Blends

As regards blends, two L2 structures, or an L1 and an L2 structure, are mixed up resulting in a “blend” (James 1998:111). The difference between blends and overgeneralisation is that there is not only one form or structure being overused but, rather, parts of two structures form a new, incorrect hybrid.

Either form is grammatically correct on its own. In the material there are only a few cases that clearly show this. Blends account for 1% (n=50) of all the errors in the corpus. Examples of blends include the incorrect combination of two semantically similar forms, e.g. in verb structures (28% n=14), indefinite pronouns/determiners (28% n=14), prepositional expressions (24% n=12), conjunctions (8% n=4) and determiners (8% n=4). Blends with verb forms mainly involve the mixing of an English and a Swedish expression (n=9), as in (1025), where the English *go+Ving* corresponds to Swedish ‘gå och’ +V, or nonfinite constructions (n=4) with either the *to*-infinitive or the *-ing* form, appearing as **to+V-ing*, as in (1026):

(1025a) Go and shopping and take many photos... [Eng. *go shopping*/Sw. ‘gå och shoppa’] (S 633)

(1025b) Gå och shoppa och ta många foton...

(1026a) My favourite is to sailing, ficing... [to sail/ sailing] (S 1048)

(1026b) Min favorit(hobby) är segling, fiske.

In (1026b) the Swedish equivalent could also be ‘att segla’, ‘att fiska’ (Engl. *to sail, to fish*), i.e. a *to*-infinitive clause, which is likely to complicate the choice of form.

The second most frequent type of blend involves the indefinite structures *a lot of/lots of* (n=9), as in (1027), but there is also a case where *very much* is mixed up with *a lot of*, in (1028):

(1027) It cost a lots of money of course to have a hors... [a lot of/lots of] (S 1686)

(1028) Today it's very lot of racism and... [very much/ a lot of] (S 3535)

Other indefinite pronouns/determiners creating problems are *every* and *all*, resulting in concord errors like (1029), where *every child's* or *all children's* would have been correct:

(1029) ...how important evry childrens situation are. [every child's/ all children's] (S 5676)

The third largest type of blend relates to prepositions. Here, prepositional expressions like *in reality/for real*, and *outside/on the outskirts of* are mixed, as in (1030) and (1031). There are also verb structures, e.g. *look at/watch*, as in (1032), with synonymous meaning but a different construction:

- (1030) ... If I can do this in real a sertenly will grow... [for real/ in reality] (S 2927)
(1031) We live in a big house on the outside of X. [outside/on the outskirts of]
(S 5091)
(1032) ... to go to London and wath at Buckingham Palace. [watch/look at] (S 2126)

The remaining cases involve a mix-up between *a bit of* and *more*, as in (1033), *most +NP* and *mcst of the +NP*, as in (1034), or *NPpl+ today* and *NPpl+ of today*, as in (1035), and also an adjective form, in (1036):

- (1033) ...to learn a little bit more of english... [more/a bit of] (S 1408)
(1034) ...I think that most of Swedish young people think ... [most /most of the]
(S 5877)
(1035) ... that are existing in many countries of today. [NPs today/NPs of today]
(S 3932)
(1036) ...without knowing the less about him. [the least/less] (S 3775)

Blends are not very frequent compared to the other explanation types. However, it is justified to separate them from transfer, overgeneralisation and simplification errors, since they do not fit neatly into any of these categories. They could be classified as cases of overgeneralisation. But in that case, which grammatical feature is overused, x or y? They are more likely blends of two “competing syntagmas” (Dechert & Lennon 1989), which are both in the learner’s interlanguage but not yet properly separated. To a certain extent this description also fits those overgeneralisation cases where there are several L2 forms to choose from, e.g. Sw. ‘som’ equal to Engl. *who-which-that*, a confusion due to incomplete acquisition or awareness. Further, are blends really errors of the same status as those due to transfer, overgeneralisation and simplification? Nemser (1991:359) suggests that they are, in the sense that the result is “the appearance of syntactic malapropism”, but at the same time he argues that they are not, because the learner has actually shown that s/he “knows the two co-available inputs”. This is an interesting stance which would merit further discussion.

19 Error explanation “revisited”: further perspectives

19.1 Introductory

The purpose of this chapter is to penetrate more deeply into the results of the present study. This includes a general discussion of explanatory categories in comparison with findings in other studies, as well as a presentation of grammatical categories in relation to the explanatory categories used in this study.

A survey of all error types according to the classification used in this study is given in Table 19.1a below:

Table 19.1a Survey of errors found as distributed over explanatory categories.

Error source	N	
L1 transfer	1408	(40%)
overgeneralisation	1775	(50%)
simplification	278	(8%)
blends	50	(1%)
unknown	14	(<1%)
Total	3525	(100%)

Errors attributable to interlingual factors, i.e. (negative) transfer, account for 40% (n=1408) of the errors. Out of these, 71% are cases of grammatical transfer and the remaining 29% are non-grammatical transfer (section 14.5). All in all, intralingual explanations, i.e. overgeneralisation, simplification and blends, are found in the remaining 60% (n=2103). Less than 1% (n=14) cannot be readily attributed to either major type of explanation. This result is more in accordance with those in Grauberg (1971), George (1972) and Flick (1980) than the other investigations mentioned in Table 19.1b, e.g. Dula and Burt (1973) and Sheen (1988).

Ever since Lado (1957), error explanation in general, and transfer in particular, have been much debated in SLA. Different periods have seen different views develop in SLA research (section 2.3). Today transfer is, again, acknowledged as one of the major error sources. Thus the role of transfer has occupied a pivotal position in most error discussions over the past few decades. This is why the discussion in this section begins with transfer.

As already noted, following the criteria set up for defining transfer (section 14.5), the errors attributed to L1 transfer make up 40% of all the errors found in the present study. A number of previous studies in second

language research have tried to estimate to what extent transfer is involved in errors. The results in various investigations from the 1970s up to the present range from around 3% to 70%, as illustrated in Table 19.1b below:

Table 19.1b Percentage of transfer errors in previous studies of second language acquisition in chronological order. Languages: English (Eng), German (Ge), Spanish (Sp), Arabic (Ar), French (Fr), Polish (Po), Italian (It).

Study	% transfer errors	Type of learner and data
Grauberg 1971	36	L1 Eng/L2 Ge - univ. students, advanced level written (composition, translation)
George 1972	33	L1 mixed/L2 Eng
Dulay & Burt 1973	3	L1 Sp/L2 Eng - children, mixed level oral (BSM)*
Stenström 1975	20	L1 Sw/L2 Eng - university students written (summaries)
Tran-Chi-Chau 1975	51	L1 Eng/L2 Sp - adults, mixed level written (composition, fill-in-blanks grammar)
LoCoco 1975	13	L1 Eng/L2 Sp/Ge - university students written (composition)
Mukattash 1978	24	L1 Ar/L2 Eng - graduate students written
Arabski 1979	>50	L1 Po/L2 Eng - 17-21-year-olds written (composition, translation)
Flick 1980	31	L1 Sp/L2 Eng - adult, mixed level oral (translation)
Steinbach 1981	64	L1Ge/L2 Eng - university students written (translation)
Lott 1983	≈50	L1 It / L2 Eng - university students written (exam papers)
Sheen 1988	70	L1 Fr & Ge/L2 Eng - adult, near-native speakers oral (interviews)
Köhlmyr	40	L1 Sw/L2 Eng - 16-year-olds written (compositions)

*BSM= Bilingual Syntax Measure, see Dulay & Burt (1973:248)

The lowest figure, found in Dulay & Burt (1973), applies to Spanish children (5-8 years old) of mixed levels of English proficiency, and the highest (Sheen

1988) applies to adult, near-native speakers of English with French or German as their L1.

The differences in results in these studies can be attributed to several causes, one being the difference in definitions of what is transfer and what is not. Flick (1979:60, cited in Ellis 1994:61) claims that the "assignment of a particular error to such categories as "transfer", "overgeneralisation" or "ambiguous errors" has been largely an arbitrary matter, subject to the individual biases and point of view of the researcher". Bearing this in mind, I have tried to be as clear as possible in describing and justifying the classification of errors into the explanatory categories chosen. It is obviously essential to state clearly what has been included or not, and on what grounds. For instance, Dulay & Burt, in their 1973 study, were convinced that only a minor part of the errors were due to transfer. Although their results were later backed up by other studies (e.g. Hansen-Bede 1975, Gillis & Weber 1976, Ervin-Tripp 1974), critics have pointed to the fact that ambiguous errors were excluded, and so the results were not complete. Later on, other scholars tried to balance the discussion and there were findings suggesting that transfer did play a much more important role in error explanation than had been previously assumed. There are also other factors to consider as regards the data used, the type of informants (age, educational background, etc.), the different L1s represented, the type of learning environment ("host surrounding" or not) and so on.

All the investigations in Table 19.1b are based on written material, except Dulay & Burt (1973), Flick (1980) and Sheen (1988), who used oral testing. The studies all deal with instructed language learning but there are great differences as to the age of informants, ranging from children to adults. It is sometimes difficult to know exactly where researchers have drawn the line as to what is included in the notion of "adult" learners. Would the 16-year-olds in the present study fall into this category or not? There are also differences in learners' L1, even though in most studies English is the target language. It has been suggested that languages which are relatively different from English could lead to more transfer than, say, other Germanic L1s. However, this is refuted by Jordens & Kellerman (1978), who argue the opposite as regards learners' perceived distance between languages. They claim that if the distance is small there will be more transfer than if the languages are seen as very different. This view is contrary to the general prediction of CA, which postulated more transfer between languages that are radically different (cf. Lado 1957).

Some of the studies investigate all types of errors (Grauberg 1971, Tran-Chi-Chau 1975, Mukattash 1978), whereas others focus on one or a few grammatical areas or features in the L2. The total number of subjects also

varies from Sheen’s (1988) nine informants to around 20 in Grauberg (1971), Flick (1980) and Steinbach (1981) and around 150 in Dulay & Burt (1973) and Tran-Chi-Chau (1975), up to 170 in Arabski (1979) and the highest number, 383 subjects, in the present study.

In spite of the variations pointed to, it is interesting to compare figures in the different studies, because they seem to reflect both the uncertainty of how to treat L1 transfer and what was the common view held at the time of the respective investigations. The results in the present study seem to support a relatively balanced view on the influence of transfer (sections 14.2 and 14.5). A view which is far from the most “negative” estimates of the role of transfer in SLA.

It is interesting to see whether there are any differences or similarities as regards what major error areas occur in the explanatory categories. In Table 19.1c below, the four most frequent areas are given in italicised figures. When concord errors are treated as errors involving verbs, nouns and determiners (i.e. articles and pronouns), the three most frequently involved areas turn out to be verbs, nouns and articles, and prepositions. It is only with simplification and blends that pronouns and conjunctions are also very frequent areas. This result is hardly unexpected, since these are high-frequency word classes. Most of the young learners in this study tend to use a relatively simple sentence structure, and when errors occur they naturally frequently involve these grammatical categories. The total numbers are given in Table 19.1c:

Table 19.1c Grammatical categories as distributed over the four explanatory categories. Italicised figures indicate the four most frequent areas in each explanatory category (top to bottom).

Category	transfer	overgener- alisation	simplifica- tion	blend	unknown	total
Nouns/Art	<i>409</i>	<i>336</i>	19	3	1	768
Verbs	<i>172</i>	<i>531</i>	<i>154</i>	<i>14</i>	6	877
Adjectives	30	38	-	1	-	69
Adverbs	47	27	1	-	-	75
Pronouns	75	166	23	<i>11</i>	1	276
Numerals	-	13	-	-	-	13
Prepositions	<i>376</i>	<i>183</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>16</i>	-	619
Conjunctions	2	11	<i>56</i>	<i>4</i>	-	73
Concord	<i>197</i>	<i>433</i>	-	1	1	632
Word order	100	18	-	-	5	123
Total	1408	1775	278	50	14	3525

A slightly different perspective is taken by comparing the number of cases in each explanatory category to the total number of errors within each error area. From the table (read left to right) it can then be concluded that transfer is clearly most powerful within the categories relating to word order (81%), adverbs (63%), prepositions (61%), and nouns/articles (53%), whereas overgeneralisation is the major explanation for verb errors (61%), pronominal errors (60%), numerals (100%), and concord (69%). Instances of simplification are most dominant concerning conjunctions (77%), whereas blends, accounting for a very small part of the total number of errors, involve mainly prepositions and verb structures, although in less significant proportions.

Having established in what general areas most errors appear, it is time to compare errors attributed to the different explanatory categories in more detail. Three main issues will be considered: what is transferred, overgeneralised, simplified or blended, why and by whom.

The first question, dealing with what is found, includes the major error types within the grammatical categories given in Table 19.1c, possible subtypes, types of "rules" involved (section 14.4), and types of structures, wherever patterns can be discerned. Second, why do these errors occur? Is there a pattern that can explain, if not all, at least some of them? Here, notions like markedness, maximization and underdifferentiation may, or may not, play significant roles. Third, the who question concerns the learner behind the errors. Since the learners in this study constitute a very homogeneous group as regards age and years of English instruction (section 1.3), this question deals solely with their choice of elective course and final grades achieved. The gender aspect has not been considered in any great detail, but is touched upon when striking differences have been observed.

19.2 Errors and explanatory categories

What has been found, then, as regards errors and explanatory categories? In this section, two different angles are applied when looking at the explanation of errors. First, there is a summary of explanatory categories represented within each error area as defined in chapters 15-18. Then we turn this perspective around and look at the most frequent error areas within each explanatory category, discussing structural difference versus similarity between L1 and L2 as well as the predictability of errors.

Among errors involving definiteness and indefiniteness, transfer (section 15.2) is the most frequent category, accounting for 63% (n=312) of the article errors. These cases are mainly of the following types: L1 definite

end article=L2 \emptyset article (L1 *vad jag vill göra i livet* ->L2 *...what I want to do in *the life*), and L1 no article=L2 definite article (L1 *gå på bio* ->L2 *and go to \emptyset *Cinema*). The first is likely to occur because of differences in the treatment of noncounts with generic reference in Swedish and English (section 4.3.1), whereas the second type usually involves certain nouns denoting “human activity” where there are also different rules (section 4.3.3). Overgeneralisation explains 37% (n=184) of the instances and in these cases the major error types involve the use of the zero article instead of both the definite (*if I could see \emptyset *Cup final*) and the indefinite article (*I’m \emptyset *excellent speaker*), overuse of the definite article where there is no article in either language, e.g. with proper names (*go to the *England*) (sections 4.3.3 and 16.4), and cases where the indefinite article *a appears for an (*I’m a *interesting person*) (section 4.3.2)

As regards the number distinction, overgeneralisation is the most common explanation, accounting for 70% (n=260) of the errors in this area (section 16.3). It is slightly more common to overgeneralise the singular for the plural (*two *sister*) than vice versa, 58% and 42%, respectively, but both types are frequent (section 4.2). Here, there is mainly similarity between Swedish and English rules, 66% (n=171). Rules differ in the remaining 34% of the instances, involving mainly ordinary count nouns. Cases where transfer can be traced account for the remaining 30% (n=111). They are of two types. First, there are the corresponding structures L1 \emptyset plural = L2 regular -s plural in contexts indicating that the plural form is required (Sw. ‘tre mil’, Engl. *three *mile*). The other type occurs with Swedish count nouns corresponding to English noncounts. In all such cases, rules differ between the languages (sections 4.2 and 14.4).

