The Acquisition of Time Reference by Norwegian School Learners of English

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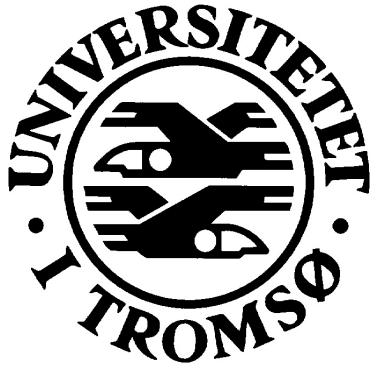

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Chapter 1

PAGE

Chapter 2

Chapter 4

PAGE

Chapter 5

CHAPTER ONE

INTERLANGUAGE THEORY AND DEVELOPMENTAL SEQUENCES : STATE OF THE ART

1.0 Introduction

The rise of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory as a discipline in its own right has contributed greatly to our understanding of the nature of second language acquisition. Given the advances that have been made in the field over the last three decades, we may be able to answer questions that previously could not even be formulated. However, as with any young discipline, there seems to be far more questions than answers. By SLA we mean the acquisition of a language after the native language has already become established in the individual.

Since the early nineteen seventies, SLA researchers have been attempting to describe and explain non-native language behavior with a view to extending our understanding of the processes and mechanisms of language acquisition. Early work on the process of first language (L1) acquisition stimulated by Chomsky's generative approach (Universal Grammar and Principles-and-Parameters Framework) influenced research on SLA in several respects. The L1 order of acquisition of grammatical morphemes in English such as *V-ing* (as in *John is go-ing*) the articles *a* and *the*, past-tense morpheme *-ed* and so on - found to be constant across subjects in Brown's work (Brown 1973) - was compared with the second language (L2) order of acquisition of the same types of morphemes in the acquisition of L2 English (see section 1.2.1 in this thesis for further remarks on the morpheme-order research). Another kind of influence that L1 acquisition research of the 1960s had on the development of SLA research is to be found most clearly and influentially in three works. Corder (1967) proposed that properties of L2 learners' language, that deviate from those of adult native speakers (NSs) should be considered not only as 'errors', but as evidence for the cognitive processes underlying the learner's behavior, parallel to the position adopted in the investigation of child L1 acquisition (Ritchie and Bhatia 1996). Selinker (1972) hypothesized that the L2 learner's linguistic behavior justifies the claim that it is determined in part by a language system, an *interlanguage*

system (IL system), which differs from both the learner's L1 and the adult native system of the L2. Finally, Adjemian (1976) proposed that the IL system has a grammatical competence component, an interlanguage grammar (ILG).

There are several aspects that need to be considered when dealing with second language acquisition research (SLAR), and in the following sections of Chapter One I will address the issues of 1) interlanguage theory, its history and recent developments, 2) L2 acquisition with reference to developmental sequences, and finally, 3) the role of instruction.

1.1 Interlanguage Theory

Since the early 1970s 'interlanguage' has come to characterize a major approach to second-language research and theory (McLaughlin 1987:60). Interlanguage theory was the first major attempt to provide an explanation of L2 acquisition, and many later theories were developments of it. The term itself was coined by Selinker (1969, 1972) to refer to the temporary grammars constructed by second-language learners on their way to the target language (TL). The term won favor over similar constructs, such as 'approximative system' (Nemser 1971), 'transitional competence' and 'idiosyncratic dialects' (Corder 1967). Today the term 'interlanguage' is used to refer to both the internal system that a learner has constructed at a single point in time ('an interlanguage') and to the series of interconnected systems that characterize the learner's progress over time ('interlanguage'). Like all theories, it is dynamic and constantly adapting to new information. Interlanguage (IL) theory is, according to Ellis (1990), a constantly evolving theory, having changed considerably since its initial formulation.

IL is thought to be distinct from both the learner's first language and from the target language. It evolves over time as learners employ various strategies to make sense of the input and to control their own output. These strategies were central to Selinker's thinking about 'interlanguage'.

1.1.1 Selinker and Learning Strategies

Selinker (1972) argued that IL, which he saw to be a separate linguistic system resulting from the learner's attempted production of the target language norm, was the product of five principal cognitive processes involved in second-language learning:

1) Language transfer (some items, rules and subsystems of a learner's interlanguage may be transferred from the first language);
2) Transfer of training (some interlanguage elements may derive from the way in which the learners were taught);
3) Strategies of second language learning (Selinker (1972:216) says that "if the fossilized items, rules and subsystems are a result of an identifiable approach by the learner to the material to be learned", then we are dealing with such strategies);
4) Strategies of communication (according to Selinker (1972:217), we are dealing with strategies if the items, rules and subsystems are a result of an identifiable approach by the learner to communication with native speakers of the TL);
5) Overgeneralization of TL linguistic material (some interlanguage elements are the result of 'clear overgeneralization' of TL rules and semantic features).

"Each of the analyst's predictions as to the shape of IL utterances should be associated with one or more of these, or other, processes" (Selinker 1972:215). The development of IL was seen by Selinker as different from the process of first-language development because of the likelihood of *fossilization* in the second language. Selinker maintained that such fossilization results especially from *language transfer* (e.g. English speakers who use English word order in German sentences etc.), but fossilization may also be the result of other processes. For example, strategies of communication may dictate to some individuals that they stop learning the language once they have learned enough to communicate (McLaughlin 1987). Thus it is not always so that a language learner, given continued exposure to the TL, will steadily grow in his or her mastery of the TL. Corder also suggests that once the language learner's IL grammar is sufficiently developed to enable the learner to communicate adequately for his or her purposes, the motivation to improve wanes (Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991:61). Since fossilization does not occur in first-language development, the acquisition of the IL is thought to be different from the acquisition of a first language.

Although the interlanguage hypothesis was applied principally to adult second-language performance, Selinker, Swain and Dumas (1975) extended the notion to child second-language

performance as well. They argued that under certain circumstances - when a second language is acquired after the first language and when it occurs in the absence of native-speaking peers of the target language - an interlanguage will develop in the speech of the children. These conditions were realized in the subjects studied (seven-year-old children) in a French immersion programme in an English-language elementary school in Canada. Selinker et al. (1975) argued that an analysis of the children's speech revealed a definite *systematicity* in the interlanguage. This systematicity was not seen to be predictable by grammatical rules but to be evidenced by recognizable strategies. By 'strategy' was meant a cognitive activity at the conscious or unconscious level that involved the processing of second-language data in the attempt to express meaning. Selinker et al. (1975) focused on three such strategies: language transfer (e.g. English word order), overgeneralization of target language rules (e.g. use of subject form where object form is required), and simplification (e.g. use of one morphological form for all tenses). Thus, for Selinker, interlanguage can be defined as an interim grammar that is a single system composed of rules that have been developed via different cognitive strategies - for example, transfer, overgeneralization, simplification, and the correct understanding of the target language. At any given time, the interlanguage grammar is some combination of these types of rules (McLaughlin 1987).

1.1.2 Adjemian and Rule-governed Behavior

In contrast to Selinker's cognitive emphasis, Adjemian (1976) argued that the systematicity of the interlanguage should be analyzed linguistically, as rule-governed behavior. In this view, the internal organization of the interlanguage can be idealized linguistically, just like any natural language. Adjemian argued that "ILs are natural languages, which share all the salient properties of human languages" (Adjemian 1976:319). Like any language system, interlanguage grammars are seen to obey universal linguistic constraints and evidence internal consistency. Adjemian (1976) aimed toward identifying those characteristics of ILs that make them somehow different from all other natural languages: *backsliding, permeability* and some types of *fossilization.* He cautioned that if it is true that an IL is different from both the L1 and L2, it must be the product of a unique set of linguistic rules, and should be studied as a fully functioning language in its own right, not as an incomplete version of the TL.

Adjemian cited Corder's (1973) suggestion that research be directed at the learner's 'transitional competence' - that is, the set of grammatical intuitions about the interlanguage that the learner possesses at a given point in time. Once knowledge about transitional competence is obtained, Adjemian saw the researcher to be in a much better position to infer the psychological mechanisms at play. For this reason Adjemian argued that analysis of the systematicity of the interlanguage should begin with the regularities observed in a large body of data and should be directed at determining the properties of the learner's grammar. Whereas Selinker's use of interlanguage stressed the structurally intermediate nature of the learner's first language and the target language, Adjemian focused on the dynamic character of interlanguage systems, their permeability. Interlanguage systems are thought to be, by their very nature, incomplete and in a state of flux. In this view, the individual's first-language system is seen to be relatively stable, but the interlanguage is not. The structures of the interlanguage may be 'invaded' by the first language: when placed in a situation that cannot be avoided, the second-language learner may use rules or items from the first language. Similarly, the learner may stretch, distort, or overgeneralize a rule from the target language in an effort to produce the intended meaning. Both these processes were seen by Adjemian as reflecting the basic permeability of the interlanguage.

1.1.3 Tarone and a Set of Styles

A third approach to the interlanguage notion is represented by Tarone (1979), who maintained that interlanguage could be seen as analyzable into a set of styles that are dependent on the context of use. She argued that a second language learner's system is a variable one, changing when the linguistic environment changes. Tarone cited evidence from the research literature indicating that learner utterances are systematically variable in at least two senses: (1) linguistic context may have a variable effect on the learner's use of related phonological and syntactic structures, and (2) the task used for the elicitation of data from learners may have a variable effect on the learner's production of related phonological and syntactic structures. Tarone maintained that the evidence shows that interlanguage speech varies systematically with context and elicitation task. To account for this finding, Tarone (1983) proposed a *capability continuum*, which includes a set of styles ranging from a stable subordinate style virtually free

of first language influence to a characteristically superordinate style where the speaker pays a great deal of attention to form and where the influence of the first language is, paradoxically, more likely to be felt. Tarone compared the spontaneous subordinate interlanguage style to natural spontaneous unmonitored speech; the more careful superordinate style shows the intervention of a consciously learned rule system (McLaughlin 1987). More precisely, Tarone (1983) proposed that variability in interlanguage can be accounted for by a system of variable and categorical rules based on particular contexts of use. The contexts range along a continuum of styles from formal to vernacular. The learner's grammatical system exhibits more systematicity or consistency in the vernacular style and less so in what she called the superordinate style. These two systems are defined in terms of the amount of attention paid to speech. These two, then, reflect the outer boundaries of a continuum of styles, the use of which is determined by attention, which in turn is determined by the social setting of a speech event.
Like Adjemian, Tarone assumed that the interlanguage is a natural language, obeying the constraints of the same language universals and subject to analysis by means of standard linguistic techniques. She went beyond Adjemian in claiming that language productions show systematic variability, similar to that demonstrated to exist in the speech of native speakers. Thus she added a sociolinguistic point of view to Adjemian's linguistic perspective. For Tarone, interlanguage is not a single system, but a set of styles that can be used in different social contexts.

To summarize, the views of interlanguage that guided early research saw second-language learners as possessing a set of rules or intermediate grammars. Two of these formulations (Selinker and Adjemian) stressed the influence of the first language on the emerging interlanguage. These authors differed, however, in that Selinker hypothesized that interlanguages are created by psychological mechanisms different from those responsible for the development of native languages. Adjemian and Tarone viewed interlanguages as operating on the same principles as natural languages, but Tarone differed from Adjemian in that she stressed the notion of variability in use and the pragmatic constraints that determine how language is used in context.