Verbs are involved in different ways mainly in three areas: subject-verb concord, auxiliaries and omission of verb. A majority of these errors have to do with verb forms relating to subject-verb concord and auxiliaries inflected for person/number. Overgeneralisation is the most frequent category, 54% (n=351), responsible for cases where the 3rd person singular -s is incorrectly attached to the verb (n=306), i.e. *Vs [V \emptyset] (*we *goes*) (section 11.2), as well as addition of a redundant auxiliary (n=45), mainly *am* and *will*²⁴⁹ (*I’m *live*, *I’ll *think*). The transfer cases correspond to the first of these areas (s-v concord), showing L1 transfer of uninflected verb forms in all persons, i.e. V \emptyset [Vs] (*my *mother deliver*) (sections 11.2 and 15.3). The equivalent of the second error area (auxiliaries) consists in using *are* with all persons due to the similarity to Swedish ‘är’ (Sw. ‘jag/han är’, Engl. *I/he

²⁴⁹ Errors of this kind are discussed separately in sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2.1, 5.2.3.1 and 5.5.4, and there is also a general discussion in section 16.1.

are). Simplification is manifested in this area by complete omission of the verb in several structures, e.g. **I a girl* (Ch. 5 *passim* and section 17.1). This occurs in 24% (n=155) of the instances relating to verb form.

As regards tense (section 5.2) and aspect (section 5.3), overgeneralisation dominates, again, accounting for 85% (n=294) of the cases (section 16.2). There are three main areas: overuse of the simple present (**When I saw these words I think...*), the simple past (**If we have time I wanted to see...*) and the progressive aspect (**...she is coming from Ireland*). These are likely to occur due to lack of automatization, the first two possibly enhanced by lack of consistency in the L1. This is also suggested by Stenström (1975:17), who says that "students tend to switch unexpectedly from present to past and vice versa also when writing essays in Swedish". However, this would have to be properly investigated by comparing these learners' Swedish and English compositions, which is clearly beyond the scope of this study. In the case of overuse of the progressive form, there is also the element of maximization to consider (section 14.2).

In the instances where the simple present is used for the future, there is likely transfer of Swedish tense rules. This type of tense error, together with problems involving English *used to* in a present tense context, makes up the remaining 15% (n=51) of the cases (section 15.7).

The last type of verb area relates mainly to verb structures consisting of complex verb structures and nonfiniteness (section 5.7). Again, overgeneralisation (section 16.6) is in a majority of 58% (n=149). Most of these cases have to do with the realisation of the main verb in complex structures (**have live*) or with problems in using the infinitive forms (**must to have*, **make them to laugh*) correctly. Here, difference (46%) and similarity (54%) in rules between Swedish and English are relatively equally distributed. Transfer cases make up 37% (n=94), involving Swedish *att*-infinitives and some specific uses of nonfinite structures where L1 and L2 rules differ (**think about to go*, **I want go*) (section 15.6). In this area there are also a few instances of blends, 5% (n=14), all related to nonfinite structures (**to listening*) (Ch. 18). Differences between rules account for 71% (n=10) of these cases.

With prepositions, transfer is the most frequent category, accounting for 61% (n=378) of the errors (section 15.1). Three types of construction are involved: L1 prep=different L2 prep (Sw. 'bra på', Engl. **good on*); L1 \emptyset prep=L2 prep (Sw. 'hemma', Engl. **home*); and L1 prep = L2 \emptyset prep (Sw. 'för X år sedan', Engl. **for X years ago*). The first type deals with "literal translation" or non-grammatical transfer, i.e. one primary counterpart (Arabski 1979), usually the most "direct" equivalent, is used to cover all English prepositions in a "set". This underdifferentiation accounts for the

overwhelming majority of the transfer errors concerning prepositions. The other two types are both grammatical transfer where differences between Swedish and English are clearer. Overgeneralisation makes up 30% (n=184) of the preposition errors (section 16.5). They mainly occur where the wrong preposition is used, although not triggered by Swedish, i.e. it is not the L1 primary counterpart. There are also cases where a redundant preposition is added to the English expression. In 7% (n=45) prepositional usage is simplified by omission (section 17.4). In these cases, a preposition is required in both Swedish and English, and, thus, there is similarity between rules. Only a few cases of blends have been found (n=12), making up 2% of the instances involving prepositions. There is similarity between L1-L2 rules in one third of the cases but in the majority, 67% (n=8), they differ.

Errors in pronominal/determiner form and use are generally due to overgeneralisation, 62% (n=152). One distinct characteristic of these instances is the "split forms", L11 = L21, 2, 3..., with special rules of application (e.g. *it-there*, *some-any*, *who-which-that*). In a majority of 80% (n=122) of these cases there are differences in rules between Swedish and English. The transfer cases make up 23% (n=58) of the instances in this error area (section 15.8). Either there are attempts to apply Swedish rules in the use or non-use of pronouns/determiners, or there is "literal" translation of nonstandard written Swedish forms (e.g. Sw. 'dom', Engl. *them*) or problems with the distinction between Sw. 'mycket-många' and Engl. *much-many* (section 15.8). Simplification (section 17.5) occurs in 9% (n=22) of the instances, mainly as omission of *it-there* (section 7.3) or a personal pronoun (section 7.2) in subject function. Here English and Swedish rules are similar in all cases but one. Blends account for the remaining 6% (n=14) of the pronominal/determiner errors (Ch. 18). The problems consist in not keeping similar expressions apart, such as *a lot of* and *lots of*. Here L1 and L2 rules differ. The exception involves pronominal/determiner counterparts with similar pairs in Swedish, in this case L2 *every - all*, in Swedish 'varje/alla' and 'alla', respectively.

In cases of word class confusion (n=149), overgeneralisation (section 16.8) is the most common category, 60% (n=89). There are two types, either a switch to a different word class or errors in choosing between two related, but different, forms within the word class, e.g. the adjectives *interested* and *interesting* (section 6.1). Transfer in this area explains 40% (n=60) of the instances, where the three types of confusion involve adjectives, adverbs and modals having one form in Swedish with two functions corresponding to separate forms in English, e.g. Swedish 'där' functioning both as a relative and a demonstrative adverb, corresponding to English *where* and *there*,

respectively (section 15.7). Obviously, there are grammatical differences between the languages here.

Word order errors (n=118) are generally a result of transfer, 85% (n=100). The problems mainly involve adverbials disturbing the subject-verb order (section 12.2). There are differences between Swedish and English in all these cases. Overgeneralisation accounts for 15% (n=18) of the instances, mainly in the form of excessive use of the English SAV structure (section 12.3) and, again, there are differences in rules between L1 and L2.

Let us now look at the errors from a reverse perspective. Here the point of departure is the explanatory categories, not the error areas.

Most transfer cases involve prepositions, definiteness/indefiniteness, plural formation and word order, all predictable due to differences between Swedish and English grammar. In fact, most transfer cases may be seen as predictable errors.²⁵⁰ Very few complex structures are found among the transfer errors. Basically, what could be called "complex structures" involve negation, perfective verb structures, the progressive and, perhaps, word order.²⁵¹ All other cases are defined as simple structures in this study, and such structures are most frequently transferred. In 98% (n=1378) of all transfer cases, there are differences between rules and realisation of structures in Swedish and English. This involves 99% (n=980) of the grammatical transfer errors and 98% (n=398) of the cases of non-grammatical transfer (section 14.4). Differences in rules and realisation in transfer errors are most obvious in the areas involving prepositions, articles, verb structures, and word order. Errors where there is similarity in rules make up the remaining 2% (n=24) of the total number of transfer errors. In the cases of grammatical transfer similarity applies in 1% (n=14) of the cases, versus 2% (n=10) of the non-grammatical cases. Errors where there is similarity in rules appear in occasional instances from several of the main categories. However, two categories, nouns relating to the number distinction and personal pronouns, are more frequent than the others. The former involve special cases of names of cars which are difficult in either language since they contain numbers (e.g. *Volvo 245* and *Saab 99*), and the latter are cases where pronunciation and spelling could explain most of the problems in getting the forms right.

Most overgeneralisation errors involve subject-verb concord (section 16.1), tense mixing (section 16.2) and number (section 16.3). In 59% (n=1044) of the 1781 instances L1 and L2 rules differ. The majority of errors in this group involve overuse of the 3rd person singular *-s* verb form (Ch. 10).

²⁵⁰ See Swan & Smith (1987:16-29) for an outline of typical errors made by Swedish (and other Scandinavian) learners of English.

²⁵¹ Errors involving the progressive are not classified as transfer errors but as cases of overgeneralisation (cf. section 16.6).

This is only to be expected since there is no similar inflection in Swedish. In fact, in most of the errors the difference in rules consists in Swedish not having grammatical distinctions corresponding to the pairs found in English: 3rd person verb inflection ($V\emptyset$ - Vs), the *some-any* and *it-there* distinctions, as well as the *a-an* distinction (the *en/ett* distinction in Swedish works differently). The 41% ($n=737$) of the errors where there is rule similarity are more difficult to explain. Here, positive transfer from Swedish would have eliminated the errors. However, there is no phonologically or orthographically similar form in Swedish to trigger transfer in these cases, most of which involve tense and aspect (sections 5.2 and 5.3), mainly overuse of the progressive form but also of the simple present or the simple past, and problems with the singular – plural distinction (section 4.2). The errors concerning number are perhaps particularly puzzling. The majority of cases of overuse of the singular form cannot be attributed to the "one -s principle" (**the countris general for the countries' generals*), nor to misplacement of the -s (**others thing, *news friend*) since some cases are preceded by a numeral that could induce the plural form for the following noun (**15 years old boy*) and some by L1 and L2 differences between count and noncount nouns (**progresses*). As regards tense mixing, this could be due to inadequate practice in writing in different tenses, but it could also mirror uncertainty in the mother tongue about tense use. These are all non-predictable errors.

A majority of the simplification errors, 72% ($n=200$), are cases where there is similarity between L1 and L2 rules. In these instances, a verb, an article or a conjunction is omitted. These are not predictable errors since, in both languages, the grammatical categories are needed in order to form correct sentences according to the standard norm. Some of the verb errors could perhaps be attributed to the use of contracted forms, especially frequent in spoken language, which might make it easy to miss the full forms. There are no indications that any of the learners making these kinds of errors have an L1 without a copula or other verb in this position. In the remaining 28% ($n=78$) the rules differ, and here most errors involve the future time construction *be going to* and other complex forms.

As for blends, differences in rules account for 62% ($n=31$) and similarity makes up the remaining 38% ($n=19$) of the instances. The relatively few instances found concern mainly nonfinite verb forms and indefinite pronouns/determiners, but also prepositions.

Summing up, both similarity and difference between L1 and L2 rules are found in all error categories except for conjunctions, where there is only similarity in the two languages. An overview of the distribution of similarity and difference in L1-L2 rules is given below:

Table 19.2a Distribution of similarity and difference in L1-L2 rules — an overview.

Explanatory category	Similarity L1-L2	Difference L1-L2	Total
transfer	24 (2%)	1384 (98%)	1408
overgen	737 (41%)	1038 (59%)	1775
simplification	200 (71%)	78 (29%)	278
blends	19 (38%)	31 (62%)	50
unknown	8 (57%)	6 (43%)	14
Total	988 (28%)	2537 (72%)	3525

These figures suggest that, at this level, differences in grammatical structures between the languages lead to more errors than structures with similar systems. This is in accordance with the CA hypothesis that differences between languages are likely to cause problems.

19.3 Markedness, maximization and other hypotheses

Why, then, do the errors discussed in this study occur? As regards transfer, some scholars (e.g. Eckman 1977, Gass 1979, Hyltenstam 1984, Kean 1986) argue that markedness holds the answer. Bardovi-Harlig (1987:389) for instance, says that "[i]n order for there to be transfer, the relevant construction in the native language must be unmarked, regular, productive, and common". This implies that L1 unmarked forms would incorrectly transfer to the L2 in the shape of a corresponding L2 unmarked form, where the marked alternative is the correct one, i.e. in accordance with a formula $L1u=L2m>L2*u$.

Markedness is a difficult term, defined in many different ways, and it is not the purpose of this study to discuss different notions of markedness in any depth. However, it is an interesting concept to include in a general discussion of errors and error explanation. Gair (1988) points out that it is not a new concept; rather "under one conception or the other [it] has been a part of linguistics since the 1930s", starting out in phonology. However, its connection to syntax and SLA is more recent, mainly through Eckman's (1977, 1978, 1985) development of the Markedness Differentiation Hypothesis (MDH).

In this study, the terms "marked" and "unmarked" are used broadly to denote linguistic markedness where the unmarked form is the most versatile and frequent one and the marked form consists of "at least one more feature, morpheme or rule than its unmarked counterpart" (Santos 1987:208), and "the marked member usually requires a special rule to delimit its usage" (Ibid.; see also Moravcsik & Wirth 1986, James 1998:182). In this sense, the

unmarked forms are "standard" or the "normal" state of a grammatical feature. However, there are cases where a marked form is more normal, e.g. within subsets of certain grammatical categories. One example is noncount nouns, which may be regarded as marked in relation to count nouns. A prototypical noun may appear in singular or plural form, the unmarked state of affairs. Thus, for nouns in general, the lack of plural form is a marked feature, but with noncounts this is the "normal" state, and so it can be seen as unmarked for this type of noun. In fact, with count and noncount nouns, it seems that markedness operates both at a "basic" level, and at a "sublevel" within each of the two, where there are also distinctions, between the singular and the plural in count nouns, or between the \emptyset article and the indefinite article relating to noncounts, yielding markedness at a sublevel, as Figure 19.3.i shows.

This points to problems in defining the term, but here no attempt will be made to solve such problems. Instead, morphological addition is here considered deviation from prototype, the basic criterion for markedness, in combination with what is generally considered as standard forms, i.e. frequency plays a part, too.

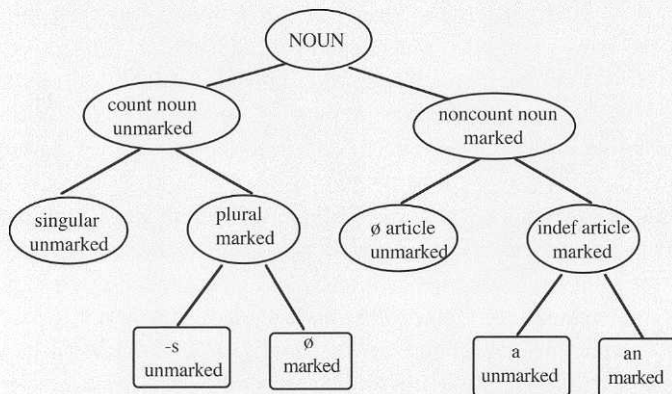


Figure 19.3.i Different types of markedness.

Using this definition, the data shows that a majority of the transfer cases support Bardovi-Harlig's (1987) $L1u=L2m>L2*u$ hypothesis that when the L1 has an unmarked item this is transferred to the L2, replacing a marked form. Typical examples of this are found in the transfer of L1 zero article with names of countries (including abbreviations), which is the normal, regular and unmarked form, appearing as L2 **go to USA*; or in L1 unmarked

regular plural forms which are transferred, resulting in L2 **knowledges*. In these two cases the marked forms (L2 definite article and no plural, respectively) are the correct ones.

However, in some cases a marked L1 form appears to be transferred to the L2 instead. This suggests that White (1987) and Zobl (1983) are right in claiming that marked forms can also be transferred. Larsen-Freeman & Long (1991:107) support this view by saying that beginners are especially dependent on the L1 "and so initially [are] more willing to transfer marked as well as unmarked items". When marked forms are transferred, they actually replace an unmarked L2 form, and so we get $L1m=L2u \rightarrow L2*m$. This occurs, e.g., with word order problems of the type **at home are we happy*. Inverted word order in Swedish is required with sentence initial non-subjects and is, thus, marked, whereas English retains the normal (unmarked) SV(O) order.

The two types of markedness — morphological (i.e. morpheme addition = marked form) versus frequency based (i.e. "standard" form = unmarked, "restricted" form = marked) — relating to transfer are exemplified in Table 19.3a below:

Table 19.3a Markedness and L1 transfer: some examples

L1 "unmarked"	L2 "marked"	Incorrect L2 "unmarked"	Formula
regular plural <i>läxor</i>	no plural <i>homework</i>	*regular -s plural * <i>homeworks</i>	$L1u=L2m>L2*u$
zero article <i>USA</i>	definite article <i>the USA</i>	*zero article * <i>go to USA</i>	$L1u=L2m>L2*u$
Vø person infl. <i>jag/hon sjunger</i>	3rd p.sg Vs <i>she sings</i>	*3rd p.sg ø infl * <i>she sing</i>	$L1u=L2m>L2*u$
L1 "marked"	L2 "unmarked"	Incorrect L2 "marked"	Formula
AVS order <i>hemma är vi glada</i>	ASV order <i>at home we are happy</i>	*AVS order * <i>at home are we happy</i>	$L1m=L2u>L2*m$
zero plural <i>många år</i>	regular -s plural <i>many years</i>	*zero plural * <i>many year</i>	$L1m=L2u>L2*m$

In the examples where marked forms are transferred, there is no morphological addition. Instead the L1 items, inverted word order and zero plural, are less frequent and, therefore, marked. Thus, it seems there is more to it than a simple binary opposition, unmarked versus marked items. If a scale ranging from "less marked" to "more marked" is used instead of a binary opposition, we get a slightly different picture (cf. Gair 1988). Then,

cases where both L1 and L2 forms are marked, but the L1 form is less marked than the correct L2 form, could perhaps also be explained within markedness theory, especially if we hypothesize that "each marked structure could be located at different points on a markedness hierarchy" (Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991:103).

For instance, L1 marked definite form is used with nouns having generic reference so that **vad jag vill göra i livet* appears in the L2 as **what I want to do in the life* when *in life* is the correct, but also the marked form. In these cases, the L2 zero article is restricted to generic reference and so may be considered more marked (i.e. less frequent or versatile) than the definite article in *the life*, as in *a day in the life of NN*. In turn, this definite article is restricted to specific reference, i.e. it is marked, although less so than the zero article, and more so in relation to the indefinite article. In fact, Zobl (1983) has identified cases of difficulty and transfer where both L1 and L2 are marked. If it is possible to grade markedness, the formula could be something like $L1-m=L2+m \rightarrow L2*-m$, where "-" stands for "less marked" and "+" for "more marked". Markedness is connected to acquisition order in that unmarked or less marked features seem to be learnt first (cf. Cook 1993:203, Ellis 1985:213). In this sense, also bearing in mind the morphological addition and "standard form" theory, we could perhaps say that the unmarked form is a default value. However, markedness is a problematic notion, as shown by the above discussion, and therefore not easy to use consistently in error explanation.

What does this imply with regard to intralingual errors? Is markedness involved here too? Does it function in the same way as transfer, i.e. is it most frequently the unmarked form that is overgeneralised or simplified? It seems that both marked/more marked as well as unmarked or less marked forms are overgeneralised (e.g. the marked progressive form, the unmarked verb forms). It is more difficult to assign markedness labels to cases of simplification since they generally involve complex structures such as *have /got/ to* and *be going to*. Are these marked forms, as opposed to the "reduced" forms that have been found in their respective places? A more detailed investigation into markedness in these areas would obviously be needed. However, a rough estimate suggests that, with intralingual errors, it is twice as frequent to move in the direction from unmarked, or less marked, forms to overuse of marked ones (e.g. simple present \rightarrow *simple past *-ed* or progressive *-ing*, singular \rightarrow *plural form, regular \rightarrow *irregular forms), and that (more) marked forms are generally simplified into unmarked or less marked structures (e.g. *have got /to/* \rightarrow * \emptyset *got*, *be going to* \rightarrow * \emptyset *going to*). No such comparison has been made for the rather infrequent cases of blends.

The maximization principle (section 14.2) is related to markedness in that it seems to involve marked forms only. Errors where the progressive *-ing* form, the 3rd person singular *-s* verb form, the definite article and *do*-support are overused can be accounted for by this principle. Learners seem to perceive certain forms as being particularly "English" or more "exotic" and non-Swedish, and so tend to overuse them, a kind of "new toy" effect. This could be a result of perceptual salience, since the forms occurring in these error types are either marked or more marked than the correct alternative. Maximization could also be a side effect of teaching. The features mentioned above are rightly emphasised in most textbooks and learner grammars since they mirror L1-L2 differences in a very obvious way. They are also relatively easy to point out and to teach, although unfortunately not as easy to learn and apply.

There is also "underdifferentiation", resulting in either transfer or overgeneralisation. Out of a set of alternative forms, one is attributed the role of primary counterpart²⁵² (Arabski 1979), and as such is used in all the alternative functions. In the case of there being one form in the set closer to the corresponding L1 phonological or orthographic form than the others, the result may be non-grammatical transfer from the L1. Examples of this type of transfer are found in the use of *an*, similar to Swedish 'en', for *a* (section 15.2), excessive use of *are*, Swedish 'är' (section 15.3), "literal translation" of prepositions (section 15.1), and the use of *there*, similar to Swedish 'där', for *where* (section 15.7).

On the other hand, if there is no such similarity, the choice is likely to fall on the form that is perceived to be the most general or most frequently encountered (or perhaps even most frequently practised), a kind of psychological notion of markedness. This results in overgeneralisation due to underdifferentiation and is exemplified by overuse of the first form in pairs and triplets such as *it-there*, *some-any*, or *who-which-that* (section 16.7).

Cases of simplification and blends are different and can hardly be fitted into either maximization or underdifferentiation. In cases of simplification there are no alternative forms to choose from. The omitted item should have been used in English as well as in Swedish. If anything they would be cases of "minimization". This is a common feature in child language acquisition and could well be part of beginners' language as well as uninstructed learner language.²⁵³ A few of these errors could perhaps be said to be a kind of "incorrect blends", i.e. there is an element similar to blending L1 or L1-L2

²⁵² Dulay, Burt & Krashen (1982:160) refer to this type of overgeneralisation as the use of 'archi-forms'.

²⁵³ Compare L1 acquisition, pidgin language and telegraphese (e.g. in Ellis, 1985, 1994 and Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991)

forms but it is not as clear as in the cases actually labelled blends in this study. For instance, the error *ø lot of* is close to **a lots of* which is a mix of *a lot of* and *lots of*. However, in the first, simplified example, it is difficult to determine which form was intended. Other, similar cases involve **go to city*, possibly influenced by *go to town*. As for blends, they suggest a higher degree of proficiency since learners in such cases must be aware of there being two interchangeable forms to choose from. In these cases it is likely that it is simply the lack of automatization that gives rise to errors.

19.4 Errors in relation to course, grade and gender

The next thing is to find out whether there is a pattern as to who makes these types of errors. If Taylor (1975) and others are right in assuming that less proficient learners will rely more on L1 transfer than more proficient ones, it follows that the supposedly weaker learners attending the general level of the elective courses in the Swedish school would make transfer errors more frequently.²⁵⁴

Comparing the total number of transfer errors in proportion to the total number of words produced by all learners in each elective course group, Taylor's (1975) hypothesis is corroborated. Transfer tends to decrease with increasing proficiency.²⁵⁵ There is a clear decrease in the total number of transfer cases from the general course to the advanced. The results show that learners in the general course make 2.6 transfer errors per 100 written words, whereas there are 1.8 errors of this type in the advanced course.

There is a similar pattern within the different courses. Transfer errors are more frequent among the less advanced learners in each course. Looking at the grades given in the courses, this pattern is clearest in the advanced course group. However, even within the general course, transfer errors are more frequent among learners given grades 1 and 2 than among those with grades 3-5. In the advanced course, the number of transfer errors range from

²⁵⁴ The general course was different from the advanced course in degree of difficulty of the texts read, the amount of written work done, general work load and speed. It often concentrated more on oral than written proficiency. It is also important to remember that grades 1-5 were used in all course types. Further, the choice of course was entirely in the hands of the pupil and, thus, strategic moves to attain a higher grade with less effort cannot be disregarded. On the whole, however, it is probably true that the general-course pupils were less proficient, at least as regards grammar, than those attending the advanced course. See also Oscarson (1993:104) and Miliander (1995).

²⁵⁵ Since the unstreamed course includes relatively few learners, this course is not included in the discussion here.

3.5 per 100 words produced by the less proficient learners to virtually no errors of this type among the most proficient ones.

Is there also a difference as regards types of transfer errors among these learners? Table 19.4a displays the three most frequent error areas in the general versus the advanced course, as distributed over learners divided into three groups: grades 1-2, 3 and 4-5, respectively.

Table 19.4a Areas of transfer errors related to final grades in the general and the advanced course.

Course	Grades 1-2		Grade 3		Grades 4-5	
general	articles	25%	prepositions	29%	prepositions	37%
	prepositions	24%	articles	20%	articles	17%
	number	11%	number	10%	number	11%
advanced	prepositions	26%	prepositions	26%	prepositions	28%
	articles	18%	articles	24%	articles	28%
	word order	11%	number	10%	nonfin/trans*	10%

*nonfin/trans = errors related to nonfiniteness and verb transitivity

Looking at the error types this way, we find that prepositions, articles and number seem to account for the most persistent errors in both courses, regardless of proficiency level, as represented by the intervals of given grades. First, preposition errors increase in both courses, although more distinctly so in the general course, from 24% to 37% of the transfer errors in this course. This can be explained by two factors: (1) the sentences are longer in the grade 4-5 group, and (2) the compositions as such tend to be longer in this group. It is likely that, since there is more elaborate language, these compositions contain more prepositional phrases and phrasal verbs. Thus, they are more prone to errors relating to prepositions than the shorter and simpler compositions.

Preposition errors in the general course most frequently involve “literal translation”, like **good on*, (instead of *at*) Sw. *bra på* (section 15.1). In the grades 1-2 group they account for 84% of the cases, mainly relating to the structure V+prep+obj. Among grade 3 compositions, “literal translation” amounts to 67%, and in the grades 4-5 group it has increased to 91%, perhaps a sign of a higher average proficiency in combination with longer compositions and more elaborate language. In both these groups, free prepositions, as opposed to prepositional phrases and prepositional verbs, are involved in the majority of errors. The proportion of preposition errors in the advanced course remains relatively stable at 26-28%. “Literal translation” of

prepositions is in a majority in all three groups, with a slight decrease among compositions given grades 4-5.

Article errors come second in all groups, except for general course grades 1-2, where this type is the most frequent one. One striking fact is that in the general course the proportion of article errors due to transfer decreases from 25% (grades 1-2) through 20% (grade 3) down to 17% (grades 4-5), whereas it increases in the advanced course from 18% to 28%. A closer look at the types of article errors involved reveals that, in the general course, incorrect transfer of the Swedish definite form dominates clearly in 62% of the cases among grades 1-2 and grades 4-5 learners, whereas this type and transfer of the Swedish *ø* article are about equally common in the grade 3 group, 48% and 39%, respectively. In the advanced course the picture is slightly different. Here, grades 1-2 learners display more or less equal figures in transferring the Swedish definite form, 48%, and the *ø* article, 39%, whereas transfer of the Swedish definite form makes up 62% of the errors in the grade 3 group, and 60% in the grade 4-5 group, i.e. there is a slight decrease from grade 3 to grades 4-5.

The third most frequent error area in the general course involves number. In this course type, the proportion of errors is relatively constant around 11%, from the poorer (grades 1-2) to the better learners (grades 4-5). However, in all three groups, the Swedish *ø* plural is most frequently transferred, increasingly so from 64% to 90% of the errors found in this area. In the advanced course, number-related errors come third only among grade 3 learners. Here, the Swedish *ø* plural is responsible for 66% of the errors. Word order errors are more frequent (11%) in grades 1-2, where number accounts for only 7% of the errors. In the grades 4-5 group, nonfiniteness/transitivity errors make up 10%, number errors only 1%. Thus, in the advanced course, plural formation errors are found mainly in the grade 3 group and have almost disappeared in grades 4-5.

Although it is well beyond the scope of this study to thoroughly investigate the gender aspect of errors, some interesting features deserve mention. Genderwise, transfer errors are, on the whole, more or less equally frequent with male and female learners, 45% (n=28) and 55% (n=30), respectively. However, looking at an average in each course type, figures show that female learners seem to make more transfer errors per person and number of words produced than male learners. The total amounts to 4.1 transfer errors per female learner versus 3.2 errors for each male learner. The relevant figures are shown in Table 19.4b:

Table 19.4b Transfer errors per words produced in the different course types in relation to gender.

Course type	Number of male and female learners	Number of transfer errors	Number of errors/learner	Average number of errors/learner
general	m 62	191	3.0	341/93= 3.7
	f 31	150	4.8	
unstreamed	m 7	17	2.4	81/22= 3.7
	f 15	64	4.3	
advanced	m 128	420	3.3	933/256=3.6
	f 128	513	4.0	
unknown	m 4	18	4.5	42/12= 3.5
	f 8	24	3.0	

The total number of transfer errors per learner in each course type drops slightly from 3.7 for general course learners to 3.6 in the advanced course. However, female learners dominate clearly in each course except among those who have not stated any specific elective course.

In the material, six specific transfer areas show notable differences in the distribution with respect to gender. Female learners are responsible for the vast majority of errors of the type **s/he are* (72%), **them who...*, (76%), **there I live for where I live* (80%), **s/he sings good* (69%), **my mother like...* (68%) and **I'm 15 years ø* (89%). The first three are all cases of non-grammatical transfer, discussed in sections 15.3, 15.8 and 15.7, respectively. The three remaining areas involve grammatical transfer in cases where Swedish adjectives and adverbs have the same form (section 15.7), but also subject-verb concord with full verbs (section 15.3) and the English use of the "prop" word *old* (section 15.10). Male learners seem to make most of the non-grammatical errors where transfer of the Swedish indefinite article *en* results in errors like **an disaster* (77%). This is the only error type where there is clear male dominance. These findings are puzzling and merit further investigation.

Thus, transfer errors seem to involve basically the same error areas regardless of elective course and proficiency level and, to a certain extent, gender. Instead, it is their relative proportions within these major areas that may change or vary somewhat. Is there a similar pattern as regards intralingual errors?