The emerging interlanguage paradigm suggested that those who would stress the differences between first- and second-language acquisition and those who would stress the similarities were equally misguided. Rather than focusing on the first or the target language, researchers working in the interlanguage framework began to develop data-analytic procedures that would yield information about the dynamic qualities of language change that made the interlanguage a unique system, both similar to and different from the first and target languages (McLaughlin 1987). This process-oriented approach became pronounced as interlanguage theory developed in the late 1970s and 1980s.

1.1.4 Recent Developments in IL Theory

As we have seen, early interlanguage theorists differed in their view of how dynamic and changeable the interlanguage is. Most analyses of IL tended to focus on the product; what IL demonstrates at a given point in time. In the 1970s researchers however, began to direct their attention to the developmental process and to how one could account for both systematicity and variability in the development of interlanguage. A shift from a product to a more process related orientation came about. As McLaughlin (1987:74) puts it, "by simply focusing on the product (what the learner is saying), one is in danger of losing sight of the process (what the learner is trying to say)".

Attention to the following issues has provided the context for recent developments in interlanguage theory:

1) How systematic and variable is interlanguage?

2) How are interlanguages acquired?

3) What is the role of the first language?

Variability

Learner ILs are thought to exhibit a fair degree of systematicity and order. Systematicity does not mean that learners use structures in a target-like manner from their first exposure. What it does mean is that like all natural languages, ILs appear to be rule governed. There is variability in learner performance, but it is typically systematic, that is, learners use certain forms

erroneously by target-speaker standards but consistently as a response to certain extralinguistic factors (e.g. attention to form (Tarone 1988)).

Andersen (1978) and Hyltenstam (1977) found that their subjects showed systematicity in their L2 acquisition. Regardless of their first-language background, the subjects showed a single implicational order. Although the data also revealed individual variation, the general tendency was to follow a definite order. These two researchers claimed evidence for variation within systematicity. Huebner (1979, 1983) added evidence for variation in his study of the acquisition of the English article by a Hmong speaker. Huebner found little systematicity in the use of the article until he examined *how* it was used. Huebner maintained that the learner's interlanguage was systematic beneath its superficial chaos, and that variability was due to the subject changing his hypotheses about the target language (McLaughlin 1987:71). In this respect, Huebner claimed the existence of a functional type of variation; he examined the possible variation of a form and the way in which other forms in the learner's IL are used to cover roughly the same functional domain as the form in question.

Ellis (1985) has argued that in addition to systematic variability, there is non-systematic variability in the interlanguage. There does seem to be some random or free variation, such as when a learner produces 'no go' and 'don't go' within moments of each other under seemingly identical conditions, which Ellis found in his 1985 study. Ellis suggests that:

> ...the learner's IL is composed of competing rules at any stage of its development. In some cases, these competing rules are systematic, as they relate to situational and contextual factors. In other cases, the competing forms are used arbitrarily, in free variation (Ellis 1994:366).

According to Ellis (1994), L2 acquisition involves a first stage (the 'acquisition phase'), where new forms are acquired and used in free variation, and subsequent stages (the 'reorganization phase') where learners sort these forms into functional pigeon-holes (Ellis 1994:366). The initial form-function correlations that learners establish are not likely to correspond to those found in the target language. Ellis' distinction between systematic and non-systematic variability is an attempt to allow for the basic instability and unpredictability of interlanguages, and Ellis saw non-systematic variability to be a necessary part of the acquisition process.

Acquisition

How do ILs develop? Researchers working within the IL framework have begun to look at how learners map form-function relationships. There is some controversy regarding the question of whether the learner begins with forms or with functions. Sato (1984) found that her subjects marked temporality in IL via other means than verb morphology. The learners relied on implicit references and context to mark temporality. Thus, the subjects in Sato's study show evidence of the acquisition of function prior to the acquisition of form. Huebner's (1983) work revealed the possibility of learners attending to both form and function simultaneously in the acquisition process, whereas Ellis (1985) made claims of form being acquired prior to function.

First language influence

What role does the first language play in the development of interlanguage? Zobl (1982) found that two case studies involving the acquisition of the English article indicated that the children had taken different paths to acquisition. Zobl concluded that these subjects' processes differed because of differences in their first languages. Keller-Cohen (1979) found the similar process to happen in his study of a Japanese, Finnish and German child. In addition to showing that transfer results in learners taking different developmental paths to target-language mastery, transfer may also make it more difficult to learn certain constructions. It has been found that some learners need longer time to learn certain forms than do others. In a study conducted by Schumann (1982), he claimed that certain forms (in this case *no + verb*) may be more difficult to eliminate from the interlanguage of Spanish speakers than they are from other speakers learning English because of the existence of this pattern in Spanish. Kellerman (1979, 1983) has argued that transfer should be viewed as a cognitive process, where decisions are made on the basis of (1) the learner's perception of the similarity between first-and second-language structures, and (2) the degree of markedness of the first-language structure. (More marked structures are those that the person thinks of as irregular, infrequent, and semantically opaque (McLaughlin 1987)). Transfer is predicted to occur when the perceived similarity between the two languages is great and when the structures involved are unmarked. A number of studies (Gass 1979, Jordens 1977, Rutherford 1982) support these predictions. Kellerman and

Sharwood Smith (in Gass and Selinker 1994) have suggested the term *cross-linguistic influence*, which is sufficiently broad to include transfer, in the traditional sense, but also avoidance, language loss and rate of learning.

Thus far we have seen how interlanguage theory developed during the 1970s, and how the various approaches differ from one another. We have also looked at some of the more recent developments within the interlanguage framework.

The term *interlanguage* is now used by theorists of very different persuasions and has become almost theory-neutral. It can be glossed as the 'system of implicit knowledge that the learner develops and systematically amends over time'. The idea of fossilization has also stuck. However, with the obvious exception of transfer, Selinker's strategies - the specifically cognitive dimension of the initial theory - have not been taken up by theorists (Ellis 1994:354).

The proposals based on interlanguage theory had a profound effect on language teaching. According to Ellis (1990), there was a strong conviction that classroom learning would be more successful if it more closely resembled naturalistic L2 learning. The main proposals were related to three aspects of language teaching; (1) remedial procedures, (2) error treatment and (3) the organization of the syllabus. The most radical of them was syllabus organization, where the teaching syllabus was recommended to be compatible with the learner's syllabus (Ellis 1990).

Interlanguage theory has helped to shape the development of SLA research by advancing the notion that learners posses a separate mental grammar that they draw on in L2 performance. The central premises of the theory, according to Ellis (1990), are that L2 learner language is rule-governed and that learners pass through a series of developmental stages as they test out hypotheses about the target language. We will now consider the morpheme studies, and the sequence of acquisition studies performed in the 1970s and 80s.

1.2 Developmental Sequences

A striking example of the systematicity of interlanguage consists of common developmental sequences within morpho-syntactic domains through which, with only minor variations, all learners seem to pass, regardless of age, native language or (formal or informal) learning context (Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991:92). We will now proceed to an outline of research and theories dealing with such sequences.

1.2.1 The Morpheme Studies

In the 1970s a number of studies, commonly referred to as the morpheme studies, were carried out to investigate the order of acquisition of grammatical functors such as noun and verb inflections, articles, auxiliaries, copulas and prepositions. The so-called morpheme studies provided early empirical evidence of interlanguage systematicity and of the existence of L1-neutral developmental sequences. Both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies were conducted, although the former predominated. These studies were motivated by similar studies in L1 acquisition. Brown (1973) reported that children learning English as the first language follow a common 'invariant' sequence in the acquisition of 14 functor words. In particular, the morpheme studies sought to establish whether, as in Brown's (1973) study on L1 acquisition, there was an invariant order in L2 acquisition as well. Early studies of child second language learners by Dulay and Burt (1973, 1974) made claims for a similar developmental sequence. Although Dulay and Burt (1973) found the child ESL order somewhat different from the L1 order pointed out by Brown (1973), they attributed this variation to the differences in cognitive abilities of children at different stages of development.

Dulay and Burt (1973) used the Bilingual Syntax Measure (BSM) to elicit speech samples from 151 Spanish-speaking children living in Tijuana, Mexico, California and New York. Despite differences in amount of exposure to the language in target, the subjects under study showed roughly the same pattern in their use of the functors in obligatory contexts. The rationale for this study was that, "if the creative construction process does play a role in child L2 acquisition, then we should find a common sequence of acquisition of grammatical structures across diverse

groups of children learning the same language" (Dulay and Burt 1974:38). In other words, due to their findings, Dulay and Burt concluded that the general sequence in which certain English syntactic structures are acquired by children of different language backgrounds should be the same, with only minor variation. Dulay and Burt (1974) confirmed their earlier findings of a morpheme order in their third effort to discover the universal regularities in child second language acquisition. This study revealed that the sequences of acquisition of 11 functors obtained for Spanish and Chinese children were virtually the same. Thus, Dulay and Burt (1973, 1974) found that some 250 Spanish- and Chinese-speaking children, aged six to eight, learning English in the USA, exhibited statistically significant related orders in speech data elicited by the BSM.

Research with adult subjects (Bailey, Madden and Krashen 1974, Larsen-Freeman 1976) indicated that the pattern obtained in cross-sectional studies of children was found in adults as well. Although there were differences due to the subjects' first language and the types of tasks they were engaged in (Larsen-Freeman 1976), "the differences were generally not marked enough to obscure the common pattern in the accuracy order" (McLaughlin 1987).
More specifically, Bailey et al. (1974) confirmed the finding of a common morpheme order, using the BSM for 73 Spanish-speaking and non-Spanish-speaking instructed adults. However, Bailey et al. (1974) also showed, as did Dulay and Burt (1973), that the ESL order differed from that obtained for English L1 in Brown's (1973) earlier mentioned study, and the cross-sectional study of 24 children conducted by de Villiers and de Villiers (1973).

Larsen-Freeman (1976) extended the above mentioned studies (Dulay and Burt 1973, 1974, Bailey et al. 1974) by using learners with a wider range of L1s and by using a battery of five tasks to collect her data. She found that the learners' L1 made little difference with reference to the accuracy orders she obtained, but she also revealed differences in the orders for the different tasks. Some morphemes (for example, plural *-s* and third person *-s*) rose in the accuracy rank on her reading and writing tasks, thereby 'disturbing' the order that was becoming familiar. Thus, it seemed as if different orders existed for oral and written learner language.

However, Krashen, Butler, Birnbaum and Robertson (1978) found in a subsequent study that the accuracy orders obtained from written data did correlate significantly with those reported by Dulay and Burt (1973, 1974) for oral data.

We have seen that the morpheme studies of the 1970s investigated a common set of English grammatical morphemes, and used the results to postulate a more or less invariant order of acquisition which was independent of L1 background and age. This order provided evidence against the 'Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis'[1] and in favor of the existence of universal cognitive mechanisms which enabled learners to discover the structure of a particular language. This view of L2 acquisition became known as creative construction (Dulay and Burt 1975).

The procedures

Performance analysis aimed to provide a description of the L2 learner's language development and looked at both deviant and well-formed utterances. It came to dominate L2 acquisition research in North-America in the seventies. Performance analysis was used in both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies. In case of the former, an accuracy order of a number of different grammatical features was discovered and this order was then equated with acquisition order by some researchers, on the grounds that the more accurately a morpheme was used, the earlier it must have been acquired. Thus, there was an a priori assumption that the accuracy order corresponded to the acquisition order. However, it should be noted that the subjects were usually tested only once.

The criticism

As Ellis (1990:47) points out, "the evidence provided by the morpheme studies needs to be treated circumspectly as the methodological procedure was seriously flawed". Obligatory context analysis has been object to criticism in that it seemed to measure accuracy of use rather than acquisition sequence. This procedure (obligatory context analysis), according to Ellis (1990), ignored occasions when the learner overgeneralized. It was possible that a learner could

[1] The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, in its strong form (Wardhaugh 1970), stated that all L2 errors could be predicted by identifying the differences between the target language and the learner's L1.

supply a feature like *verb -ing* on every occasion that called for it, and thus be credited with having acquired it. However, the same learner might also use *verb -ing* in contexts that did not require it. To say that this learner had 'acquired' *verb -ing* would clearly be misleading. A feature is by no means fully acquired until the learner has mastered the particular grammatical functions that it serves (Ellis 1990). Acquisition of a feature can only be said to hold true when the learner is able to distinguish the different categories. This indicates that the so-called 'natural order' of acquisition of L2 English morphemes was not as fixed and definite as some researchers at the time claimed.

To overcome the problem of rank orders disguising differences in accuracy between various morphemes, Dulay and Burt (1975) and later Krashen (1977) proposed a grouping of morphemes. They argued that each group constituted a clear developmental stage in that morphemes within it were 'acquired' at more or less the same time. We will now turn to Krashen's contribution to SLA theory; the Monitor Model and his 'Natural Order Hypothesis'.

1.2.2 Krashen's 'Natural Order'

Reviewing over a dozen ESL morpheme studies available at the time, Krashen (1977) postulated a 'natural order' supported by the longitudinal and cross-sectional SL findings. The 'natural order' consists of nine grammatical items divided into four stages of acquisition based on learners suppliance in obligatory context (fig. 1.1). Krashen's 'Natural Order hypothesis' is one of five hypotheses making up a theory of SLA, better known as the 'Monitor theory'. The 'Natural Order Hypothesis' states:

> ...that we acquire the rules of language in a predictable order, some rules tending to come early and others late. The order does not appear to be determined solely by formal simplicity and there is evidence that it is independent of the order in which rules are taught in language classes (Krashen 1985:1).

So, according to Krashen, grammatical structures are 'acquired' in a predictable order, which is the same for adults and children and for learners with different L1s. It is not evident in language activities such as grammar tests when the focus is on form, but whenever the focus is on communication. In addition to this, Krashen argued that both naturalistic learners and classroom learners basically demonstrate the same order of acquisition. This 'natural' order of acquisition

is presumed to be the result of the acquired system, operating free of conscious grammar, or the Monitor[2].

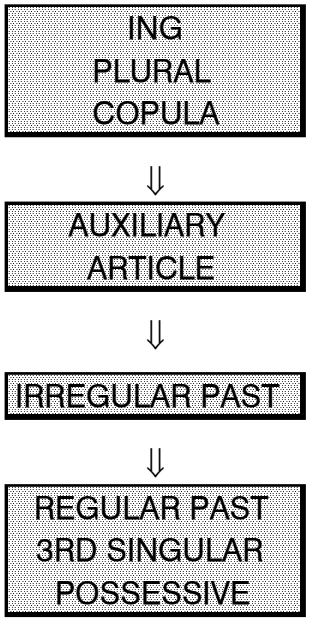

Fig. 1.1 Krashen's (1977) 'Natural Order' for ESL

The very first stage in Krashen's postulated 'natural order' is the acquisition of *-ing* morpheme, plural and copula. In stage two, auxiliaries and articles are acquired. Irregular past is acquired in the next stage, stage three, whereas regular past, 3rd person singular and the possessive is acquired in the fourth and final stage. Regarding the ordering of items within each stage, Krashen makes no claims about this.

The principal source of evidence for the 'Natural Order Hypothesis' comes from the above discussed 'morpheme' studies. In these studies, as we have seen, the BSM was used as an instrument to elicit spontaneous speech. The accuracy order was assumed to reflect the acquisition order. Thus, one could in many ways claim that by assuming so, an acquisition sequence was not so much measured as was the accuracy of use in obligatory contexts. Aside from the question whether it is legitimate to infer 'natural' developmental sequences from accuracy data based on cross-sectional research, there are other important methodological issues

[2]Krashen's second hypothesis within the Monitor Model, the Monitor Hypothesis, states that 'learned knowledge' is the system's monitor, which means that it may edit the utterances originating from acquired knowledge. However, this may only happen if the following three conditions are met; the rule must be known to the learner, there must be sufficient time for monitoring and the learner has to focus his/her attention upon language form.

in the 'morpheme' studies. For example, Hatch (1983) has pointed out that it is possible to score morphemes as acquired when, in fact, the function of the morpheme has not been acquired. Many learners, she contented, produce large numbers of *-ing* verb forms in the beginning stages of learning (cf. the above mentioned criticism of morpheme studies). If, as in most morpheme studies, the morpheme is scored as correct when it is used appropriately in an obligatory context, this procedure will hide the fact that the *-ing* form is being used excessively, in correct and incorrect contexts. Finally there is the question of whether the finding of a 'natural' order in morpheme accuracy is instrument- and task-specific. Larsen-Freeman (1975) found a strong relationship between accuracy scores for adult second-language learners and child second-language learners when the data were obtained by the BSM. However, when she looked at the other tasks, using other instruments, she did not find that correlations between adult and child accuracy scores were as strong. This led her to conclude that one should be careful about claims of an invariant order of acquisition based on morpheme research.

To conclude, Krashen's argument for the Natural Order Hypothesis is based largely on the morpheme studies, which have been criticized on various grounds and which, by focusing on the final form, tell us little about acquisitional sequences. Research that has looked at the developmental sequence for specific grammatical forms indicates that there is individual variation and that there may be several different developmental streams leading to target-like competence (McLaughlin 1987:35).

1.2.3 Pienemann's Theory of Developmental Sequences

Manfred Pienemann's research is based on a well defined theory of SLA, namely the Multidimensional Model (MM) (Meisel, Clahsen and Pienemann 1981). The theory itself was developed on the basis of data elicited from 45 naturalistic learners of German as a second language in a study known as the ZISA-project (Zweitsprachererwerb Italienischer und Spanischer Arbeiter) and carried out in Germany in the 1970s. This project worked from a cross-sectional data base derived from interviews with the above-mentioned 45 informants and a study of some twelve informants over a two-year period. The ZISA researchers' findings were that the process of acquisition of the rules in question fell very neatly into six stages. These stages constituted a classical implicational sequence, that is, mastery of the rules at a

particular stage entailed mastery of the rules characterizing earlier stages (Pienemann and Johnston 1987:74). On the matter of development, Pienemann and Johnston write:

> In our view, only those linguistic features (structural or functional) which are acquired in a fixed order by all learners of the L2 qualify as developmental. We take this position because we now consider it to be quite clearly the case that there is a series of invariant stages of acquisition through which all learners must pass. These stages are defined in the 'Multi-dimensional Model' (MM). While the multidimensional model of acquisition allows us to measure development, it also makes it quite clear that there are many linguistic features which *will not* serve as indices of development; quite a few structures and elements used in previous and current testing procedures belong to this latter group of features (Pienemann and Johnston 1987:72).

The Multidimensional Model (MM) accounts for the fact that within each developmental stage one will have to allow for considerable variation. Since acquisition is a multiple process, the MM distinguishes two sets of linguistic features: developmental and variational. Thus this model of acquisition (MM) reconciles the earlier mentioned concept of variation and that of development. According to Ellis (1990), developmental features are those that are constrained by developing speech processing mechanisms. Variational features are those that are not so constrained. In other words, the model predicts that certain features will be acquired in sequence because of the mental operations involved in processing them, while other features are 'free'. Ellis (1990) lists six processing operations, and their linguistic realizations, which he claims have been identified by Pienemann and Johnston. These operations proceed in a fixed order, it is impossible for the learner to skip a stage. The stages are 'strictly implicational', which again means that all learners, without exceptions, follow the sequence. Here we see a contrast to Krashen, who admitted that the natural order was not rigidly invariant, but that it was also far from being random. After having identified six general stages of acquisition, Pienemann and Johnston have worked on tentative developmental stages for more specific aspects of second language acquisition. The most interesting sequence is that for verbs, since the development of temporal reference will be the main focus of the present thesis. In fig. 1.2 we see Pienemann and Johnston's (1987) tentative developmental stages in ESL development with reference to verbs. After passing the formulaic speech stage, the learner, according to Pienemann and Johnston (1987) moves on to the second and third stages where V-ing and irregular verbs are supposedly acquired. At the end of stage three, V-ed is acquired, whereas the acquisition of the auxiliaries *be/have* + V-ed and the auxiliary *be* + V-ing takes place at the

fourth stage. Stage five allows for the acquisition of third person singular -s, and at stage six the learner is able to convert V-ing to noun (gerund).

STAGE	VERB
1:	'WORDS' or FORMULAE
2:	IL-ing IRREG
3:	-ED
4:	AUX_EN AUX_ING
5:	3SG_S
6:	(GERUND)

Fig. 1.2 Tentative developmental stages in ESL development (Pienemann and Johnston 1987:82)

1.2.4 Developmental Sequences for Temporal Reference

Several studies have been conducted in an effort to find tentative developmental sequences, and since the focus of the present thesis is on the development of temporal reference, it is natural to look at what has been done within this field of research. However, it should be noted that there is a certain lack of empirical evidence for such developmental sequences. Among the small number of studies conducted, Gertraud Havranek's (1993) longitudinal study of four Austrian learners stands out as being one of the more thorough studies at present. Havranek studied four twelve-year old Austrian school learners of English as a foreign language. The study was carried out during a period of two years. Havranek collected data through five interviews, and she used a wide variety of elicitation devices (telling picture stories, answering questions, translations, introspection, matching tasks etc.).The aim of this study was to show that the developing verb system of the Austrian learners of L2 English can be described in its own

terms, and that the learner language is systematic enough to allow the formulation of rules appropriate to different stages. At the same time, analysis of the data showed that the learner language is not homogenous in that there is considerable variation both between and within individual learner languages (Havranek 1993:165). The obtained results were used to identify five developmental stages in the Austrian boys' development of time reference.

Stage one is characterized by the learners using invariant verbs, showing temporal reference through the use of time adverbials and contextual clues, whereas the copula is marked for present tense. Moving on to stage two, the learner is able to distinguish present, past and future by use of occasional inflections or auxiliary *will* supported by adverbials and contextual clues. At this stage, past tense inflections typically occur with copula first, and then simultaneously for regular and irregular verbs. It should be noted that inflections by no means necessarily are target-like at this developmental stage. At stage three, inflections are used regularly to mark present and past, whereas *will* is used to mark future time. Inflections still show signs of overgeneralization and occasionally they are omitted. One can also observe the beginnings of further differentiation of the categories *present* and *past* into the categories *present*, *present-extended-into-past*, *past*, *past-linked-with-present*, and *pre-past*. Regular marking of these categories begins at stage four. Finally, at the fifth stage, the learner is able to differentiate the category *future* into *present-extended-into-future*, *future-linked-with-present*, and *future* proper.