The total number of overgeneralisation errors in proportion to the total number of words produced in each elective course group shows a similar kind of decrease in errors between general and advanced course learners. However, the total amount of overgeneralisation is higher than that of transfer

in all courses. In the general course such errors amount to 3.9 errors per 100 words written falling to 2.2 in the advanced course.

The pattern within each course with regard to grades is also similar to that involving transfer, showing a clearly decreasing tendency as regards overgeneralisation in all courses. In the general course, errors are relatively stable at 4 errors per 100 words in the grades 1-3 group. Then there is a decrease to 3.7 errors (grade 4) and a drop to 2.2 errors (grade 5). The pattern is very similar in the advanced course with a steadily decreasing tendency from 3.5 errors (grade 1) to 1.3 errors per 100 words (grade 5). This result is contrary to the findings in both Taylor (1975) and Arabski (1979), where there is an increase in overgeneralisation errors. Taylor explains this by the fact that more advanced learners know more of the target language than elementary learners, who tend to rely more on L1 when problems arise. In both these studies the learners are older than in the present one. Depending on what types of error areas are involved, the decreasing tendency could perhaps suggest that certain grammatical features are beginning to fall into place with increasing proficiency. Table 19.4c illustrates what types of overgeneralisation are most frequent among learners in each course in relation to grades given.

Table 19.4c Areas of overgeneralisation errors related to final grade intervals in the general and the advanced course.

Course	Grades 1-2		Grade 3		Grades 4-5	
general	tense	17%	s-v concord	16%	tense	20%
	articles	17%	tense	15%	number	16%
	prepositions	14%	number	14%	concord	15%
advanced	tense	18%	s-v concord	23%	tense	21%
	number	18%	tense	15%	number	13%
	s-v concord	14%	number	14%	s-v concord	12%
					prepositions	12%

Four areas represent the most frequent overgeneralisation errors. They are, in order of overall frequency: concord, tense, number, and prepositions. The first type, concord, involves problems with subject-verb concord only. It is one of the most frequent error areas in all categories of learners. Including figures from the grades 1-2 group, where concord comes fifth at 10%, i.e. 10 errors per 100 words written. The pattern in the general course ranges from these 10% through 16% (grade 3) to 15% (grades 4-5). Errors are more or less equally common with primary as with full verbs in both courses and in all grade groups, except for the general course grades 1-2, where full verbs account for 73% of the errors and primary verbs for the remaining 27%.

There are too few instances to draw any definite conclusions from these figures, but it could indicate that the less advanced learners avoid these constructions and that more proficient learners use more auxiliary and copula constructions, and so run a greater risk of committing errors (cf. Larsen-Freeman & Strom 1977).

In the general course, tense errors decrease from 17% in the grades 1-2 group to 15% in grade 3, but then increase to 20% in grades 4-5. Within the grade intervals there are also differences. In the grades 1-2 group, overuse of the simple past is most frequent, followed by overuse of the progressive, whereas in the grade 3 group the situation is reversed, overuse of the progressive being more frequent than overuse of the simple past. In both these groups incorrect use of the simple present comes third. Among grades 4-5 learners, excessive use of the progressive is followed by the simple present and the simple past. These errors follow the general pattern of tense mixing (section 16.2). In the advanced course, we find the same tendency as in the general course: first decrease, then increase among errors. Here, the range is from 18% down to 15% and then up to 21%. Within the three groups, tense errors follow the same pattern: the progressive is most frequent, followed by the simple past and the simple present.

Errors relating to number also occur frequently in both course types and at all levels. The majority of errors involve the number distinction relating to nouns. There is a dominance for overuse of the singular for the plural. There is a steady increase in errors of this type in the general course, from 13% (grades 1-2) up to 16% (grades 4-5). The reverse is the case in the advanced course. Number errors apparently decrease as proficiency increases, from 18% (grades 1-2) to 13% (grades 4-5). Among the less proficient learners (grades 1-2) in the general course, all errors occur with nouns, whereas nouns make up 80% of the errors in grade 3 and 87% in grades 4-5. In these two groups, number in pronouns/determiners accounts for the remaining errors, more or less in equal numbers. The advanced learners' errors also mainly involve nouns, but there is a steadily decreasing tendency from 91% (grades 1-2), through 90% (grade 3) to 86% (grades 4-5). Indefinite pronouns/determiners are involved in a majority (grades 1-2, 3) or even in all (grades 4-5) of the remaining errors relating to number in the advanced course.

Prepositions are also among the most frequent overgeneralisation errors. Comparing the two course types, there are similar percentages between the different grade groups, except in the lower grade groups. In the general course preposition errors account for 14% of the errors made by grades 1-2 learners, 10% are found in the grade 3 and 13% in the grades 4-5 group. However, the latter two are not among the three most frequent error

areas. In the advanced course, prepositions make up around 10% in all groups with a slight increase among the grades 4-5 learners. The distribution of errors relating to prepositions and the V±prep+object structure in all groups is 80-85% of the errors relating to PPs and 15-20% to verb complementation structures. This tallies well with the overall distribution between errors involving PPs and V±prep+object (79% and 19%, respectively).

Thus, in cases classified as overgeneralisation the same error areas are involved in all courses and at all levels. There are no striking differences, and the figures are similar to the percentages found in the entire material. As for the gender aspect, however, there are several areas worth mentioning. For instance, there is a clear male dominance in errors involving overgeneralisation of the auxiliaries *be* and *will* (69%), the use of nouns for adjectives (65%) and excessive use of *do* in negations with modals (78%). Female learners more often tend to overuse indefinite pronouns/determiners, especially *some-any* (84%), and conjunctions (64%), as well as having more word order problems (67%), of the kind where overgeneralisation (not transfer) is the explanation. There are also some interesting differences within the more general error areas. For instance, within verb structures, where the overall figures are relatively equal, female learners more frequently have problems with the present perfect structure (64%). They dominate especially in using *have+infinitive*, as in **have win* (69%). There is also a particular female predominance in those verb-related errors where the simple present or the simple past appears instead of other tenses, 67% and 62%, respectively. This could be related to style of writing. Female learners generally write much longer compositions (cf. Table 1.3c), but not generally longer sentences, except for learners in a few particular grade groups in the general and the advanced course. This is discussed in detail in section 1.3.

With simplification, the total number of errors in relation to the number of words produced decreases from 0.7 errors per 100 words in the general course to 0.3 in both the unstreamed and the advanced course. Thus, cases of simplification, like overgeneralisation and transfer cases, show the same falling tendency as proficiency improves, except that the figures are relatively low from the start. This could be a sign that simplification is, on the whole, infrequent after six years of instruction. All in all, the tendency for a decreasing number of errors in relation to proficiency holds for simplification as well as for transfer and overgeneralisation in the general and the advanced courses. Again, the unstreamed course deviates slightly from the pattern. This time the figures are relatively stable around 0.4% from grades 2-4. As mentioned previously, there are no grade 1 or grade 5 compositions in this course. As regards the less proficient learners in the two other courses, there is a significant difference in the number of errors in proportion to production.

Errors in the two course types add up to 1.3% and 1.6%, respectively, but then there is a gap down to 0.8% in the general course and almost nothing, 0.3%, in the advanced course.

Are there any differences in the types of errors as well? Table 19.4d shows the three most frequent error areas in each grade group (there are four areas in the general course grades 4-5):

Table 19.4d Areas of simplification errors related to final grade intervals in the general and advanced courses.

Course	Grades 1-2		Grade 3		Grades 4-5	
general	verb	54%	verb	42%	verb	54%
	pronouns/det	19%	prepositions	24%	prepositions	13%
	conjunctions	12%	conjunctions	16%	pronouns/det	13%
advanced	verb	55%	verb	51%	verb	67%
	conjunctions	21%	conjunctions	24%	prepositions	16%
	prepositions	15%	prepositions	14%	conjunctions	10%

With simplification, as with overgeneralisation, there are four major areas involved in the errors: verbs, prepositions, conjunctions and pronouns/determiners. Starting with the verbs, we find that, on the whole, these errors account for more than half of all the simplification cases in each course and grade group. With the most proficient learners in the advanced course, they even reach 67%. Now, what types of verbs are omitted? Among the general course learners, three structures seem to create most problems: the *would* construction, as in **I like to* for *I would like to*, the copula, as in **it ø a nice place* for **it is a nice place* and future *be going to*, as in *Tomorrow, I am going to...* reduced to **...I ø going to*. Each structure accounts for approximately one third of the simplification errors relating to verbs within each grade group. In the advanced course, the *would* construction makes up one third in the grade 3 and grades 4-5 groups, whereas the verb *have got*, reduced to **got*, is responsible for 28% of grades 1-2 errors and over 40% of the errors among grade 3 learners. This simplification type then falls to 15% with the most proficient learners (grades 4-5) in this course. Omission of the copula is similar in both course types, accounting for around 20% of the verb errors in all grade groups.

The second error area consists in omission of prepositions. In the general course there is a noticeable increase from 8% (grades 1-2) to 24% in

grade 3 followed by a fall to 13% in the grades 4-5 group.²⁵⁶ In the advanced course, the figure is relatively stable at 15% in all grade groups.

The third area of simplification involves conjunctions. In the general course the proportion of errors is lower than in the advanced course, fluctuating around 15% in all three grade groups. In the advanced course the proportion stays around 20-25% with the low proficiency learners (grades 1-2, 3) dropping to 10% in the grade 4-5 group. The fact that there are more conjunction errors in the advanced course could be an indication that more coordination and subordination, i.e. more complex sentence structure, are used at this level. Thus, this area would, gradually, be more prone to errors.

Pronouns/determiners are also open to simplification, but since the instances are sporadic (sometimes only one of each type) it is impossible to discern any particular pattern. However, the overall picture in the general course, where this type of omission comes second in the grades 1-2 and grades 4-5 groups, shows a decrease in errors from 19% to 13%. As for the advanced course, there is an increasing tendency from 3% to 7% among the few omissions found here.²⁵⁷

There are a few interesting gender differences in relation to the simplification cases, e.g. among the pronouns/determiners. These “sins of omission” are mainly found among male learners (73%). In fact, cases of omission of relative, personal and possessive pronouns/determiners are all male errors (100%).

Among all the other simplification errors, there is a fairly equal balance between male and female learners in general error areas. However, looking into subtypes, we find that, e.g., among simplified verb structures, the reduced *-ing* form, as in **I ø singing*, is more frequent with male learners (73%) and so is omission of *have* in *have /got/* or *have /got/ to* (68%). There is another interesting feature in the omission of prepositions, where *to* is the most frequently left out preposition among female learners, as opposed to *in* with male learners.

The instances labelled “blends” in the material (n=50) are also interesting, although very few. James (1998) claims that blends are signs of ignorance rather than signs of knowledge, even though “known” forms are mixed up. Is this a plausible interpretation or is the use of more blends really an indication of more linguistic knowledge or higher language awareness? Surely, in order to be able to use mixed forms, the learner has to be at least

²⁵⁶ Preposition errors are not among the three most frequent areas in the general course mark 1-2. Thus, there are no figures here. In this course, at this mark interval, prepositions come fourth, at 8%.

²⁵⁷ Pronouns/determiners come only fourth and fifth in the advanced course groups; thus, no figures are found in Table 19h.

subconsciously aware of there actually being two similar structures to choose from. In this sense, it would not be surprising to find at least the most complex blends among the more proficient learners. In general terms, however, this is only partly true. First, blends being so few, no firm conclusions can be drawn from the results, even though, some interesting tendencies can be distinguished. In the unstreamed course only three blends have been found, all three in grade 3 material. The two remaining elective course types, advanced and general, account for 72% of all of the blends. In the general course, these errors are most frequent in compositions written by learners given grades 3 and 4, whereas no blends have been found among grade 1 and grade 5 learners. In the advanced course most blends (78%) are found in compositions by grades 2 and 3 learners. Since the level of better learners from the general course often seems to overlap with the lower to average (grades 2-3) learners in the advanced course, this may not be surprising. Furthermore, it may also support the idea that the learners have to be aware of several possible alternative constructions.

There is also a small difference relating to gender. Two types of blends, mixing two L1 structures or one from each language, are more frequent with female learners (58%). The typical "female" errors involve expressions like **a lots of* (79%), and conjunctions (75%), as in **as bad like*. In all the other blends there is a balance between male and female learners.

19.5 Summary

Summing up the discussion in this chapter, the results show some interesting tendencies. First, the four major grammatical error categories (as defined in the present study; cf. Part II) involve verbs, nouns and articles, concord, and prepositions. Within these categories there are certain dominant subtypes: tense mixing, verb complementation and nonfiniteness relating to verbs; definiteness/indefiniteness and number distinction with nouns and articles; subject-verb discord among concord errors; and, among prepositions, replacing one preposition by an incorrect one.

The division into interlingual and intralingual errors shows that 60% of the errors found in the material are intralingual errors, i.e. cases of overgeneralisation, simplification by omission or blends. The remaining 40% of the errors are related to L1 transfer.

Transfer errors are more frequent in less proficient learners, both as regards results between the general and the advanced courses, but also between more proficient and less proficient learners within each course type. The areas of transfer are predictable in the sense that 99% occur in structures

where Swedish and English have different grammatical rules and differences in realisation of structures. In general, simple grammatical structures are involved in the transfer cases, and grammatical transfer is more common than non-grammatical, 71% versus 29%.

The cases of non-grammatical transfer seem to be due to “underdifferentiation” of one form in a set phonologically and/or orthographically closer to the L1 form than the others. This is found in areas involving the indefinite article *a/an* (Sw. ‘en’), the primary verb *are/were* (Sw. ‘är/var’), the pronouns *they/them/those* (*who*) (Sw. ‘de/dom’) and *that* (Sw. ‘det’), the adverbs *there/where* (Sw. ‘där’), and prepositions literally translated from Swedish into English.

Markedness seems to play an important role in transfer errors, and most transfer errors follow the pattern where the L1 unmarked form is incorrectly transferred to the L2, taking the place of the marked L2 form (Sw. ‘läxor’ = Engl. *homework* -> **homeworks*). However, there are also cases indicating that there is a “degree of markedness” rather than a simple binary opposition between unmarked and marked form.

As regards overgeneralisation, the findings show that 50% of the errors found can be attributed to this category. This type of error decreases as the proficiency level becomes higher, both when comparing between different courses, as well as within each course type. As regards these errors, approximately 58% of them are more or less predictable: as with the transfer cases there are differences in rules and their realisation between Swedish and English. However, this predictability only relates to the areas where there might be problems, not to what types of errors will occur (as is the case with transfer). These errors mainly involve instances where there is no L1 equivalent or where there are split forms, i.e. according to the L11= L21, L22, L23... formula (Sw. ‘som’ = Engl. *who, which, that*). Further, 40% of the intralingual errors occur where there is identity between L1 and L2 rules (section 14.4), i.e. both rules and realisation coincide, but, for some reason, in these cases the expected positive transfer does not materialize. This type can be exemplified by e.g. tense errors. These are unpredictable errors.

Maximization accounts for 26% of the overgeneralisation errors, involving marked forms such as the progressive, *do*-support and the 3rd person singular verb form. These forms are likely to be seen as typical English features, especially since they do not exist in Swedish, and thus they are frequently overused. In the sense of being “particularly English”, this type of overuse resembles cases of underdifferentiation of certain members in a set.