Havranek writes that "these developmental stages, though derived from learners studying English as a foreign language at school, are also suggested by data from untutored language acquisition (cf. Vogel 1987)" (Havranek 1993:168). Worth mentioning is the fact that Havranek's informants under study had not reached the fifth and final stage by the time the study was concluded. She also pinpoints that inter-learner variation and differences had to be glossed over in order to arrive at the idealized developmental sequence for temporal reference. She admits that the learner languages of the four learners in question showed considerable differences in several respects. "In fact, some of the differences are such that the postulation of developmental stages for all learners of a particular language seems questionable" (Havranek 1993:170). One of Havranek's informants under study did not use invariant verbs even during

the first interview and probably never did, which may indicate that the first stages do not seem to be necessary for all learners in formal learning situations. This claim contradicts to some extent earlier findings (e.g. Felix 1981) that learners will go through the same basic stages despite formal instruction. Havranek's study points out that individual differences between learners exist and that both free and systematic variation can be found. To sum up, Havranek in her study showed learners' verbal systems developing along similar lines, but also found that not all learners go through the same developmental sequences. Thus, this study could be said to falsify the claims made by some theorists discussed earlier, asserting that developmental sequences in learner language are 'strictly implicational'.

Alex Housen (1993) also reports a developmental sequence for the development of temporal reference. Housen conducted a longitudinal study of the temporal system in the developing Dutch-based IL speech of an adult native speaker of American English, Sue, who had learned Dutch through both formal and informal exposure. Housen was interested in the organization, development and use of verb phrase (VP) morphology as a means to express temporality. He collected data through two informal conversations with a gap of one year between the sessions. From the obtained data, he was able to identify a four-stage sequence starting with an invariant first stage. At stage two, Sue used several verb forms in apparent free variation. The functional specifications of the verb forms marked the arrival at stage three, although not necessarily displaying a target-like form-function relationship. In stage four, the different verb forms assumes their specific TL-like functional values. Housen (1993) discusses whether the Primacy of Aspect Principle (PAP)[3]is at operation in Sue's IL. He concludes that the PAP itself is not at work in the case of Sue, but that a weaker version of it may be responsible for the acquisition order. According to Housen, a weaker version of the PAP may operate in acquisition contexts where the learner's L1 and/or TL are Tense-prominent languages, as in the case of his study. This means that in Sue's IL, punctual and dynamic verbs are first assigned past tense

[3]The Primacy of Aspect Hypothesis was formulated by Robison (1990), and holds that nascent verb inflections are controlled in large part by aspectual distinctions inherent in the verb or predicate. That is, as inflections emerge in interlanguage, they are not evenly distributed across all verbs, but redundantly mark inherent or lexical aspect, the temporal features resident in the lexical meaning of the predicate.

morphology. Then, in later stages, past tense morphology gradually spreads towards durative and stative verbs.

At the 18th Annual Second Language Research Forum (SLRF'98)[4], Yamato (1998) presented a study in which the L2 production of 30 Japanese university students at three different proficiency levels made up the research data. This study examined whether or not the PAP can hold in an EFL setting. Two research questions were advanced: (1) which verbal aspectual feature (i.e. [± dynamic], [± punctual] and [± telic]) shows the strongest influence in the acquisition of English tense-aspect markers, and (2) does L1 (Japanese), formal instruction, and English proficiency have any effect on the acquisition? Yamato argued that the PAP does hold in an EFL setting. He found that the aspectual feature [± telic] was most influential at certain proficiency levels to determine the distribution of English tense-aspect markers. However, he also found some evidence favoring L1 transfer of aspect markers, which may be due to different classification of inherent lexical aspect in Japanese and English, resulting in Japanese students under study transferring tense-aspect markers from Japanese (L1) to English (L2). With reference to the effect of instruction given to the students, Yamato showed evidence of U-shaped behavior in the Japanese data collected. As we shall see in a subsequent part of this chapter, U-shaped behavior has been viewed as one of the harmful effects of instruction.

Another study presented at SLRF'98 which dealt with the development of time reference was conducted by Stanley and Mellow (1998). "In order to better understand the principled sequential nature of overgeneralization and underapplication in interlanguage past time expression" (Stanley and Mellow 1998), the study reported in this paper examined the written ESL data of eight learners from two perspectives: longitudinally, over a four-month period, and cross-task, considering three different narrative-based tasks (free narrative, retell and cloze). Thus, the development of past time expression was their main focus, and they based their findings on the already identified sequences for past time expression (Simple Present acquired prior to Simple Past, with Present and Past Perfect acquired the latest out of these four).

[4]SLRF'98 was held at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, October 15 - 18, 1998. For further information on the conference and papers presented, see the following URL: *http://www.lll.hawaii.edu/slrf98/default.html*

The learners in this study developed from underapplication via overgeneralization to target like use. Hence, the acquisition process became one with constant overgeneralization and underapplication working together before the learner has finally sorted out the form-function relationships. It should be noted that Stanley and Mellow set a threshold for acquisition at 70 % occurrence in obligatory contexts.

We have now seen how the notion of developmental sequences developed during the 1970s (the morpheme studies and Krashen's 'Natural Order'), the 1980s (Pienemann's Multidimensional Model) and the 1990s (Havranek and Housen on temporal reference and recent research as presented at SLRF'98). Since this last discussion is central to the premises for the study conducted in this thesis, we will return to this matter in subsequent chapters. However, there are questions to be posed regarding developmental sequences, and a couple of such questions will be dealt with in the following and final section of this chapter, concerning the role of instruction.

1.3 The Role of Instruction in the Process of L2 Acquisition

A major goal for many SLA researchers is to provide a sound psycholinguistic basis for SL teaching, and there is a growing body of work within SLA which focuses directly on these issues. In particular, a considerable number of studies have been carried out whose explicit focus has been to determine the effects (if any) of formal instruction on interlanguage development. The results of such studies have made it worth posing the questions:

- Are developmental sequences impervious to instruction?
- Can instruction be viewed as harmful with regards to developmental sequences?

We will now take a closer look at what has been done within this field of research, in order to find possible answers to the above raised questions. We will leave aside the question of the role of instruction on the *rate* and *achievement level* of L2 acquisition, but simply mention that in general, classroom learners learn more rapidly and progress further than naturalistic learners. This provides weak evidence in favor of the claim that instruction affects acquisition. As Ellis (1990) points out, the evidence is weak since we cannot be sure what really is responsible for

the advantage. Classroom learners may be more motivated to learn, and "classroom input rather than instruction may be responsible" (Ellis 1990:165). However, it seems reasonable to assume that formal instruction is of value in promoting rapid and higher levels of acquisition, and a review by Long (1983) provides tentative support for such a claim. On the basis of a review of a total of eleven studies that examined the effect of formal instruction on the rate/success of L2 acquisition, Long claimed that "there is considerable evidence to indicate that SL instruction does make a difference" (Long 1983:374). Studies conducted to investigate whether instruction influences the *process* of L2 acquisition have sought to establish the effects of instruction in two ways: (1) by comparing classroom and naturalistic learners (comparative studies) and (2) by means of classroom experiments designed to ascertain whether teaching specific items results in their acquisition (experimental studies).

1.3.1 Comparative Studies

Starting with comparative studies, Error Analysis and the above outlined morpheme acquisition studies fall into this category. Errors provide evidence of the processes involved in interlanguage development, and the available evidence indicates that instruction is powerless to prevent developmental errors from occurring. Felix (1981) found, when examining errors related to negation, interrogation, sentence types and pronouns, that the parallels between tutored and naturalistic learners were striking. Similar errors were found in school learners and naturalistic learners. Whereas Felix's (1981) study indicates that the process of acquisition cannot be manipulated by instruction, Lightbown's (1983) study of Canadian high school learners suggests that instruction can have an effect. However, this effect is not of a positive kind. In Lightbown's (1983) study, learner data were obtained outside the classroom by means of a communication game. Considering the results of V-ing acquisition, Lightbown found that the frequency and accuracy of V-ing declined from Grade 6 to Grade 7. At the earlier time, the learners produced V-ing correctly. V-ing is acquired early in naturalistic L2 acquisition without any evidence of the kind of subsequent decline observed in the classroom learners (Ellis 1990:138). Lightbown, according to Ellis (1990), suggests that the explanation for the unusual reversion is to be found in the formal instruction the learners experienced. 'Over-learning' of V-ing occurred as a result of intensive instruction in this feature towards the end of Grade 5. This

led to frequent and accurate use of the form during Grade 6. However, instruction in V-ing was discontinued in this year, while instruction in the use of the Simple Present was stepped up. This resulted in the learners dropping V-ing in favor of simple forms in Grade 7. As Lightbown puts it:

> By forcing learners to repeat and overlearn forms which have no associated meaning to contrast them with any other form(s), we may be setting up barriers which have to be broken down before the learners can begin to build up their own interlanguage systems (Lightbown 1983:239).

Thus, so far, we have seen that formal instruction either has no effect or has a deleterious effect on L2 acquisition. One of the most important comparative studies carried out to date is that by Pica (1983, 1985). Pica studied the acquisition orders of three groups of six learners: (1) instruction only, (2) purely naturalistic, and (3) mixed (i.e. learners who received formal instruction and had the opportunity for communication in informal contexts). Pica found no evidence that the accuracy order of the instructed group was disturbed. "All groups of subjects, across all language contexts, exhibited a highly similar overall rank order or morpheme suppliance in obligatory contexts", Pica commented (1983:479). However, when Pica investigated over-suppliance of grammatical morphemes, she found considerably more instances in the instructed than in the naturalistic learner group. A result which supported Lightbown's finding, was the instructed group's overuse of V-ing. Pica is reluctant in making strong claims for instruction, and points out that the sample was very small and that the study was restricted to adult native speakers of Spanish. Thus, we have seen that comparative studies conducted so far make tentative claims towards the effects of instruction being extremely limited, and in some cases even harmful.

1.3.2 Experimental Studies

Moving on to an outline of experimental studies that have been carried out, these fall into three groups: (1) accuracy studies, (2) acquisition-sequence studies, and (3) 'projection studies' (i.e. studies that seek to establish whether instruction directed at feature *x* not only results in the acquisition of *x* but also is powerful enough to trigger acquisition of features *y, z...n,* which are implicationally linked to *x*).

In **accuracy studies**, the effects of instruction are measured by investigating whether there are any gains in the accuracy with which specific structures are performed after the 'treatment'. Schumann (1978) gave instruction to Alberto, a Spanish-speaking learner of English in the United States, to discover whether the apparent 'pidginization' of Alberto's English could be overcome. Schumann concluded that the instruction influenced production only in test-like situations, while normal communication remained unaffected (Ellis 1990:150). Second, Ellis (1984) investigated the effects of instruction on the production of four semantically appropriate WH pronouns and of inversion in interrogative structures. The results showed no significant improvement in the accuracy with which the above mentioned features were produced for the group as a whole. However, a number of informants showed a marked improvement. To account for this finding, Ellis speculated that the within-group differences may have been the result of individual learner factors or of the way in which opportunities for practice were distributed. To test the latter, Ellis calculated the number of opportunities for practising *when*-interrogatives experienced by each child in one of the lessons, and surprisingly found that children with the fewest opportunities were the ones who showed the largest gains in accuracy in *when*-interrogatives. Hence, Schumann (1978) and Ellis (1984) both suggest that there are constraints on the effects that instruction can have on acquisition, moreover these two studies indicate that spontaneous speech production may be impervious to instruction.

Regarding the **sequence of acquisition studies**, we have earlier looked at Pienemann's Multi-dimensional Model (MM), and a number of general hypotheses relating to the effect of instruction have been based on this model. The classroom research carried out by Pienemann and his associates was designed to discover whether formal instruction is sufficiently powerful to disrupt the sequence of acquisition. The results, according to Ellis (1990:152), "provide us with the most powerful evidence collected so far, that under certain conditions formal instruction *can* influence L2 acquisition". As mentioned, general hypotheses relating to the effect of instruction have been based on the Multi-dimensional Model, and these are:

(1) Instruction <u>will not</u> enable learners to acquire any developmental feature out of sequence.

(2) Instruction will enable learners to acquire a developmental feature providing that the processing operations required to produce those features that precede it in the acquisitional sequence have already been mastered.

(3) Instruction directed at developmental features for which the learner is not ready may interfere with the natural process of acquisition.

(4) Instruction will help learners to acquire variational features.

Since hypothesis number three is of most interest at this point, we will take a closer look at some of the research supporting this hypothesis. Pienemann (1984) conducted an experimental study to investigate the above described hypotheses. The subjects were ten children between the ages of seven and nine years who had been learning L2 German naturalistically. Data were collected on two occasions - before and after the period of instruction - by means of interviews between pairs of subjects and between each learner and a student interviewer. Additional data were also collected by means of hidden recordings in the children's playing environment. The instruction targets were inversion and copula. Hypothesis number three claims that premature learning of a developmental feature may be counterproductive. Pienemann's study lends support to this hypothesis. The results of his study show that for two of the learners the use of adverb-preposing rule actually fell away as a result of the instruction on the use of inversion. Pienemann suggests that as a result of the instruction these two learners discovered that when they used adverb-preposing they should also apply inversion. However, they were not able to do this, because they were not developmentally ready. They knew, therefore, that their utterances containing a preposed adverb were incorrect. This led them to withdraw the use of this rule in order to avoid incorrect sentences. This study carried out by Pienemann not only supports hypothesis number three, but all four of the general hypotheses listed above.

Ellis (1989) investigated classroom acquisition of German word-order rules, and based his research on the findings of studies of naturalistic L2 acquisition (e.g. Meisel 1983, Clahsen 1985) which show that learners acquire German word-order rules in a predictable sequence (adverb-preposing ∅ particle ∅ inversion ∅ verb-end). Ellis set out to investigate whether a group of thirty-nine learners of German as a foreign language in beginner courses manifested

the same route of acquisition for the obligatory word-order rules. Ellis' results from this longitudinal study revealed the same order of acquisition for both the learners individually and as a group, but the order did not correspond to either the order in which the three rules were first introduced or to the order of emphasis placed on the three rules in the classroom instruction. The learners received instruction during the six months' duration of the study.

The conclusion drawn by Ellis held that the learners followed their own internal 'syllabus' in the same way as untutored learners. This syllabus proved immune to instruction, despite the fact that the learners (college undergraduates) were well equipped in terms of experience and cognitive skills to benefit from direct intervention. Ellis (1990:146) noted, however, that "the learners were in general successful in acquiring some knowledge of verb-end, the most advanced of the word-order rules - in contrast to naturalistic learners, who in many cases failed to acquire inversion or verb-end in studies carried out by Meisel and Clahsen". Ellis (1990) points out that this discrepancy may be the result of large differences between the groups under study. Meisel and Clahsen's data were collected from migrant workers in Germany, whereas Ellis' informants were educationally successful classroom learners. Ellis (1990:173) suggests that these differences may have as much to do with social and educational backgrounds as with the presence or absence of formal instruction.

Pienemann (1987) carried out a similar study, and was able to show that in the case of developmental features, the instruction had no effect unless a learner was ready to acquire a new rule (cf. hypothesis number three, page 26). From this study, Pienemann drew two major conclusions: (1) formal learners progress step by step irrespective of the teaching schedule and (2) the sequence of acquisition is the same in classroom as in naturalistic acquisition. In addition, as a result of this research, Pienemann put forward the Teachability Hypothesis, which states that "instruction can only promote language acquisition if the interlanguage is close to the point when the structure to be taught is acquired in the natural setting (so that sufficient processing requisites are developed)" (Pienemann 1985:37). Hence, this hypothesis rules out the possibility that instruction can help the learner to beat the natural order of developmental features, and a corollary of this hypothesis is that premature instruction can actually be harmful.

However, the Teachability Hypothesis allows for instruction as a facilitator for natural language-acquisition processes if it coincides with when the learner is ready. Also, the Teachability Hypothesis allows for the positive effect that instruction can have on the acquisition of variational features. According to Ellis (1990:158), "the teachability hypothesis is the most powerful account we have of how formal instruction relates to learning".

Concluding this part of the chapter which concerns experimental research on the effect of instruction, we will now consider approaches which allow for the existence of implicational universals, the so-called **'Projection' Studies**. This group of studies is based on predictions derived from the study of linguistic universals, and, according to Ellis (1990), two types of universals can be distinguished: typological universals and universals based on Chomsky's theory of Universal Grammar. The former have been identified by examining a representative sample of natural languages, whereas the latter have been identified by studying individual languages in depth in order to establish the set of principles or parameters which govern the way any grammar is constructed. What is meant by these approaches allowing for implicational universals, is that they relate the presence of one linguistic property to the presence of one or more other properties. Implicational universals allow predictions to be made about the acquisition of sets of linguistic features. The learner is credited with a projection device (Zobl 1983) that enables the acquisition of one rule to trigger the acquisition of all the other rules that cluster with it (Ellis 1990:159). Researchers interested in the question whether instruction can activate this projection device have investigated whether instruction aimed at marked linguistic features can facilitate the automatic acquisition of unmarked features. (Marked features in this sense refer to features that are difficult to acquire because they are not universal, whereas unmarked features are those which are universal, and therefore, easy to learn). At this point it should be noted that the notion of markedness in L2 acquisition, as connected to the role of transfer and language learner difficulties, will be treated in Chapter Two.

An example of research that supports the projection hypothesis is Gass' (1979) study, which investigated the effects of instruction in recognizing and producing sentences in which the

'object of preposition' was relativized. Her study was based on Comrie and Keenan's (1978) Accessibility Hierarchy, which established an implicational scale for relative pronoun functions. This scale predicts that if a language permits relative pronouns with a given relative function (e.g. indirect object, which is placed in the middle of the hierarchy), then it will also permit relative clauses with pronoun functions higher in the hierarchy (e.g. direct object and subject) but not with pronoun functions lower down. Gass found that the learners who were given instruction in recognizing and producing sentences in which the object of preposition was relativized (i.e. a position low down in the Accessibility Hierarchy) not only succeeded in improving their scores on object of preposition but also on all the positions higher in the hierarchy. Similar findings have since been obtained by Zobl (1985) and Eckman, Bell and Nelson (1988).

The notion of projection is a powerful one if one views the notion from a pedagogical perspective. With the findings demonstrated above in mind, one may claim that instruction would be extremely helpful since it can supply the learner with numerous examples of marked features, which again will serve to trigger the acquisition of unmarked features.

Thus, experimental research provides some evidence that instruction can have a direct effect on the acquisition of specific linguistic features, but it should be noted that there exists evidence which indicates that the effects may wear off over time. At the SLRF'98, Lim (1998) presented a paper, based on a study which investigated how different types of formal instruction affect L2 learning of English grammatical structures, particularly the Present Perfect. Both accuracy of target structures and long-term effects were measured. The results showed that subjects provided with both rule instruction and visual enhancement of input showed higher proficiency than other groups; however, the gain did not relate to better long-term retention, and the effect wore off after some time.

Recent research into the role of instruction, like the above reported study conducted by Lim, has focused on the role of input, and on the basis of cognitive theory, Doughty (1998) argued that

paying attention to target input is the most crucial factor at play in SLA development. According to cognitive theory, "progress in SLA often depends crucially upon paying attention to features of target input, upon noticing interlocutor reactions to interlanguage output, and upon making insightful cognitive comparisons involving differences between input and output utterance details" (Doughty 1998). Doughty (1998) addressed the issues of how pedagogical intervention should accommodate rather than interfere with the on- and off-line processes and memory resources responsible for progress and development in SLA. Gass et al.(1998) argued along the same lines as Doughty (1998), and considered attention (for example enhanced input) to be a necessary condition for SLA development, but concluded that attention itself is not sufficient. By conducting a study which manipulated the variables of attention and awareness in the acquisition of three grammatical structures of Spanish, Gass et al. found no significant difference between the learners who received textually enhanced grammatical forms and those provided with unenhanced input.

Another paper which focused on enhancement as a means of raising learners' attention, also presented at SLRF'98, was that of Jourdenais (1998). This paper reported research investigating the acquisition of preterit and imperfect aspect by L2 learners of Spanish, and learners at various levels of Spanish proficiency performed narrative and multiple-choice tasks eliciting past tense use. Jourdenais (1998) set out to investigate whether subjects who receive textually enhanced preterit and imperfect forms incorporate those forms earlier than subjects who receive unenhanced input. She found that while the enhancement may have encouraged subjects in the 'enhanced imperfect' group to overuse the imperfect form in one of the tasks, significant differences in performance (both between and within groups) on the other tasks were not obtained, indicating that the enhancement of the preterit and imperfect did not significantly affect group performance.

Hence, research results have shown that the effects of instruction and enhancement of input were apt to wear off over time. The conclusion, however, must be that formal instruction does contribute to L2 acquisition. Learners who receive formal instruction generally outperform

those who do not, they learn more rapidly, and they reach higher levels of ultimate achievement.

We began the discussion of 'the role of instruction in the process of L2 acquisition' by posing two questions. We will now consider what tentative answers can be given to these questions.

• *Are developmental sequences impervious to instruction?*

It seems as if developmental sequences, to a large extent, are impervious to instruction, which thereby rules out the possibility that instruction can help the learner to beat the natural order of developmental features. Hence, one can say that L2 acquisition tends to involve certain natural processes that cannot be bypassed.

• *Can instruction be viewed as harmful with regard to developmental sequences?*

When referring to Pienemann's teachability hypothesis above, it was claimed that a consequence of this hypothesis is that premature instruction can actually be harmful, and that instruction may result in interference with the normal progress of acquisition. Lightbown's (1983) findings of 'over-learning of V-ing' support the notion of the harmful effect of instruction. We will return to these issues in Chapter Five of this thesis, where we will view the results of the present study.

We have in this chapter looked at some of the central issues in the field of second language acquisition and at some of the recent research findings as presented at the SLRF'98, issues which are all deeply involved in the motivation for the present study.