In cases where there is no phonological or orthographic correspondence between L1 and L2 forms, underdifferentiation results, not in

transfer, but in overgeneralisation. This may explain another 18% of the overgeneralisation errors. The form that is overused is not the one closest to the corresponding L1 form, as with transfer, instead it seems that a form perceived as the "standard equivalent" is chosen — a kind of "psychological markedness" seems to be at play (e.g. *it-there*, as in *It is a dog in the garden*). Thus, there are indications pointing in the direction of markedness being a useful notion in explaining why overgeneralised structures generally seem to be more marked than the correct, expected form.

The last two types of intralingual errors, simplification and blends, are relatively small in comparison with transfer and overgeneralisation. Simplification — in this study restricted to the omission of grammatical words — involves mainly verbs, conjunctions, prepositions and pronouns/determiners. The main results show that 8% of the errors are accounted for by simplification by omission. Omission of parts resulting in, e.g., the "reduced" progressive, future *be going to* and *have got /to/*, generally involves marked L2 forms. Simplification, which can be seen as a type of "minimization"(similar to child language), is most frequent in the poorer learners.

As regards blends, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions based on the relatively few instances found. However, a few tendencies can be seen. First, blends are rare in the material and sometimes difficult to single out from overgeneralisation and simplification. However, 44% are fairly clear cases of mixing of two obviously known but not yet fully acquired forms, most of them cases like **to listening* or **a lots of*.

On the whole, the findings show that the most frequent error areas are found among learners in all course types and the subtypes differ only marginally. Transfer errors in general decrease as proficiency increases. However, transfer errors of some specific types increase in the "better" learners within each course, e.g. articles and prepositions with advanced-course learners, or articles with general-course learners. One reason could be that the more proficient a learner becomes, the more sophisticated his/her language becomes, i.e. more complex and advanced structures are used. In this sense the more proficient learners may be more error-prone, since they tend to take greater risks. There is also a gender aspect related to this. Female learners tend to write longer compositions, generally with more complex sentence structure, and thus run a greater risk of committing specific errors involving, e.g., verb structures, coordination/subordination and word order.

More research is needed in order to draw firm conclusions from the tendencies indicated here. Naturally there are also a number of pedagogical implications related to the results. These are dealt with in the following chapter.

20 Pedagogical implications

20.1 Introductory

At this point, it may be useful to recall what goals for English should be achieved by the end of the ninth year, according to the Swedish comprehensive school curriculum (section 1.1). It seems that the main focus at this level of English instruction is on oral proficiency. The specific directions for written proficiency in *Lgr80* (the old curriculum) say that the purpose of grammar studies is for learners “to be able to express themselves clearly and correctly in English” (*Lgr80*; p. 78, my translation), whereas *Lpo94* (the new curriculum) settles for more modest requirements: learners should be “able to express themselves *fairly correctly* in writing, e.g. in messages and simple letters” (cf. *Lpo94*, pp 17-18, my translation, emphasis added). This indicates a downgrading of “correctness” in writing, a difference in requirements which is further discussed later on. Now, how well does the actual performance match the stipulated objectives in the curricula?

Reports on the results in NU92 and UG95 state that, on the whole, most learners’ achievements at this level are in accordance with the goals formulated, i.e. writing in simple forms (cf. Oscarson 1993, Miliander 1995, Dahlgren & Leoj 1997). However, all three studies point out that, although most learners are able to follow the instructions given, describe themselves and argue their case in simple language, it does not necessarily follow that what they produce is grammatically correct. In fact, Oscarson (1993:117) says that learners have problems even in expressing themselves “*fairly correctly*” (emphasis added) in messages and letters.

Do the findings in these reports and those in the present study have any implications for learners’ achievement of “communicative competence”? This is also discussed in section 20.2. The term itself is only used once in *Lpo94* and, for the age group relevant to this study, such competence will be achieved by putting gradually increasing weight on grammatical structures and more formal training in order to “develop formal confidence as well as the ability to vary the language in terms of vocabulary, phrases and sentence construction” (cf. *Lpo94*, p 17, my translation).

What, then, is implied by the central notion of “communicative competence”, in general as well as in this study? This is another question dealt with in section 20.2. In relation to this, another issue arises, especially relevant to the results of this investigation: what errors may impair communication, more or less seriously? In order to attempt to answer this question, an evaluation of the gravity of the errors found in this investigation

is necessary, at least in general terms. Are all errors equally serious? Should different error types be treated differently? Possibly, some of them could simply be disregarded. This leads on to a section on how to deal with grammatical errors. There is also a variety of suggestions in the literature on ways to remedy errors, if at all possible. Does instruction really help? Is there a place for feedback and correction? Does teaching “language awareness” help learners to succeed better in learning and using a second language? This is a point hinted at in *Lpo94*, where one goal to “strive towards” (Sw. ‘strävansmål’) is that learners “should learn to analyse, adapt and improve their language towards greater variation and formal confidence” (p. 16, my translation). This may be taken to mean that simply “learning the language” is not enough but should, to some degree at least, be combined with “learning about the language”. In looking for answers to these questions let us first look into the notion of “communicative competence”.

20.2 Communicative competence

What does communicative competence stand for, in general, and, for the purpose of this study, in terms of writing, in particular? Is it not true that the more correct a written piece is, the easier it is to read and understand, and that, therefore, the reader is more affected by the text? Johansson (1978:6) states that in conversation, whether written or spoken, it is important that, in order for it “[t]o be communicatively effective, the message must get across swiftly and unambiguously and without undue demands upon the receiver”. Discussing the relation in teaching between oral versus written communication, Rivers (1994:336), cited in Lehmann (1999:148), says that “for efficient communication (in speech and writing) we need to pay attention to both” types.

So how should communicative competence be interpreted? The difference in interpretation of the term is confusing. In fact, the term is often misinterpreted, taken to be something very distinct from accuracy (cf. Little 1994, Ohlander 1999a, Svartvik 1999). Many have taken it to refer to flexibility and creativity in the sense that simply “getting the meaning across” is enough (cf. Savignon 1983, Rivers 1994:333). Why is it that very often it seems that “communicative competence” is seen as opposed to “formal accuracy” (cf. Hammerly 1991, Tornberg 1997, Lehmann 1999), i.e. implying a shift from “form” to “content”? Why should one exclude the other (cf. Widdowson 1990)? As regards foreign language teaching in the early 1980s, the “no-grammar-needed” interpretation seems to have been very common among teachers, both in Scandinavia and elsewhere (cf. Higgs &

Clifford 1982, Malmberg 1985, Little 1994, Master 1994, Lehmann 1999). For instance, there is a tendency to play down the importance of grammatical accuracy in the grading of the compositions in the Swedish National Assessment Tests. In the NU92 assessment guidelines, teachers are thus reminded that “linguistic shortcomings (grammar and spelling) *generally affect comprehension* but should be *played down* in the total assessment” (Oscarson 1993:96, my translation, emphasis added). The UG95 instructions do not explicitly say anything about this but the assessment criteria used emphasize the importance of communicative ability and willingness to use the language rather than accuracy in keeping with the intentions of the curriculum. Dahlgren and Leoj (1997:44) state that a majority of the participants are “able to give good written information concerning a topic interesting for young people, *even if there are a good number of serious linguistic errors*” (my translation, emphasis added). The question is why linguistic errors should be toned down if they affect comprehension and, thus, the communicative ability of students. Comprehension, if anything, would seem to be crucial to the communication process.

Hymes (1971), introducing the term “communicative competence” in the 1970s, argued that merely *linguistic* competence in the Chomskyan sense, involving formal accuracy, was not enough; communicative competence also entailed appropriateness in a given situation. Swain (1985:248-9) also points to the importance of several components making up comprehensible output:

“Simply getting one’s message across can and does occur with grammatically deviant forms and sociolinguistically inappropriate language. Negotiating meaning needs to incorporate the notion of being pushed toward the delivery of a message that is not only conveyed, but that is conveyed precisely, coherently and appropriately.”

A good example pointing to the close relation between appropriateness and accuracy can be found in expressions involving politeness. The most basic, getting-the-message-across form for asking someone to sit down would be *Sit down!*. However, this would not be appropriate if you were trying to be friendly and polite. Instead, a more elaborate form, e.g., *Would you like to sit down?*, requiring grammatical as well as pragmatic knowledge, is necessary. Ellis (1994:696) says that most models of communicative competence proposed today “recognize that it entails both linguistic competence (for example, knowledge of grammatical rules) and pragmatic competence (for example, knowledge of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour in a particular situation)”. Canale & Swain (1980) define it as consisting of three

parts: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence. Modifications and elaborations of this model have then been proposed, not only by Canale (1983) himself, but also by others (cf. Littlewood 1981, Bachman 1990). In order to get a complete picture of communication, it is important to include all the necessary ingredients, i.e. grammatical (or formal) accuracy cannot be excluded from communicative competence (cf. Ljung & Ohlander 1992). Instead, the conclusion is obvious: the command of grammar is an integral part of communicative competence, as becomes especially apparent whenever communication is disrupted or disturbed by insufficient command of grammar. In the Swedish comprehensive school syllabi there is no definition given to the concept "communicative competence". Instead, the term "språkfärdighet" (Engl. *language proficiency*) is used (cf. Tornberg 1997:42). This "ability" should be the goal for language learning (cf. Lpo94). The *effects* of grammatical inaccuracy on communication are further discussed in the following section.

20.3 Error evaluation

The fact that there are more category errors (93%) than realisation errors (7%), indicating that the choice of grammatical category generates more errors than knowing how a specific category should be realised in a specific context, leads on to the pedagogical implications of this result. In order to find out whether communication functions as intended by the writers, in spite of the errors made, we have to investigate how different error types affect the message. First it is important to discuss the errors in terms of gravity. One important distinction involves the difference between spoken and written language. As van Lier (1995:88) puts it, "speech and writing have their own characteristics, and are appropriate for different purposes and situations". Spoken errors have a different effect than written errors, mainly due to the type of media involved. In conversation there is cooperation and negotiation, as well as time for immediate correction between the interlocutors, whereas writing generally presupposes a delayed reception (cf. Shepherd 1978, Celce-Murcia 1992, Carter & McCarthy 1995, Lehmann 1999).

If errors are serious enough, misunderstandings will arise or, even worse, there will be a complete communication breakdown. An obvious negative effect in such cases is that the errors may give a bad impression of the writer, or they can even be socially stigmatizing, e.g. in ordinary letters, letters of application, CV's, essays, written tests, or even when using the Internet (cf. Tomiyana 1980, Eisenstein 1983). On the other hand, errors may lead to grammatically unacceptable sentences which, nevertheless, may be

correctly interpreted by the reader, thanks to semantic and pragmatic/situational factors. As several previous studies have shown, it seems that most NNS errors do not impair communication completely (cf. Stenström 1975, Olsson 1977, Chastain 1980). However, irritation on the part of NS can cause loss of interest not only in the actual message, but in the writer as well. That is, too much effort on the part of the listener/reader may have a negative effect on his/her attitude, so that communication, in a wider sense, will suffer.

In order to deal with errors, it is vital to understand what to concentrate on. What errors are most damaging to communication and in what way? A number of studies have tried to pinpoint how errors affect readers/listeners (cf., e.g., Corder 1967, Olsson 1974 & 1977, Johansson 1978). Hughes and Lascartou (1982) found that NNSs tend to mark for accuracy while NSs mark for intelligibility, and that the former are less lenient in their evaluations. Differences in marking between NS and NNS are also reported in other studies where the general conclusion seems to be that, in general, NNSs are more severe in their judgements of learner language than are NSs (cf. James 1977, Davies, E 1983, Sheorey 1985, Fayer & Krasinski, 1987; Santos, 1988; McCretton & Rider, 1993). However, in Kobayashi's (1992) study, English NSs were stricter about grammaticality than Japanese NNSs regarding ESL compositions. Some reports show that there are differences between how NSs and NNSs evaluate errors as regards degree of gravity (e.g. James, 1977; Hughes & Lascartou, 1982), whereas others state that the ranking order is very similar (e.g. McCretton & Rider, 1993). In different studies different hierarchies of acceptability or degree of irritation have been used to establish NSs reactions. In many of these studies, specific error areas have been dealt with: concord (Thagg-Fisher, 1985), the passive voice (Olsson, 1977), the VP and the NP (Stenström, 1975). However, it is important to point out that it is impossible to establish a definite hierarchy (cf. Albrechtsen et al, 1980), since evaluation of errors is a highly subjective matter. "The same error may be evaluated very differently depending on who made it and where, when and how it was made" (Ellis, 1994:67). Tran-Chi-Chau (1975) takes a similar stand, saying that acceptability tests "are not perfect procedures as [they involve] subjective judgements" (cf. also Chastain, 1980; Davies, E 1983). This sounds reasonable enough. However, it is also important to remember that this is probably the way most L2 speakers are judged/received by NSs, since reactions and responses to communication necessarily involve highly subjective views and feelings.

Ideally, then, the errors found in the present material should have been assessed by NSs. Such an undertaking, however, has not been possible within the more limited scope of this investigation. Instead, the question of error

evaluation is addressed more indirectly, by way of findings in other studies, dealing with both oral and written data, applying their results to the error types found in the present material. Only suggested hierarchies concerning grammatical errors have been considered.

Oscarson (1993) states that, unfortunately, the errors found in NU92 are not insignificant since they not only disturb communication but are sometimes also likely to lead to misunderstanding. This indicates degrees of gravity rather than a simple binary opposition "correct = intelligible" v. "incorrect = unintelligible", i.e. total communication breakdown (cf. Johansson, 1978). James (1998) uses the term "miscommunication" (MCM) for errors that are intelligible but lead to a nonintended interpretation, as opposed to "noncommunication", i.e. unintelligibility. Now, what errors are the most damaging to communication in the material investigated?

A number of studies report that, among grammatical errors, verb-related errors seem to cause most irritation in NSs' judgements (e.g. Stenström, 1975; Johansson, 1975c, 1978; James, 1977; Tomiyana, 1980; McCretton & Rider, 1993). Error types within this group involve verb complementation, verb forms, concord and tense errors (cf. Stenström, 1975; Johansson, 1975c, 1978; James, 1977; McCretton & Rider, 1993). Stenström (1975) also found that written verb errors were judged worse than spoken ones. The verb errors in the present study make up the majority of all errors (25%) and most belong to the areas just mentioned. Adding up all verb-related errors from Chapter 5 (877 errors) to the errors involving subject-verb concord in Chapter 11 (453 errors), these areas make up 1330 instances, i.e. they constitute more than one third of all the errors found. Out of these verb errors, time and tense (section 5.2) account for 39%, subject-verb concord (section 11.2) 34% and verb complementation (section 5.7) for 16% of the errors. Tense errors (sections 5.2, 15.9, 16.2) disrupt continuity across clauses and as such can be referred to as "global" errors (cf. Tomiyana, 1980). Global errors refer to errors that affect clauses (e.g. word order, tense, coordination, etc.) whereas local errors affect smaller units (e.g. verb and noun inflections, and articles). "Students must control global grammar in order to be easily understood, while it is possible to communicate successfully without controlling local grammar" (Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982:192-3). On the other hand, if learners do not control local grammar, they run the risk of "being judged less competent", resulting in less value given to the message and less regard as an individual. In this sense, communication is in fact impaired, but, as pointed out by, e.g., Santos (1987), the distinction between global and local errors may not be the best way to define errors (cf. Zalewski, 1993). Applying Burt & Kiparsky's (1975) distinction between "global" and "local" errors, Dulay, Burt & Krashen (1982:192ff) also suggest that the

former type is more destructive to communication. However, as Zalewski (1993) notes, "local morphology may be the source of information which is crucial not simply to efficient but to successful text processing". Further, as regards local errors, Celce-Murcia (1985), cited in Zalewski's (1993:695) report, found that trained judges reacted very negatively to "such minor but frequent [morphological] errors in surface grammar", resulting in rejected compositions.