CHAPTER TWO

TENSE, ASPECT AND MODALITY

2.0 Introduction

In order to acquire the system of temporal reference in English, a learner must master tense, aspect and modality, all of which are concerned with time, but in different ways. We will, in this chapter, outline these categories, and view how they may represent difficulties for the Norwegian learner. A contrastive analysis, English vs. Norwegian, will be provided, as well as various usages of the verb forms under study. This chapter of the thesis will begin with a tense outline which is followed by an outline of aspect and modality. Finally, the contrasts between the two languages in question are provided. The examples which will be used to illustrate the different usages of the various verb forms are to a large extent the same sentences that the informants under study were asked to complete in a fill-in-the-blanks test (Appendix II).

2.1 Tense

Tense is a grammatical category that is realized by verb inflection. According to Hasselgård, Johansson and Lysvåg (1998), most grammarians hesitate to talk of a future tense in English. The motivation is that there are a number of expressions of future time and that the most typical ones, for example the auxiliaries *shall* and *will*, also have clear modal uses. Thus, since English has no inflected form of the verb denoting futurity, the threefold semantic opposition (future - present - past) is reduced to two tenses: *the Present Tense* and *the Past Tense*. As the names imply, the Present Tense normally refers to present time and Past Tense to past time.

2.1.1 Simple Present Tense for Present Time

We will now consider the various usages of Simple Present verb forms, in addition to exemplifying these usages by sentences. The reader should be reminded about the fact that only

the verb forms under study in this thesis will be discussed in this chapter concerning tense, aspect and modality.

(A) Present state

The 'present state' has also been referred to as the 'unrestrictive present', and has been called so because it places no limitation on the extension of the state into past and future time:

1. Anna loves going to the theatre.
2. Nichole knows many languages.

However, limits to the duration of the state may be implied by an adverbial expression which underlines the 'presentness' of the period in question, thereby indicating a contrast with some other period:

3. *At present* we live in London.

(B) Present event

The 'present event' signifies an event simultaneous with the present moment, and normally occurs only in certain easily definable contexts; such as in sports commentaries (4) and in the commentary of demonstrators (5):

4. Fowler passes the ball to Owen, who heads it straight into the goal.
5. Now I put two eggs into the bowl, and add three tea-spoons of sugar.

(C) Present habit

A third use of the Simple Present, that of the habitual use, is like the above 'present event' confined to 'event' verbs. The habitual present represents a series of individual events which as a whole make up a state stretching back into the past and forward into the future:

6. John works at Kværner.

As a way of interpreting 'event' verbs, the habitual present is more common than the 'present event' above, since the latter is rarely found outside a few limited contexts.

Sometimes an adverbial expression of frequency reinforces the notion of repetition in the habitual present:

7. My family and I go to France *every year*.
8. I like Bergen, although it rains here *every day*.

This form of the Simple Present most likely implies the least difficulty for Norwegian learners, since it can be viewed as the least marked form of the Simple Present.

In addition to these three uses with reference to present time (i.e. time including the present moment), the Simple Present may also refer to future time and to the past (the historic present). Regarding Simple Present used to denote future time, it will be dealt with together with other means of expressing futurity.

2.1.2 Simple Past Tense for Past Time

The Past Tense refers to a definite time in the past, which may be identified by:

I. a past time adverbial in the same sentence,

II. the preceding language context, or

III. the context outside language.

Examples of the three types are:

I. I walked to school yesterday

II. -Did you catch any fish? - Yes, I caught many!

III. Did you get any letters? (Here one can use the Past Tense without language context, because it is understood that the mail arrives at a given time during the day).

Just as the three usages given in the above outline on 'Simple Present Tense for present time', there are similar past time meanings:

(A) the State Past

The 'state past' is used with stative verb senses to refer to a single unbroken state of affairs in the past:

9. When I was a young boy I lived in Paris.

(B) the Event Past

The 'event past' is used with dynamic verb senses to refer to a single definite event in the past:

10. I walked to school yesterday.

11. Today the weather is fine, but yesterday it rained a lot.

(C) the Habitual Past

The 'habitual past' is used with dynamic verb senses to refer to past events that occurred repeatedly:

12. I used to get up early those days.

Apart from these three usages of the Simple Past Tense, there are also some special uses of this grammatical category, namely, when referring to the attitudinal past (13), the hypothetical past (14) and in indirect speech or thought (15,16):

13. Did you want to see me now?
14. If she asked me, I would help her.
15. He said that he visited you.
16. I thought you were in Rome.

2.2 Aspect

Aspect is a grammatical category that reflects the way in which the meaning of the verb is viewed with respect to time. We recognize two aspects in English; *the perfective* and *the progressive*, which may combine in a complex verb phrase and are marked for present and past time (Greenbaum and Quirk 1990). *John sings* and *John sang* show a difference in tense; *John sang* and *John was singing* show a contrast in aspect, both sentences being in the Past Tense (occurring prior to the time of speaking). In addition, English has both a Present Perfect, *John has sung* and a Past Perfect *John had sung*. For each of these categories, learners must acquire the appropriate morphology (plus irregular forms) - for tense, past (-ed) and nonpast (Ø, -s); for aspect, progressive (be+ing); and for perfect (have+en) - as well as learn the order of these elements in combination, as in the Past Perfect Progressive, *had been changing*.

Present Perfect	e.g. has changed
Past Perfect	e.g. had changed
Present Progressive	e.g. is changing
Past Progressive	e.g. was changing

Present Perfect Progressive	e.g. has been changing
Past Perfect Progressive	e.g. had been changing

The Present Perfect is used to refer to a situation set at some indefinite time within a period beginning in the past and leading up to the present, whereas the Past Perfect refers to a time earlier than another past time. It may represent both the past of the Simple Past and the past of the Present Perfect. The progressive aspect (or 'continuous') focuses on the situation as being in progress at a particular time. In consequence, it may imply that the situation has limited duration and that it is not necessarily complete. As pointed out, the progressive and perfective may combine. When these two aspects are combined in the same verb phrase, the features of meaning associated with each aspect are also combined to refer to a 'temporary situation leading up to the present', when the perfect auxiliary is Present Tense *has* or *have*. The combination conveys the sense of a situation in progress with limited duration. The Perfective Progressive may combine with the Past Tense and with modals.

2.2.1 Past Tense vs. Perfect Aspect

There is a special problem of past time reference in English, namely the question of how to choose between the use of Past Tense and the use of Perfect Aspect. The Past Tense is used when the past happening is related to a definite time in the past which one may call 'then'. Hence, the Simple Past Tense means 'past-happening-related-to-past-time'.

17. I lived in Paris for ten years (='Now I don't live there anymore')

In contrast, the Perfect Aspect is used for a past happening which is seen in relation to a later event or time. Thus, the Present Perfect means 'past-happening-related-to-present-time'.

18. I have lived in Paris for ten years (='I still live there')

There is also a slight difference between the two languages in question, namely, Norwegian and English. These two differ according to *precisely how* the two forms, Past vs. Present Perfect, are kept apart. Since the two languages show a somewhat differing use, it is important to compare Past Tense and Present Perfect in more detail.

In cases where there is no overt specification of a definite time in the past, Norwegian is more apt to use the Present Perfect. Past Tense is more frequently used in English. As Johansson and Lysvåg (1987:130) point out, "it seems as if Norwegian tends to focus on the present result and chooses the Present Perfect, whereas English frequently emphasizes the preceding event". Instances where English Past Tense is often used when the corresponding tense is Present Perfect in Norwegian are, for example, in sentences with *ever*, *never*, and *always* (19, 20, 21), in sentences containing some uses of *ago* (22,23) and in situations which contain evidence of some past happening (24,25):

19. Did you ever come across any members of the royal family?	Har De noensinne støtt på medlemmer av kongefamilien?
20. I never said a word.	Jeg har ikke sagt et ord.
21. She was always popular in our family.	Hun har alltid vært populær i vår familie.
22. We met once long ago.	Vi har truffet hverandre en gang for lenge siden.
23. I saw the movie some time ago.	Jeg har sett filmen for en tid siden.
24. Did you fall? (You've got dirt all over you).	Har du falt ?
25. What happened to your brand new bicycle? (looking at damage)	Hva er det som har skjedd med den splitter nye sykkelen din?

Thus, we have seen that the distinction between Past Tense and Present Perfect in English may involve some problems for the Norwegian learner. We will now look at the actual use of Present Perfect, before we move on to the various usages of the Progressive Aspect.

2.2.2 The Present Perfect

As we have concluded, we can refer to an event which is past relative to the moment of speaking in two different ways. If we use a Past Tense form, as in (26) below, the event is disconnected from the present. Usually there is some adverbial expression which anchors the event in the past. The other way is to connect the past event to the moment of speaking by using

the Present Perfect, as in (27) below. In both these cases the person saw a movie some time in the past, but the parenthesized material in (27) shows that the past happening has relevance at the moment of speaking. That is the reason why the perfective form is preferred.

26. I *saw* the movie last Saturday.

27. I *have seen* the movie before (so I don't want to watch it again tonight).

Thus, the Present Perfect is used to refer to a situation set at some indefinite time within a period beginning in the past and leading up to the present. As mentioned, there is also a **Past Perfect** (or 'pluperfect') which may represent both the past of the Simple Past and the past of the Present Perfect. The essence of the Past Perfect is that it locates an event to "a time further in the past, seen from the viewpoint of a definite point in time already in the past" (Leech 1987:47). Due to the fact that this verb form was not chosen as one of the verb forms observed in this particular study, we will not deal here with the various usages of this verb form. Regarding the verb forms under study, three related uses of the Present Perfect may be noted:

(A) The State Present Perfect

Present Perfect is used with stative verb senses to refer to a state that began in the past and extends to the present, and which perhaps will continue in the future:

28. I have lived in Tromsø for the past six years.

29. He has lived in Paris for ten years now.

30. I've always loved him.

(B) The Event Present Perfect

Just as with stative verbs, Present Perfect can also be used with a dynamic verb sense. This is done when one wants to refer to one or more events that have occurred at some time within a period leading up to the present:

31. Have you ever been to France?

(C) The Habitual Present Perfect

The 'habitual Present Perfect' is used with dynamic verb senses to refer to past events that have repeatedly occurred up to and including the present:

32. I have visited London several times.

2.2.3 Progressive Aspect

Unlike Norwegian, English can choose between the Simple Present Tense and the Present Progressive to refer to present time. In some cases the choice depends on the speaker's subjective perception. Learners of English must pay attention to contextual clues, typically adverbial expressions, to decide which verb form to use. In contexts where one is talking about something habitual, permanent or unchangeable, use of the progressive is ruled out. Norwegian learners may have problems with choosing between the use of the simple form and the progressive form; hence, Johansson and Lysvåg suggest these definitions of the two forms:

> Whereas the simple form is used to describe what the speaker thinks are characteristic and permanent properties of persons and things, the progressive is used to report on the observable and changeable behaviour of people and on evidence and manifestations of changeable properties of things (Johansson and Lysvåg 1987:160).

However, certain adverbials (*always, forever* etc.) may accept the progressive if the sentence refers to something that the speaker feels annoyed about (33):

33. You're always finding excuses for everything.

It is important for learners of English to bear in mind the difference between stative and dynamic verbs. What is special about this distinction with respect to the progressive aspect, is the fact that sometimes a verb changes meaning depending on whether it is in the Simple Present Tense or the Progressive. That is, in some cases a verb must be used in the Simple Present Tense in one sense (34), but allows the Progressive when used in a different sense (35):

34. This car drives like a Mercedes.

35. My mother-in-law is driving me mad!

In the first example, the verb *drive* is used in a **stative** sense, whereas the second implies a **dynamic** sense. "The dynamic sense means that the verb refers to a voluntary action that can be controlled by the person the subject refers to" (Hasselgård et al. 1998:181), whereas one could say that stative verbs denote conditions and properties over which human beings have no control. In English, quite a few verbs have a stative sense only and therefore practically never appear in the progressive aspect. Examples of such verb types are verbs of perception (see,

hear, smell, etc.), verbs denoting cognition or emotional states (know, understand, love, hate, etc.) and those verbs which denote physical or abstract relationships (remain, own, want, resemble, etc.) Let us now turn to the actual usages of the progressives, and consider some examples of these.

(A) The State Progressive

We just made it clear that stative verbs generally do not occur in the progressive, since there is no conception of progression in state of affairs:

36. * I am liking you.

37. * Nichole was knowing many languages.

However, when verbs that are ordinarily stative occur in the progressive, they adopt dynamic meanings, and may thereby indicate a type of behavior with limited duration:

38. You are wanting too much!

39. She was hearing voices as soon as she was alone.

Some of the ordinarily stative verbs which express emotion or attitude will indicate tentativeness when occurring in the progressive:

40. Sheila is hoping to get a new job soon.

41. I was wondering whether you could lend me some money.

(B) The Event Progressive

The 'event progressive' is used with dynamic verb senses to refer to an event that has duration and is not necessarily completed:

42. I am reading a book about economics.

43. John was studying for his exam all last week.

The Past Progressive in (43) suggests that the exam is yet to come, and that John still has studying to do.

The Present Progressive is more commonly used than the Simple Present for events in present time, due to the fact that present events are usually regarded as having some duration:

44. Where are you going? I am going to the store.

(C) The Habitual Progressive

The 'habitual progressive' is used with dynamic verb senses to refer to events that repeatedly occur, with the implication that they take place over a limited period of time:

45. My car is in the garage so for the time being I am going to work by bus.

46. When I was a young girl, my family and I were going to France every summer.

As we will see in section 2.4 concerning contrasts between Norwegian and English, there is no opposition in Norwegian corresponding to the contrast between progressive and simple verb forms. It can thus be expected that the meaning and the use of the progressive aspect involve problems for the Norwegian learner.

In addition to the grammatical aspects described above, a learner of English must learn how morphologically marked aspect interacts with *Aktionsart*, or lexical aspect, which refers to the inherent properties of the verb. A learner must also learn how the temporal relations of events are established on the discourse level (Givon 1982). There are also other linguistic devices for indicating temporal reference, namely adverbials (*yesterday* and *in the morning*), calendric reference (*May 5*), and metrical time expressions (*two months*), to name a few. Thus, we have seen that there are several features which a learner of English as a second language must pay attention to. However, it has been decided to restrict temporal reference in the present thesis to the explicit morphological encoding of tense and aspect; hence, there will be no discussion of the other devices which can be used to code temporality. The verb forms whose acquisition is investigated in the present thesis are the following:

Verb forms	Codes used in analysis
simple present	PRE
simple past, regular	PA
simple past, irregular	PA/irr
present progressive	PREpro
past progressive	PApro
present perfect	PREper
be going to + inf. - future	Goto-f
will + inf. - future	Will-f
base form	Ø

Table 2.1 Verb forms whose acquisition is investigated in the present thesis

Additional verb forms which will also be dealt with in this thesis, due to the informants' production of such forms:

Verb forms	Codes used in analysis
past perfect	PAper
present perfect progressive	PREperpro
past perfect progressive	PAperpro
will/shall + inf. - future	Will/shall-f

Table 2.2 Additional verb forms which will also be dealt with in this thesis

2.3 Modality

As Johansson and Lysvåg (1987:116) put it, "tense is inextricably bound up with two other major verbal categories". Aspect, being one of the two, has already been discussed, but the other verbal category, namely, *modality* will be considered in this section of the chapter. Due to the focus on temporal reference and the verb forms used to express it, modality will only be considered in light of the modals used to express futurity. Initially, we will adopt the definition of modality as "the variety of meanings that can be expressed by the modal auxiliaries proper" as given in Johansson and Lysvåg (1987:188), and concentrate on ways of expressing future time by the use of the modal auxiliary under particular study in this thesis, namely *will*.

2.3.1 The Modal 'Will'

It seems hard to distinguish between the temporal, future-referring 'will' and the modal uses of the auxiliary. The formal characteristics of 'will' are the following:

1) It is followed by the bare infinitive (John will do the dishes).

2) It cannot occur in non-finite functions (*to will, *willed etc.).

3) It has no *-s* form for the 3rd person singular of the present tense.

4) Its present and past form can be used to refer to future time, often with a tentative meaning:

-Will / would you visit him at the hospital tomorrow?

We will now look at the meaning of the modal *will*, and only briefly note that this modal, as any other modal, has both **intrinsic** (which involves some human control over events) and

extrinsic (which involves human judgement of what is or is not likely to happen) uses. As a modal, 'will' has several meanings:

(A) Prediction

The **future predictive** sense of 'will' is the most common way of expressing futurity. 'Will' is here used with the infinitive, and can express the neutral future of prediction:

47. Temperatures tomorrow will be much the same as today.

'Will' is particularly common in the main clause of a conditional sentence:

48. If the weather is fine tomorrow, we will go for a walk.

In addition to the future predictive sense of 'will', there is also a **present predictive** sense of the modal, which is comparatively rare. This sense resembles the modal *must*, in that it implies logical necessity:

49. That'll be the milkman. [on hearing the doorbell ring]

The final predictive sense of 'will' is the **habitual predictive** meaning, which often occurs in conditional sentences, or in timeless statements of 'predictability':

50. Oil will float on water.

(B) Volition

'Volition' is one of the earlier mentioned intrinsic meanings. This sense induces some intrinsic human control over events. Such intrinsic control can either be *intention*, *willingness*, or *insistence*. Examples of the three are provided below. It should be said that the last mentioned, insistence, is rarely used, but when used, it implies wilfulness on the part of the subject referent. In these cases, the auxiliary is always stressed, an cannot be contracted to *'ll*.

51. I'll send you an e-mail as soon as I can. (*intention*)

52. Since there is no milk in the refrigerator, I will go and buy some. (*willingness*)

53. She 'will keep interrupting me! (*insistence*)

2.3.2 Other Means of Expressing Future Time

In the absence of an inflected verb form denoting futurity in English, there are several possibilities for expressing future time. There are at least four chief ways of expressing future

time in the English verb-phrase, the most important future constructs being those which use 'will' and 'be going to'. These are also the two constructs focused on in this thesis. Due to the fact that the informants under study also provided other constructs, we will provide their usages as well.

(A) Will/shall + infinitive

The 'will + inf.-future' is the most neutral, most frequent, and most widely applicable future-referring expression. 'Will' can express the neutral future of prediction (54), combined with modal overtones; 'will' exhibits intrinsic and extrinsic meanings (as discussed above), and 'will' is particularly common in the main clause of a conditional sentence (55):

54. Temperatures tomorrow will be much the same as today.

55. If the weather is fine tomorrow, we will go for a walk.

(B) Be going to + infinitive

The 'be going to + inf.-construction' is, besides the 'will + inf.-future', the most important future-referring expression. Though choosing between the use of 'will' or 'be going to' often is a stylistic matter, there are some differences in meaning between the two. When 'will' is used, a future event or state is viewed in the context of something unknown at the moment of utterance, whereas the 'be going to-expression' involves that something is already known or existing in present time.

Thus, the general meaning of the 'be going to-construction' with the infinitive has been described as 'future fulfilment of the present' (Leech 1987, Greenbaum and Quirk 1990). One further distinguishes two specific meanings. The first, 'future fulfilment of a present intention', is associated with personal subjects and agentive verbs. Because of its 'present' connection, the 'be going to-construction' often refers to the immediate future. This is especially true when there is no accompanying future-referring Adverbial, as in (56) and (57) below:

56. It's going to rain.

57. Leanne is going to lend us her camera.

58. We are going to go to London next week.

The other meaning, 'future result of a present cause', is found with both personal and non personal subjects:

59. Sheila is pregnant. She is going to have a baby in June.

60. Erik stole a Toyota, and there is going to be trouble.

61. There is a car in our lane. We are going to crash!

Other means of expressing future time in English which are not under *particular* study in this thesis, but were still produced by the informants are:

(C) Present Progressive Aspect

This form is normally used for future events arising from a present plan, programme or arrangement:

62. Dad just told us that we are going to London next week.

(D) Simple Present Tense

The use of Present Tense for the expression of future time in the data collected for this thesis is restricted to present tense use for events which are seen as absolutely certain, because they are determined in advance by calendar or timetable:

63. The lecture starts at 2 p.m. tomorrow.

2.4 Verb Usage in Norwegian and English

The informants under study in this thesis were faced with the task of acquiring a verb system which, although at first sight quite familiar formally, also reveals some relevant differences when compared with their native language system. In English, all the forms of the Simple Present are in the base form (V-Ø; also the infinitive form) except for the third person singular which adds /s/ to the base (V-s). The Norwegian Simple Present has both a regular and irregular conjugation, where regular verbs add /r/ to the infinitive. Like in English, the Norwegian Simple Past has a regular and irregular conjugation, but Norwegian regular Simple Past shows more morphological variation: regular verbs add /t/, /te/, /de/ or /dde/.

The relationship between future-referring expressions in English and Norwegian is complex, as both languages have a range of such expressions. Neither has a future 'tense' in the sense that there is one particular form which is the privileged way of referring to future time and has this use as its major function. The prevalent future-referring expression in Norwegian is the Present Tense, whereas such use of the (non-progressive) English present is highly circumscribed. The Norwegian use of present with future time reference is found with a variety of verbs, and they typically indicate actions or processes. The natural English equivalent is *will* + verb, indicating a prediction of future events. Another way of expressing future in Norwegian is formed periphrastically by the auxiliary *skal/vil* 'shall/will' and the V-Ø form of the main verb. This form is also quite common in Norwegian, whereas *shall* in English is rare.
Another periphrastic form, *komme til* + infinitive, is also used in Norwegian, but this form corresponds translationally to more than one English form, so contrastive problems may arise.

The major difference between these two languages is related to the English progressive. Unlike English, Norwegian does not have the morphological category of Progressive Aspect. The Norwegian language has not grammaticalized the meaning conveyed by the progressive. In order to express that an action is taking place at some definite moment, idiomatic expressions such as *holde på (med)* or *drive på med* 'doing' and *være i ferd med* could be employed. So, the implication of an on-going situation can be expressed overtly by these idiomatic expressions, but most often Norwegians rely on the total context to decide whether the verbal action is in progress or whether some other aspectual meaning is relevant. As pointed out in the above section concerning the Progressive Aspect, the meaning and use of this feature to a large extent involve problems for the Norwegian learner. On the whole, Norwegian learners of English tend to overuse progressive forms. Johansson and Lysvåg (1987:158) make claims for such non-target-like use being textbook induced, "because teaching materials produced for beginning learners often overuse progressive forms to avoid the problematic auxiliary *do* ".