Errors involving subject-verb concord account for 34% of all the verb related errors found in the material (Ch. 11, sections 15.3 and 16.1). An overwhelming majority of them are of the type referred to as "extremely objectionable items" in Thagg-Fisher's (1985) hierarchy of error gravity. As regards subject-verb concord in particular, she concludes that, since this type of error is "frequent, nonnativelike and severely condemned by native informants... there can be no compromising with such basic, mechanical concord rules" (p. 187). In consequence, these errors should be "emphasized in teaching" and "penalized in tests" (p. 191). Verb complementation errors are also seen as serious by NS judges, especially those that give rise to misunderstandings of the type *John stopped to smoke* versus *John stopped smoking* or *I hate written letters* versus *I hate to write/writing letters*. The first type is a relatively frequent error area among nonfinite verb errors in the material.

Noun-related errors make up the second largest error area in the material, 22%, and can also be seen as serious. Zalewski (1993), arguing that there is a continuum rather than a dichotomy as regards global versus local errors, shows that errors involving number and person and, to a certain extent, determiners, can be seen as global at the discourse level (although according to Burt & Kiparsky (1975) they are local errors at sentence level). This type of error can lead to loss of information. In this group of errors, those involving, e.g., internal NP concord, discussed in Chapter 11 in this study, are also included.

In Stenström (1975:40), incorrect use of articles is a feature reported as intolerable by NS judges, especially if they "lead to confusion, as in: *I hit the head*". This specific type is marginal in the material but problems with articles in relation to generic reference and noncounts are very frequent (Ch. 4). It has also been suggested that using the marked instead of the correct unmarked form, as in **an book* for *a book*, is judged as more serious errors than the reverse, **a orange* for *an orange* (cf. Tomiyana, 1988). This is also a type of article error found in the material.

These two types of error areas are generally regarded as the most serious by NS judges. However, other errors may also give rise to irritation or negative reactions. For instance, Olsson (1977) found that the more errors

there are in a sentence, the more intelligibility is impaired. Albrechtsen *et al.* (1980:34) say that "all errors are equally irritating" and that "irritation is directly predictable from the number of errors regardless of the error type or other linguistic aspects".

Excluding those sentences in the material investigated where there are no grammatical errors, there is 1.1 grammatical error (as defined in this study) in each sentence.²⁵⁸ Lexical and orthographic errors are generally regarded as even more irritating than grammatical ones, especially by NNSs (cf. Olsson, 1973; Khalil, 1985). When, in the present study, such errors are added on top of the grammatical ones, the result is 21.1 lexical/ orthographic errors + 1.1 grammatical error, i.e. 22.2 errors per sentence where errors were detected.²⁵⁹ This has to be seen in relation to the average sentence being approximately 12 words long (section 1.3).

Another perspective is taken by looking at the "operations" – substitution, addition, omission – involved in the errors (Ch. 13). Tomiyana (1980) reports that NS judges found it "easier to deal with insertion than with omission or wrong choice errors". Insertion is referred to as addition in the present study, and "wrong choice" would be the equivalent of substitution of the correct item by an incorrect one. Thus, according to Tomiyana's model, addition errors would be less serious than omission and substitution errors. In the present material, addition errors account for 5% of the errors, whereas substitution makes up 84% and omission 11%. Thus the majority of the errors found are considered to be of the serious kind in this respect, too. Furthermore, most substitution cases, 39%, involve the VP, followed by NP errors at 39%, and most omission cases are VP-related, 36%. Thus, again, the most serious error areas appear in the groups generally considered the most damaging to communication, one way or another.

Moreover, Hughes & Lascartou (1982) found that transfer errors were more severe than others, at least in NS judgements. These types of errors are generally less severely judged by NNSs. This can probably be explained by the simple fact that a native speaker who does not have the learner's L1 background is unable to make the necessary comparison with the learner's L1 to infer the intended or likely meaning. Transfer errors make up 40% of the errors found. Furthermore, 22% of the most serious verb errors, and 53% of the noun- and article-related errors are transfer errors. Thus, L1 transfer creates more problems than other error types.

²⁵⁸ 'Sentence' in this study also refers to what may here be considered a sentence in view of the frequent lack of punctuation in this material. There are a total of 6059 sentences, out of which 2921 contain no grammatical errors as defined in this study (cf. the discussion in Chapter 2).

²⁵⁹ Lexical and orthographic errors are thus in an overwhelming majority.

Summing up, the errors most important to focus on seem to be those involving verbs, nouns and determiners. To most teachers of English this is no news. These are also the areas especially pointed out in textbooks and grammars. Relatively early, verb patterns and the basic concord system are introduced to learners. The results in this study suggest that these are also the most persistent error areas. The question, then, is: why is teaching not more successful?

To sum up, the result of this investigation shows that there are a large number of errors, quite a few of which would be regarded as serious by native as well as nonnative speakers, because they impair communication or simply because they make the learner appear less competent and reliable. This leads on to the question of whether instruction and feedback could help to remedy these errors. Could some methods of instruction yield better results than others? Should feedback be given and errors be corrected, and, if so, in what way? These and some related questions are dealt with in the following section.

20.4 Instruction and feedback

Having established what types of errors seem to cause most problems in communicating a message, it is important to decide whether or not to do something about them. The question whether or not feedback (in different forms) helps to minimize or remedy learner errors is a much debated issue. Some scholars have indeed come to the conclusion that neither feedback nor instruction helps to any great extent (cf. Felix, 1981; Krashen, 1982). Thus, having stated that transfer is not a significant factor in L2 learning, Dulay, Burt & Krashen (1982:5) go on to say:

“Another surprising finding was that correcting students’ grammatical errors seems to produce little improvement. Correction may of course serve other important purposes such as helping students and their parents feel that the teacher is earning her pay or providing the basis for a grade. Research suggests, however, that teachers need not bring every error to the attention of the learner for fear the error will become a habit.”

However, most recent studies have found that instruction does indeed make a difference and that feedback in different forms is useful (cf. Ellis, 1990; Carroll, Swain & Roberge, 1992; Tonkyn, 1994; Ohlander, 1999a), and, generally, wanted by students (cf. Cathcart & Olsen, 1976; Dam, 1989; Leki 1991; Ferris, 1995). Higgs & Clifford (1982) suggest that “grammarless

instruction could lead to fossilization". The hypothesis that instruction would hinder fossilization or pidginization is supported by the results in Harley (1993) and Pica (1994).

It is also important to point out that, as Ellis (1985:215) puts it, "the acquisition that results from teaching may not be immediate", i.e. delayed learning is not unusual. This means that results might not be measurable in immediate connection with instruction until later on (cf. Schmidt, 1990); Ruin, 1996)

Now, assuming that instruction does help, what kind of instruction is recommended, and when? Pienemann (1985:23) says that instruction is useful but that the studies of "acquisition order" should tell us not to teach certain items before the previous stages have been acquired. This resembles Hammerly's (1991:86) ideas:

"Some people encourage SL students to be 'creative' and to engage in what I have called *linguistic adventurism*. But if one is 'creative' with a complex tool one doesn't control, and one's misuse of the tool is not promptly corrected, one will develop poor tool-handling habits. The SL classroom does not and cannot offer students the kind and amount of feedback that allows NL or even many SL acquirers in the field to be linguistically creative while becoming linguistically accurate. In the classroom, if linguistic accuracy is not part of all activities from the start, and if linguistic creativity is not restricted to the creative use of what the students know of the language, not much accuracy will develop."

However, in most teaching groups, especially mixed-level classes, this kind of approach poses a problem, since learners are bound to be at different acquisition stages. Therefore, most creative exercises would always be problematic to at least some of the learners. It is therefore important to strike some kind of balance between communication practice and exercises more related to grammatical accuracy and appropriateness (cf. Littlewood, 1981; Spada, 1987). This also implies different techniques for strictly communicative creative exercises and more controlled ones. Both content and form should be attended to (cf. VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993). Being "creative" does not mean "anything goes" vis-à-vis accuracy, but the feedback given should concentrate more on discourse matters.

Instruction does not seem to change the *order* of acquisition of grammatical morphemes but it can affect the *speed* with which they are learnt (cf. Fathman, 1975; Perkins & Larsen-Freeman, 1975; Krashen *et al.*, 1978). Further, Doughty's (1991) study seems to indicate that the teaching of

marked structures will have a favourable effect on the corresponding unmarked structures, thus providing shortcuts to learning.

The question of instruction leads on to *feedback*, which can be both positive (acknowledgement, agreement) or negative (e.g. correction of errors, questioning, signs of misunderstanding). It seems that instruction and feedback relating to grammar is more controversial than for pronunciation and vocabulary. One reason could be that it is much more obvious to the learner that the risk of being misunderstood is imminent if words like *bin-bean-been* are mispronounced or if there are misspellings of words like *how-who*, *which-wish-witch*, *their-there*, or *her-here-hear-hair* in a text. However, communication may suffer even more from obvious grammatical errors, and correction is one step on the way towards becoming aware of what is wrong and why the message was misunderstood.

There are different ways of giving feedback and also different times to give it. In what way and when is feedback useful? A number of studies have shown that correction is not wrong provided it is given at the right moment and in the right way in order to help the learner, not to intimidate him/her. Correction should be non-threatening and immediate in order for it to be most effective (cf. Lalande, 1982; James, 1998). This can be achieved through an open attitude: errors are a natural part of the learning process, something to be learnt from rather than an "excuse" for mere criticism or punishment (cf. Edge, 1989; Hendrickson, 1980). This is a crucial point: if learners are used to feedback they will not react negatively to it, and they will probably be more perceptive and aware of form and style of language than if they have never been corrected. It is partly from our mistakes we learn - provided we get feedback revealing how the message was received. If no correction is given, the learner may simply assume either that the erroneous utterance is accurate, or that, in case of several grammatical structures being optional in the L1, similar rules involving a choice between forms apply to the L2. Such incorrect hypotheses may lead to "fossilization" (cf. Selinker 1972, Higgs & Clifford 1982).

It is important, however, to recognize that correcting every error at all times can be counter-productive (cf. George, 1972; Hendrickson, 1978). This suggestion is also found in Dulay, Burt and Krashen's statement quoted previously (p. 282). Correction should focus on different aspects (meaning, structure, appropriateness, etc.), when suitable, but it should always be systematic and clear (cf. Zamel, 1985; Leki, 1991). Hendrickson (1981b:44) states that a good feedback strategy entails correction of different error types at different levels, and, as Littlewood (1981:91) argues, it is "important for the teacher to monitor the kind of feedback that his learners receive, from himself or from others, so that it supports the methodological purpose of the

activity". Also, it is important, or even vital, that learners appreciate feedback as being a resource, a "guidance towards *the next step*" (Dam, 1989:18). Identification and correction of errors are examples of negative feedback, but, as Schachter (1984) showed, so are "confirmation checks, clarification requests and failures to understand" on the receiver's part, especially in conversation. This shows that explicit as well as implicit correction is helpful and will direct the learner toward correctness and thus to a solid communicative competence. This would also fit in with consciousness-raising activities striving towards language awareness, discussed in section 20.5. Such activities, in turn, are also suitable for a "learner autonomy" approach.

Correction is thus necessary to promote certain types of language awareness. Now, what errors should be corrected? Hendrickson (1978:392) suggests three types: those that impair communication significantly, those that have highly stigmatizing effects on the listener or reader, and those that are very frequent. Virtually all of the verb- and noun-related errors found in the present study fall into one or several of these categories. What types of feedback would be most useful as a remedy for these errors? Fotos (1993) suggests that transfer errors can be reduced by "noticing" activities. Here CA may be assigned a role in predicting what areas might cause problems. Overuse of the progressive form and *do*-support would also very likely benefit from this type of activity. Tense problems, on the other hand, are probably more due to lack of writing practice, not only in the L2 but perhaps also in the L1, since these overgeneralisation errors may indicate that command of tense distinctions is poor in the L1 as well. Knowing the basics in your L1 is vital before moving on to a second language (cf. Stendahl 1973, James 1998).

Summing up, since many grammatical errors are clearly serious from the point of view of communication, instruction and feedback focussing on areas that are grammatically different in L1 and L2, and where errors can lead to misunderstanding or communicative failure, may pave the way for and thus promote language awareness. Gass (1991:137) argues that "before a change in one's grammar can come about there has to be an awareness that there are changes which *need* to be made". The learner may have to be made aware of the mismatch between her/his interlanguage (IL) structures and those of the target language. This can be done through sensible guidance from a competent teacher. The question of awareness is further discussed in the following section.

20.5 Language awareness and consciousness-raising

Language awareness (LA) is a notion that has been in use since the 1980s in the field of language learning and teaching (cf. Hawkins 1987). In Sweden, however, there has been fairly little discussion in this area until recently (cf. Ohlander 1999). There are different interpretations as to the meaning of this notion. Five domains in which LA can be useful have been suggested by James & Garrett (1991:12): (1) the affective domain, (2) the social domain, (3) the “power” domain, (4) the cognitive domain, and (5) the performance domain. All five domains seem to be applicable on both first and second/foreign language learning. The first, refers to the effect on learners’ attitudes and attention to language, as well as the raising of their curiosity about language, i.e. a general interest in language as a means of communication. LA is thus used as a means of raising the consciousness about “the nature of language” as a whole and its “role in human life” (cf. James & Garrett 1991:4-5). Next, awareness of language in a multi-lingual society could act as a means of improving relations between ethnic groups, creating understanding and tolerance both towards minority languages and towards the majority language within a school or a multi-cultural community. In the power domain, language would be looked upon as a possible instrument of manipulation, used by governments, bureaucracy, media, the Church, etc. Raised awareness in this field would then make the language user able to recognize and filter manipulative messages. The fourth domain involves the study of language at a metalinguistic level, i.e. talking *about* language as a system, e.g., grammar. Finally, language awareness is related to the actual linguistic competence or language proficiency where it could possibly lead to overall improved linguistic performance. Halliday *et al.* (1971, cited in Hawkins 1987:73) conclude that “awareness” and “competence” are closely linked and that the aim of these two notions is to make learners aware of “what language is and how it is used and, at the same time extend their competence in using it”.

Language awareness also seems to be crucial if the learner is to be able to do anything about linguistic errors, i.e. to restructure her/his language (cf. McLaughlin 1990, Batstone 1994). Grammar instruction of different types may trigger such awareness. Error correction is another means which, like instruction, can be used to focus on some features that are particularly problematic for learners. Thus, there are several different ways of drawing the learner’s attention to form, i.e. becoming conscious of the language (cf. Rutherford & Sharwood Smith 1985, Rutherford 1987). Consciousness-

raising (CR) through "focus on form", e.g. through task-based learning²⁶⁰ (TBL) or grammar lessons and feedback (positive and/or negative), are activities that may lead to the noticing of grammatical structures and their use in context. Schmidt (1990:129) suggests that noticing can in fact "convert input to intake" (cf. Ellis 1990). If this is so, then consciousness-raising activities would definitely promote learning (cf. Rutherford & Sharwood Smith 1985). Noticing may be induced by teacher-fronted formal instruction and/or grammar tasks done in groups, e.g., through exercises involving error-spotting, grammar games and so on (cf. Fotos 1993). At a more advanced level CR is then likely to turn into a wider kind of language awareness. Another positive result to be gained from CR activities is that they seem "to have durability" (cf. Ellis 1992:288), i.e. these activities appear to have long-term effects (Doughty 1991), although possibly with a certain delay.

As a result of these steps learner autonomy (cf. Eriksson & Miliander 1991, Thavenius 1990, 1991; Tholin 1992) may be promoted, i.e. learners take responsibility for and become aware of their own language learning. This is in line with the recommendations in the 1994 curriculum (cf. *Lpo94*, 1994). Learner autonomy here does not mean that the learner is left to her/his own devices to find things out, but rather that, through careful guiding, s/he will gradually learn to learn and thus to become responsible for her/his own learning both in and outside school. Then we can really talk about the teacher being a "door-opener" (Tornberg 1997) to knowledge. In order to close, or at least narrow, the perceived gap between what is taught ("input") and what is learnt ("intake"), Nunan (1995) suggests a "learner-centered" approach to pedagogy. This entails working through steps on a continuum as regards both content and process in the L2 classroom. The continuum includes five steps, gradually moving from *awareness* to *involvement* through *intervention* and *creation* to *transcendence* (cf. Nunan 1995). Moving along this continuum then means moving towards increasing "learner autonomy" interpreted as responsible language learning.

The best argument in favour of CR and LA seems to be that they facilitate language learning as such. Being aware of language functions and grammatical patterns appears to boost language development, both as regards acquisition rate and quantity. Furthermore, some areas reported to benefit from CR activities relate to tense and aspect and also transfer and overgeneralisation errors seem to be positively affected (cf. Harley & Swain 1984, Carroll & Swain 1993, Yip 1994, Pica 1994). These are very frequent error types in the present study, which suggests that CR and LA could have a

²⁶⁰ See e.g. Crookes & Gass (1993a, 1993b), Foster & Skehan (1996) and Willis (1996) for a detailed discussion of task-based learning (TBL).

role to play. Yip (1994) sums it up nicely, stating that “in light of both empirical results and learnability considerations, certain areas of grammar call for some form of grammatical instruction, to which C-R can be an effective approach”. The results of interviews with teachers in Oscarson’s report (1999) show that many teachers do not know how to combine the ideas of a communicative approach and learner autonomy with attention to form if they are to achieve the goals in the curriculum. However, it seems that process-writing, problem-solving and task-based as well as structure-based activities are well worth exploring in order to raise learners’ awareness of language form *and* function.

Thus, CR and LA are necessary but not the only means for second language acquisition. In the light of this, CR/LA activities, in combination with other, more “communicative” exercises, appear to be useful tools helping the language user navigate the deep linguistic seas.

20.6 Some further pedagogical aspects

Why is it that the teaching of the most error prone areas is not more successful? It seems that, in general, the grammar sections in the textbooks/workbooks used do cover, if not all, at least most of these areas. Further research into how exercises are sequenced and possible connections to actual intake is needed if we are to draw any conclusions. This could be related to the learnability/ teachability hypotheses (cf. Pienemann 1985, & 1987, Spada & Lightbown 1993, Williams & Evans 1998, Lightbown 1998), which might shed some light on why some errors areas are so persistent. Is it possible that learners have not yet reached the developmental stages involved in, e.g., using the progressive or zero article correctly. Again, this implies a need for monitoring the individual development of the learners because, after all, they should not be regarded as beginners after six years of study. Also, they are on the borderline area between child and adult learners. More research is needed in this area, too. Ellis (1990:172) points to another important aspect, arguing that the failure to learn in spite of formal instruction “may reflect a failure in the *kind* of instruction offered rather than in formal instruction *per se*”, i.e. learners may respond differently to different kinds of instruction. This hypothesis seems to be corroborated by the studies mentioned in section 20.4 and Yip’s (1994) conclusion cited earlier that there are certain areas of grammar where consciousness-raising of some kind could help (section 20.5).

It is also important to remember the “delayed effect” (Ellis, 1990) of teaching, where input may turn into intake at a later stage, i.e. what is taught

at one point in time is perhaps not mastered until later on. This means that even if learners are not always "ready" for the items taught, they may be "able to make use of the information they received through instruction at a later time" (Ellis, 1994:621).

Learners' L1 competence also seems to play an important part in learning a L2. Being aware of how the first language functions can facilitate the understanding of other linguistic systems from many different angles, such as stylistic code and appropriateness as well as grammaticality. General linguistic awareness is important (cf. Stendahl, 1973; Oscarson, 1993), especially since learners' ability to analyse, adapt and improve their language is one of the goals to strive towards in the curriculum already at this level (cf. *Lpo94*). This fits in well with the ideas of individual differences in learner development and the flexibility offered by learner autonomy. However, this also requires a high degree of teacher flexibility and competence, both linguistically and pedagogically (cf. Wright & Bolitho 1993, Lehmann 1999). The teacher needs to be able to use alternative and individual instructional strategies to meet each learner's needs (cf. Williams & Evans, 1998). This may possibly be facilitated by some kind of levelling according to developmental stages and learner-centred teaching. Further, the teachers' own language awareness, or explicit knowledge about language, is also vital in order to be able to "move beyond phrasebook learning to the creative use of the target language" (James & Garrett 1991:47). This is a crucial point related to the goals in the curriculum dealing with communicative competence. Teachers are expected to guide learners towards communicative competence but in order to do so they themselves need to have adequate, explicit knowledge about the language as well as solid language proficiency. Moreover, they need to be familiar with theories and ideas about language learning and teaching in order to find what is most suitable for their own work.

20.7 Summary

To sum up, findings in several reports, indicating that many learners have problems in expressing themselves "fairly correctly" in messages and letters (cf. Oscarson, 1993), suggest that a more balanced view of the notion of "communicative competence" is needed. In this study the interpretation of this notion coincides with that of Canale & Swain (1980) and others, recognizing it as including several factors, all important for efficient communication to take place. Grammar, at the very core of linguistic competence, is an integral part of communicative competence.

In the material, several of the error areas are regarded as being among the more serious error types, as judged by both native (NS) and nonnative speakers (NNS). Most errors involve verbs, nouns and prepositions, i.e. the basic parts of simple sentences. Very frequently occurring errors relating to these areas, especially those involving general, basic grammatical rules, are regarded as worse than others, e.g. subject-verb concord. Transfer errors, making up 40% of the errors found, are also damaging to communication, especially to native speakers (of the target language), since they do not have the necessary L1 background to guess what is the intended meaning.

Is there a place for instruction, positive feedback and correction? Does “language awareness” help learners to succeed better in learning and using a second language? There are clearly different views on this, but grammar instruction should not be easily dismissed, since “there is at present no convincing evidence that to do so would ultimately be beneficial to second or foreign language learners” (Celce-Murcia 1991:462). On the contrary, there are reports on different types of more or less successful instruction. Pica (1983) for instance, argues that there is empirical support *for* instruction and that both implicit and explicit feedback seem to have a positive effect on learning (cf. Carroll & Swain 1993, Ellis 1990 & 1994).

Feedback in different forms has also proved useful, if used wisely. It seems that “to correct or not to correct” is not the question, but rather to know how, when and why to do it. Instead of polarizing formal instruction and communicative practice, both need to be included in order to promote “communicative competence”. It is also a question of focus; there is a time and a place for different kinds of feedback in formal instruction as well as in free communication (cf. Hammerly, 1991; Brumfit, 1984). Sometimes the focus will be on form, at other times on meaning, and the type of feedback to be employed should be chosen accordingly. However, communication may sometimes suffer more from obvious grammatical errors than those relating to lexis or orthography, and correction is one step on the way towards language awareness and understanding what is wrong and why the message was misunderstood. If learners are used to feedback of different kinds, they are likely to be able to use it better and learn from it, in order to improve their language use. Focus on form is a means to increase language awareness, starting out with “noticing” and “getting the feel for language” at relatively early stages in language learning.

One important factor in L2 learning, and teaching, is that learners have a good, solid knowledge of and about their L1. Another is the teacher’s competence. Teachers need to be familiar with concepts like CA, EA, CR and LA and different teaching methods in order to find “the balanced approach” suitable in their own various groups of learners. It seems there is no “all-or-

nothing” theory that holds the solution to efficient teaching and learning. Instead, a balance between different approaches and ideas is probably likely to lead to better results than simply adhering to one specific method (cf. Canale & Swain 1980, Montgomery & Eisenstein 1986, Pica 1994, Lehmann 1999). Concepts like “learnability”, as well as “teachability”, may also play major roles (cf. Pienemann 1985; 1987) in what is to be taught. Moreover, Pica (1994:67) concludes that some grammatical features are “better off not taught”, while the learning of other items through instruction will be enhanced or even accelerated. Thus, careful selection and sequencing of grammatical items also seem to be necessary to achieve better results.

There are studies, including the present one, suggesting that a balance between formal instruction and communication in the classroom leads to better results than reliance on only one of them. Lee (1989:45), for instance, stresses the value of both “free times” and “strict times” in the classroom. The former give learners ample time and room for “experimental” communication without pointers to errors except when there is obvious communication breakdown, whereas the latter provide time for more controlled instruction and feedback in order to increase learners’ language awareness.

All of this entails that teachers’ competence is extremely important. It has to be high in order to detect errors and to give learners the corrective feedback they are entitled to (cf. Stenström 1975, James 1998, Widdowson 1990, Lehmann 1999). Having the linguistic knowledge and ability to analyse students’ errors will enable teachers to find out what is necessary to concentrate on in each student group, or even individually, thus facilitating the search for a suitable technique for teaching different types of learners (cf. Hendrickson 1981a, Lott 1983:256). Or, as Wright and Bolitho (1993:292) put it:

“A linguistically-aware teacher will be in a strong and secure position to accomplish various tasks — preparing lessons; evaluating, adapting, and writing materials; understanding, interpreting, and ultimately designing a syllabus or curriculum; testing and assessing learners’ performance; and contributing to English language work across the curriculum. Indeed, we suspect that successful *communicative* teaching depends more than ever on a high level of language awareness in a teacher due to the richness and complexity of a ‘communicative view’.”

Also, it may be added, the ideal language teacher needs to be fairly familiar with SLA/FLL research in order to be able to evaluate methods and theories suitable for their own classroom work.

The results in this study also seem to indicate that increased emphasis on form, language awareness and, thus, a grammatical system is necessary in order to achieve the goal of communicative competence mentioned in the curriculum. Language studies at this level should, in this view, be a combination of learning the language and learning *about* the language in order to realise, and put into practice, the potential of language – any language – in communicative use.

21. Summary and conclusion

“Klug ist nicht, der keine Fehler macht, sondern
Klug ist, der sie schnell zu verbessern versteht.”
Bertold Brecht²⁶¹

This study of grammatical errors in compositions was initiated through the author's interest in written proficiency, English grammar and the teaching of English to Swedish 16-year-old learners. On average, the testees in the investigation have studied English for six years at school, they represent both municipal and independent schools and they have attended the general, the advanced, or, in some cases, the “unstreamed” course. The data used are 383 randomly selected free compositions taken from the Swedish National Assessment Programmes in 1992 and 1995. The compositions range from very poor ones, with few and simple sentences, to well-written compositions of several hundred words. The average length of the compositions is 185 words.

With such a large corpus it should be possible to find certain tendencies and also to provide a general overview of what written production looks like at this level, more specifically, from a grammatical point of view. In view of this, three major questions have been addressed: (1) what grammatical errors do learners produce in free writing? (2) how frequent are the different error types?, and (3) what explanations can be given for the errors found? A further aim of the investigation was to relate the results to the goals stated in the 1980 as well as the 1994 Swedish curriculum.

The present study makes use of both contrastive analysis (CA) and error analysis (EA) and several different types of classification have been used. First, the errors are divided into major areas according to word class, with the addition of two separate categories on word order errors and concord errors. Second, within these main categories, the errors are further divided into more detailed subcategories at different levels. For instance, the main category “verb” is subcategorised into “tense” which is then split into “the present”, “the past”, etc.

Further, errors are discussed as problems in finding the correct grammatical category, i.e. category errors (e.g., *I went* for *I go*), and problems in correctly realising a chosen and indicated grammatical category, i.e. realisation errors (e.g., **many sheeps* for *many sheep*). In each type three kinds of “operation” are reckoned with: substitution (**a orange* for *an orange*), addition (**I am will go*) and omission (**My name o NN*) of an

²⁶¹ From *Die Maßnahme*, scene 4. Sufirkamp Verlag, Berlin, pp 255-307

element. These "operations" are only descriptive, i.e. they do not refer to any psycholinguistic processes. After the errors have been found, classified and analysed in this way, they are analysed and discussed in terms of explanatory categories, i.e. whether they may be due to transfer from Swedish, overgeneralisation or simplification of forms within the target language (English), or whether they are blends, i.e. a mix-up of two variant L1 forms or between two corresponding (or similar) L1-L2 forms.

Not unexpectedly, the great majority of errors in the material are related to verbs (25%), nouns and articles (22%), concord (18%), and prepositions (12%). These four groups are intertwined in the sense that many errors in the last two areas are also related to verbs and nouns/ articles. An overwhelming majority of errors, 93%, are category errors, i.e. they reveal problems of a more serious grammatical nature than difficulties in correctly realising the forms chosen or intended. The major error types within the four areas involve tense and verb complementation, articles and number distinction, subject - verb concord and the choice of preposition.

Substitution of one grammatical item for another, particularly involving pairs (*it - there*) or triplets (*who - which - that*), is the most frequent operation involved. The low number of addition and omission cases could be a result of learners tending to use compensatory strategies, such as paraphrasing or simply avoiding difficult structures.

Further, the results show that 60% of the errors are intralingual (overgeneralisation, simplification, blends). At first sight, this would seem to suggest that instruction should concentrate on structural contrasts within English grammar rather than on the differences between Swedish and English. Most of the intralingual errors are overgeneralisations of L2 forms, which coincides with results in several previous studies. The remaining 40%, certainly a significant number of errors, are due to transfer. By and large, this proportion represents errors that, in other studies, have been regarded by native speakers as being very serious or causing irritation, impairing communication and/or giving rise to negative attitudes. Thus it is necessary to focus on form in a contrastive perspective alongside of intralingual errors. Transfer errors also seem to be the most persistent errors in ESL writing, which is another reason for highlighting them in classroom instruction as well as in grammar books. Furthermore, in the present study, less proficient learners make more transfer errors than more proficient ones, as also shown by Taylor (1975). This may suggest that contrastive analysis (CA), consciousness-raising (CR) and language awareness are useful tools in teaching. Insufficient focus-on-form teaching (cf. Ellis 1990) could possibly explain many of the errors found. Some studies further suggest that there may be too little free writing (e.g. Oscarson, 1993; Lehmann, 1999) and this could

be one explanation for the verb tense problems that are not related to L1-L2 differences.

There seems to be a relationship of sorts between transfer and markedness, as suggested by, e.g., Bardovi-Harlig (1987) and Eckman (1985). It is possible that markedness, on a scale from less to more marked forms, could be involved in all types of errors, going from different types of simplification or omission (using unmarked for marked forms), via underdifferentiation (transfer from L1 or overgeneralisation of both unmarked and marked L2 forms), to maximization (overgeneralisation of marked L2 forms).

The purpose of CA is to compare L1 and L2 in order to predict where problems may occur and thus provide learners and teachers with a tool for anticipating and forestalling errors. However, as is well known, not all errors can be predicted using CA; the contrastive analysis hypothesis (CAH) is not entirely tenable. Nonetheless, transfer is responsible for a large number of errors (at this level) so CA may reasonably be assumed to be of at least some help. EA, on the other hand, has often been criticised for being concerned mainly with what has already gone wrong, but it is useful because it is "based on empirical data and permits realistic, as opposed to probabilistic, analysis of errors" (Khalil, 1985:337). This gives teachers a means to reassess their students' linguistic development and, thus, adapt their teaching accordingly.

What, then, is the predictive value of CA in view of actual errors, and can EA be of any pedagogical use here? What can learners "learn to learn and teachers learn to teach" (Svartvik 1973:9) differently by looking at the results in this study? The relatively large number of errors apparently related to L1 transfer suggests that CA is, in fact, of considerable help in predicting areas of difficulty to learners at this level, whereas the remaining error types are better discovered and explained through EA. The bottom line, however, seems to be that form-focused grammar instruction should be assigned an important part in language teaching and that feedback of different kinds at different times is vital to help the learner towards language awareness. This, in turn, is a way of "fostering" autonomous learners, who, in time, will be able to take responsibility for their own learning, including grammar.

Error types seem to be relatively evenly spread over learners in the different elective courses: general, advanced or unstreamed level. However, there are some tendencies worth mentioning. Among the learners in the advanced course, the number of errors involving articles (mainly transfer of the Swedish definite form) and prepositions increases from the weak to the more proficient learners. The same phenomenon regarding articles occurs in the general course. This may be explained by the fact that the better learners generally write longer and more complex sentences, and so are more error

prone. Although no clear gender differences have been found, some error types seem to occur somewhat more frequently with female writers (e.g., some indefinite pronouns/ determiners and certain tense structures) whereas others are more common in male writers (e.g. overgeneralisation of *be*, *will* and *do*).

Summing up, together with "positive" feedback, "negative" feedback, i.e. correction of errors, is important and necessary since learners need to be made aware of errors in order to learn from them (cf. Gass, 1991; Lee, 1989). It is then, and only then, that they can readjust and refine their knowledge of the L2. Otherwise learners run the risk of L2 fossilization at a stage where they believe they are able to make themselves understood, if only barely so. Too often, it seems, an unwarranted distinction has been made between "communicative competence" and a striving for "correctness". Correctness should not – and cannot – be seen as totally opposed to fluency and communicative competence in the full sense of the term. Formal, linguistic competence is in fact a vital part of "communicative competence". Furthermore, when teaching a second language the policy should, of course, be to strive towards accuracy in order to achieve full comprehensibility. "Perfection is useful as an *ideal*, as long as teachers and students keep in mind that that is what it is – an ideal that offers a sense of direction and a source of motivation" (Hammerly, 1991:viii). Every teacher (and learner) knows (or should know) that mistakes and errors are part and parcel of the learning process towards this goal. Thus errors, when found and explained, can be a useful tool for the teacher to find out at what stage the learner is in his/her linguistic development and to map out learner profiles, both for the individual learner and the group as a whole. It is also important to evaluate errors in order to "get our priorities right [...] to prevent obsession with trivial errors and give priority to the ones that really matter" (James, 1998:264). In this way, teaching can be made more efficient and more effective for the learners.

A good education demands good instruction, which implies good pedagogues (cf. Lehmann, 1999). Teachers need to be familiar with contemporary research and teaching methods, e.g. using form-focused consciousness-raising in order to achieve language awareness. Further, a solid knowledge of their subject/s will provide teachers with the flexibility and freedom needed to adapt their teaching and teaching materials to suit individual learners' needs and increase their language awareness.

Being a cross-sectional investigation giving an overview of errors and their possible explanations, this study may provide a point of departure for more in-depth investigations on more specific error areas. There are several other interesting areas that could also be followed up, e.g. further

investigation relating specific errors to grades and elective course types; gender aspects; geographical position of schools as well as municipal versus independent schools vis-à-vis results etc. Also, the implications of markedness for errors merit further investigation.

A particularly worthwhile study would be to investigate the same learners' free writing three years later, after upper secondary school, in order to compare results with what has been found in this study: how much is learnt/acquired in the intervening years.

Finally, "to err is human" and it is partly through mistakes and errors we learn, provided that the learner knows what went wrong. When discussing language learning and teaching, there is a lot to be said in favour of a forgiving attitude as regards learners' errors and mistakes, at least to a certain extent. However, it must be remembered that indiscriminate and unquestioned perseverance of such "divinity" may, in the end, turn out to be diabolical instead. Linguistic development is hardly promoted by simply leaving the learner to his/her own devices. However, how best to provide form-focused grammar instruction and feedback is likely to remain one of the classic challenges in language teaching.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Description of the National Assessment Programmes 1992 and 1995

Half of the material upon which this investigation is based comes from "Nationell Utvärdering 1992" (NU92) covering not only English but all other subjects studied in the last year of the comprehensive school, except the second foreign languages French or German. The test given in 1992 involved approximately 10,000 learners and 500 teachers from 101 schools all over Sweden. The schools were selected according to a sampling method which guaranteed national representativity. Naturally there was a certain drop-out rate due to absence or deviant responses but the total response rate was very high. In the part of the test concerning English teachers were given two questionnaires. One dealt with the teachers' education and training as well as their views on the teaching of English, the other with the actual teaching in class. The learners were asked questions about their English studies, grades, the teaching, their own ability, etc. They were also given different tests in several lessons, as follows:

Parts 1-2	Questionnaire, LCT 1, RCT 1, FWC (from the standardized test)	Appr. 10,000 testeetees Appr. 9,000 testeetees
Part 3	LCT 2, RCT 2	Appr. 10,000 testeetees
Part 4	LCT 3, LCT 4, completion test	Appr. 1,100 testeetees
Part 5	Oral test Questionnaires 1 and 2	Appr. 350 testeetees Appr. 500 teachers

The abbreviations above denote listening comprehension test (LCT), reading comprehension test (RCT) and free written composition (FWC). A completion test is a test in which gaps in a text are to be filled, e.g. with a word or an expression. Parts 1, 2 and 3 were given to all 10,000 testeetees, except for the FWC, which was given to approximately 9,000. Part 4 was administered to approximately 1,100 testeetees and part 5 to a small random sample of approximately 350 testeetees. The compositions from lesson 2 (the FWC) have been used as a basis for my investigation. This part of the test is described in Appendix 2. The time given for each part of the test varied as follows:

“To Err Is Human”

LESSONS 1-2

Questionnaire	10 min
LCT 1, “Traffic Call”	8 min (from the standardized test part 1)
RCT 1, “Find the Right Story”	10 min (from the standardized test part 2)
FWC, “Win-A-Dream”	50 min (from the standardized test part 3)

LESSON 3

LCT 2, “Black Train”	8 min
RCT 2, “Pete and Karim”	30 min

LESSON 4

LCT 3, Dialogues	5 min
LCT 4, “Beans”	15 min
Completion test, “Letter”	10 min

In 1995 another nationwide assessment test, *Utvärdering av Grundskolan 1995 (UG95)*, was carried out in the Swedish comprehensive school. This time it included the 2nd, 5th and 9th forms. In UG95 the following comprehensive school subjects were tested: English, German, French, Swedish, mathematics, general science, social studies, and careers guidance. The UG95 part of the material used in my investigation comes from the English written proficiency test given in the 9th grade. A total of 4,050 learners were involved, coming from 100 municipal schools and 35 independent schools all over Sweden, chosen in the same way as in the case of NU92. However, from each of these 135 schools, 30 learners (+ 5 substitutes) were randomly selected for the composition test. Out of the 30 learners, three also participated in an oral test. The oral test was given directly after the written test and the maximum time for that part was 30 minutes.

On the front page of the test paper, learners were asked to state date of birth and gender. Information on course level was available but the questionnaire this time is not as exhaustive as in NU92. However, some questions were put to the learners to do with self-assessment regarding the ability to understand (an English film without subtitles) and the ability to speak (making a phone call, etc). It also included information on their parents’ as well as the learners’ nationality, mother tongue and and/or home language. The type of wide-ranging questionnaire with information on classroom activity, attitudes to studies etc.) used in NU92 was only given for German and French this time.

Part 1 Questionnaire	Appr. 4,050 testees
Part 2 Free written composition (FWC)	Appr. 4,050 testees
Part 3 Oral test	Appr. 405 testees

Appendix 2

The foreign language composition assignment in the National Assessments

The written test in NU92 was designed as a mock competition called "Win-a-Dream". Testees were given the task of writing a letter to the fictitious "Youth Contact Foundation" in order to win one of ten trips to Britain. They were asked to describe themselves, what they would like to do in Britain if they were chosen as one of the lucky winners, and explain why the jury should select them rather than someone else. As a source of inspiration a page with pictures of different tickets was presented to them. The letter was to be between 150 and 250 words long. This part of the test was given in connection with a questionnaire, a listening comprehension test and a reading comprehension test. The total time for this test paper was approx. 80 minutes. The composition was the last part of the test and the testees had 50 minutes to complete it.

WIN-A-DREAM!

Ten Swedish teenagers now have the chance to go to Britain, stay with a British family for a week and do the things they most want to do! The "tickets" opposite show just some of the things you could do during your visit. To have a chance you must write a letter about yourself. Who are you? What would you like to do? Why should the jury select you among the thousands of other youngsters who want a free holiday in Britain? Write between 150 and 250 words. Write your letter today and send it to:

Win a Dream
Youth Contact Foundation

NS100 4p 3

Instruktionen till denna uppgift finns på sidan 100



In UG95 the task was called "Join us in July". It consisted in writing a letter to the UNICEF in order to obtain a free ticket to an imaginary international conference for teenagers. Testees were to write about themselves, why they wanted to go, what two or three things they would like to talk about at the conference and why, and finally, what young Swedish people think about the subject they had chosen. Some help was given on the page attached to the pre-printed "letter body" handed out. No minimum or maximum length was stated and the time allowed was 40 minutes.

JOIN US IN JULY!

***COME AND MEET YOUNG PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER
THE WORLD***

<i>WHO?</i>	People between 13 and 19 from different parts of the world, with different backgrounds and different cultures.
<i>WHAT?</i>	An international conference for teenagers from all over the world. (Conference language: English) Organizer: UNICEF
<i>WHERE?</i>	Copenhagen, Denmark
<i>WHEN?</i>	July 3–10, 1995
<i>WHY?</i>	The conference will give you the chance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• to meet young people from all over the world• to make new friends• to talk about things that are important for young people today and tomorrow (<i>examples of possible subjects: schools, jobs, living together, peace and understanding, the environment</i>)
HERE IS YOUR CHANCE!	
Write a letter to the organizers of the conference. FREE conference tickets will be given to the writers of the 500 most interesting letters.	

In your letter to the organizers, tell them:

- **who** you are (name, age, family, home, school etc.)
- **why** you want to go, and **why** you should get a free ticket
- **what two or three things** you think are the most important to talk about at the conference and **why** (your own suggestions or the subjects given above)
- **what young Swedish people** think about **one of the subjects** you have chosen. (What is the situation like today? What do you think will happen in the future and what can *you* do about it?)

Appendix 3

Excerpts of compositions relating to handwriting

I'm not ~~at~~ (nik) ^{svenda} but it
wants to work with some ~~file~~
and (tjeha) ^{svenses} money ~~is~~ 97 ord
I never ~~had~~ a work
my parents i nice. ~~They got~~

if I use my knowledge in karte
in other times then self defense.
I'll be suspended from -line
club and the sport. I do it
mostly to keep my self in sch
stage over the winter period.
Of these things you guessed I

and the sun i wheri hot.
I want tejennyman. I relevant
to win the prize
so ~~many~~ most I rait a hundred
words man but I want do it
because I'm tired of raiting

Appendix 4

Sample compositions

①

I'm not ~~in~~ (rik ^{Svenska}) but I
 wants to work wid some thing
 and (tjän) ^{Svenska} money ~~A~~ 97 ord
 I never had ~~A~~ a work. [?]
 my parents i nice. they got
 werry nice work and they make
 me-s money time so happy
 I've got a car it's a Amazon
 I've got a 2 1/2" (ex-habitarer) ^{Svenska} and
 a webber ⁴⁵ (färgsvanen) ^{Svenska} ~~A~~ 133 ord
 my Amazon is red and ~~fine~~
 fine. It's a two doors red car.
 the car a got from my
 brother.

I have two brothers and one sister
 my sister got to one son and
 five de-ers

here sons name is Marcus he
 is a wild boy he is

②

have all her records. The third thing I want to do is going on the Adventure trip. I like watersports and the feeling of climbing a mountain or hang-gliding excites me. Some friends of mine are rock-climbers and they have told me its very exciting. I like challenges.

There's only one more thing I would like to do in England, to see the Wimbledon final. Tennis is a fun sport to watch and Sweden has many good players. I hope Stefan Edberg and Boris Becker plays the final because they are the best players in the world.

Now I think you know me a little better. I'd very happy if you picked me!

With regards from Magnus.

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Pia Köhlmyr

"To Err Is Human ..."

An Investigation of Grammatical Errors in Swedish
16-year-old Learners' Written Production

This study is a broad investigation of grammatical errors in compositions written by 16-year-old learners of English in Sweden. It combines two areas within second language acquisition; error analysis and contrastive analysis. Approximately 400 compositions from two national evaluation programmes carried out throughout Sweden in 1992 and 1995 are investigated. The material is randomly selected and, thus, can be regarded as approximately representative of the age cohort in the compulsory school. The grammatical errors are classified according to a system mainly based on a word class framework with the addition of errors involving concord and word order. The intention for using this system has been for it to correspond to the categories used in school grammars and textbooks.

The aims of the study are (a) to investigate what errors Swedish learners make in English written production, (b) to establish the frequency of different error types, (c) to analyse the causes of the errors made, and (d) to point out possible pedagogical implications. The errors are discussed at two levels: as functional errors and executional errors, i.e according to whether the intended grammatical category was chosen, and, the correct form was chosen to realise that grammatical category. Failures of the former type are called category errors and failures of the latter type are realisation errors.

The results show that the same error types occur in compositions regardless of grades and that most errors involve what may be regarded as frequently practised grammatical features. An overwhelming majority of all the errors are category errors implying that the actual mastering of grammatical structures is more difficult than the correct realisation of them. The results of the analysis of the errors confirm that transfer from L1 is a very significant factor in learner errors, although overgeneralisation dominates on the whole. The results give rise to a discussion of actual performance vs. goals set in the curriculum, correctness vs. communicative competence, the role of instruction and feedback, as well as other pedagogical implications including the importance of language awareness and learners' L1 competence in relation to second/foreign language learning.

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