The English and Norwegian Perfect tenses are formally similar (present/past auxiliary + past participle), the only difference being that of American English using Simple Past instead of

Present Perfect in certain contexts where British English and Norwegian not would allow for such use, e.g. AmE: 'Did you pay the bills/Did you see that movie? - Yes, I already paid the bills/I already saw that movie', meaning 'I have already paid the bills/ I have already seen that movie'. Thus, American English shows a stronger preference for the Simple Past than British English and Norwegian, especially with certain adverbs (*already, just, yet*) and in expressions referring to the immediate past.

Table 2.3 summarizes the major grammaticalized tense and aspectual distinctions in Norwegian and English.

		ENGLISH	NORWEGIAN
TENSE	PRESENT	unmarked form (V-ø, V-s)	1a. regular (V-r) e.g. *kjøper* 1b. irregular e.g. *være - er*
	PAST	1a. regular (V-ed) 1b. irregular	1a. regular (V-et, V-te, V-de, V-dde) 1b. irregular e.g *gå - gikk*
	FUTURE	1. unmarked form (V-ø, V-s) 2. periphrastically: will + V-ø be going to + V-ø	1. simple present tense (V-r) 2. periphrastically: skal + V-ø vil + V-ø
		aux. *be* + pres.part.	komme til å + V-ø
ASPECT	PROGRESSIVE	aux. *be* + pres. part.	There are no forms corresponding with the so-called continous tenses in English. In order to express that the action is taking place at some definite moment the following idiomatic expressions could be employed: 'holde på (med)' 'drive på med'
	PERFECT	aux. *have* + past part.	aux. *har* + past part.
	HABITUAL	used to + V-ø (optional)	pleide + inf brukte + inf

Table 2.3 Verb usage in English and Norwegian

2.5 Eckman's Markedness Differential Hypothesis (MDH)

When contrasting the two languages in question, English and Norwegian, it is also interesting to see how they relate to each other with regard to markedness. According to Eckman (1996:197), "the areas of difficulty that a language learner will have can be predicted on the basis of a systematic comparison of the grammars of the NL, the TL and the markedness relations stated in universal grammar,

a. Those areas of the TL that differ from the NL and are more marked than the NL will be difficult.

b. The relative degree of difficulty of the areas of the TL that are more marked than the NL will correspond to the degree of markedness.

c. Those areas of the TL that are different from the NL, but are not more marked than the NL will not be difficult."

Eckman defines his use of the concept *markedness* as the following:

> If the presence of a structure *p* in a language implies the presence of some other structure *q*, but the presence of *q* in some language does not imply the presence of *p*, then the structure *p* is marked relative to structure *q*, and structure *q* is unmarked relative to structure *p* (Eckman 1996:198).

In the typological sense, markedness refers to the relative frequency or generality of a given structure across the world's languages. The goal of the MDH is to explain difficulty in L2 acquisition. Hence, the MDH is capable of accounting for why some NL-TL differences do not cause difficulty, and why some differences are associated with degrees of difficulty whereas others are not. We will now use Eckman's MDH in the comparison of Norwegian and English, and various sentences will be listed in English (A), Norwegian (B) and German (C). German is compared with Norwegian and English to see whether it agrees or differs with respect to verbal morphology and usage of the verb forms under study.

① **Be going to + inf.-future**

A. She is going to have a baby.

B. Hun skal ha barn.

C. Sie wird ein Kind haben.

English	Norwegian	German
marked	unmarked	unmarked

② **Regular Simple past**

A. He worked on a farm.

B. Han arbeidet på en gård.

C. Er arbeitete an einem Hof.

English	Norwegian	German
unmarked	unmarked	unmarked

③ **Irregular Simple past**

A. Yesterday I went for a walk.

B. Igår gikk jeg en tur.

C. Gestern ging ich spazierengehen.

English	Norwegian	German
unmarked	unmarked	unmarked

④ **Past Progressive**

A. When I arrived in Bergen, it was raining.

B. Da jeg ankom Bergen regnet det.

C. Als ich nach Bergen kam, regnete es.

English	Norwegian	German
marked	unmarked	unmarked

⑤ **Simple Present**

A. Anna loves going to the theater.

B. Anna elsker å gå i teateret.

C. Anna liebt ins Theater zu gehen.

English	Norwegian	German
unmarked	unmarked	unmarked

⑥ **Present Perfect**

A. I have lived in Norway for ten years.

B. Jeg har bodd i Norge i ti år.

C. Ich habe zehn Jahre in Norwegen gewohnt.

English	Norwegian	German
unmarked	unmarked	unmarked

⑦ **Present Progressive**

A. It is raining right now.

B. Det regner akkurat nå.

C. Es regnet im moment.

English	Norwegian	German
marked	unmarked	unmarked

⑧ **Will + inf.-future**

A. The weather will be fine tomorrow.

B. Været vil bli fint imorgen.

C. Das Wetter wird Morgen gut sein.

English	Norwegian	German
unmarked	unmarked	unmarked

As we can see from the tables and forms ①, ④ and ⑦ provided above, English differs from the two other languages, and hence receives the characteristic as **marked**. Thus, we expectedly have a problem area for Norwegian learners of English, according to Eckman's MDH. The remaining forms, ②, ③, ⑤, ⑥ and ⑧, reveal the same unmarked characteristic for all three languages, and hence these usages should not involve major problems for Norwegian learners.

We have in this chapter outlined the characteristics of the verb forms whose acquisition is under study in this thesis, contrasted them with the learners' language (Norwegian) and viewed them in light of Eckman's MDH. This leads us to some expectations at the onset of this study, which will be listed as working hypotheses in the following section, i.e. section 2.6.

2.6 Working Hypotheses for the Present Study

One of the preparatory stages in the development of a research project is the stage where one states ones research question(s) or hypotheses. I will here state the hypotheses formulated at the onset of the present study, and return to them in a subsequent chapter, Chapter Five.

1) *I expect that the L2 learners will demonstrate gradual development in their use of time reference, from invariant verb forms to the introduction of tense morphology. I furthermore anticipate a progression in the use of time reference from less to gradually more marked forms.*

2) *Instruction may play an interfering role in the acquisition of time reference; it may result in the overuse of a specific verb form and/or in the learner abandoning already acquired rules.*

3) *Finally, I view the L2 learner's knowledge of his/her native language as representing a facilitation for the learner. Whenever a target-language verb form is similar to the corresponding form in the learner's native language, this will enable correct hypothesizing about the language in target. Interlanguage transfer of unmarked forms is more likely than marked ones, and the learner difficulty will generally result from L1-L2 differences involving a greater degree of L2 markedness, with degree of difficulty reflecting the degree of markedness.*

We will now turn to the actual study conducted for the present thesis, i.e. the acquisition of time reference by Norwegian school learners of English, and initially look at research methodology. Later, the findings will be described (Chapter Four) and subsequently discussed (Chapter Five).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

Due to the fact that the present thesis involves acquisition and not static knowledge, its purpose is to discover not just what learners know at a particular point in time, but what happens over a period of time. One way of gathering such data is through a longitudinal study, but another way, which has been chosen for the present study, is to use a cross-sectional design to create a quasi-longitudinal study. The emphasis in such a study, like in a longitudinal study, is on language acquisition and change, with data being collected at a single point in time, but with three different proficiency levels represented. From that one might infer that comparing these three groups would yield results similar to what would be found if one looked at a group of learners over time. An advantage of gathering information about linguistic development in this way is the fact that it is likely that the results can be generalized to a wider group. The present study may be characterized as an ethnographic one, analyzed by qualitative rather than quantitative means.

The informants on which this study is based were learners from three different proficiency levels of English. The beginner level was represented by fifth grade learners from the Gyllenborg elementary school, whereas the intermediate level was represented by junior high learners from the Kroken school. The group of informants which made up the higher level of English were learners from the Kvaløya high school (1. klasse allmenfaglig linje).

3.1 The Informants

Conducting a cross-sectional study, I decided that I needed at least ten learners to represent each level. I received permission to collect data from school learners of English in Tromsø from the Department of Education (Avdeling for Undervisning) in Tromsø kommune (see Appendix I),

and after some correspondence with various schools in the area, I was allowed access to three classes at three different schools in Tromsø.

As mentioned above, the 33 informants had reached three different levels of proficiency in English. Each group consisted of 11 learners and both sexes were represented. The selection process of each L2 learner was based on his or her length of study of English in Norwegian schools, and on this basis proficiency in English was roughly estimated. In order for no one to feel left out or excluded in the classroom setting, all members of each class were given the written test (fill-in-the-blanks test), unless they did not volunteer for participation in the present study. After a brief analysis of written data collected, I selected 11 learners from each class who seemed to have reached approximately the same level of proficiency, or were the 11 most alike informants in that particular group. Some of the learners were eliminated from the list of possible informants due to non-linguistic factors such as learning disabilities, extensive contact with the target language (English) or behavioral problems thought to influence the data. Approvals from the parents of the informants in group A and B were also received prior to the first data collection, whereas parental consent from C-group's learners was, according to the principal of the Kvaløya high school, not necessary.

The fifth graders, Group A, represented the beginner level of English. Their knowledge, very limited indeed, consisted of only the very basic rules of the English language. They had been exposed to English as a subject in school for about a year and a half, and used a textbook and workbook named *Scoop* (1997). The teaching of English in Norwegian schools is based on *Læreplanverket for den 10-årige grunnskolen,* also known as *L97,* where guidelines and directions are given concerning material and procedures for teaching as well as goals and perspectives for the various subjects taught. English as a subject in Norwegian schools was until 1997 introduced in the third grade (for learners at the age of nine). Due to changes in the Norwegian school system in the fall of 1997, the A-group learners were in their fifth grade at the time of data collection, despite only one year of instruction in English (and were ten years old). The textbook used at the Gyllenborg elementary school was designed to conform with the

new curriculum introduced in *L97*, and hence was meant for learners with a three-year experience in English. Needless to say, the level of difficulty in the teaching material was at times a problem in this group.

The textbook, *Scoop*, is built on authentic and contrived texts adjusted to the age group, encouraging the learners to actively take part in communication in the classroom and to discover the structures of the language rather than receiving explicit instruction in grammar. The book contains humorous as well as serious texts, and of the genres represented one could mention rhymes, jingles, poems, cartoons, fables and fairy-tales. As the author of *Scoop* so truly points out, songs and jingles are excellent to resort to for creating variation and activity in the classroom (Flemmen 1997:9). Tasks and activities in the textbook and workbook are open, thereby including all the learners in the classroom. According to the author of this book, as stated in the teacher's book, the intention is that every learner should be able to do something, at the same time as the 'strong' learners always can have something to stretch out for. Thus, the idea is for everyone to master something, and get credit for it, at the same time as 'strong' learners receive tasks which are linguistically more challenging. 'Weak' learners should reach the general standard prescribed for this level, whereas the 'stronger' learners could develop a more advanced knowledge of the L2. This teaching material highly conforms with the guidelines given in *L97*, where it is held that learners should notice the structures in the language through the encounter with various texts. Learners should be provided with a broad selection of texts in order to be encouraged to make use of their L2. Needless to say, the A-group learners had a strong focus on oral activities and communicative abilities rather than a focus on form, so that the reading of various texts was used as a tool to learn about language and culture.

The eighth graders, Group B, had reached a slightly more advanced level, some intermediate stage. These students had been exposed to English as a second language in school for more than four years, and they were, to a large extent, able to speak quite freely about chosen topics. Their textbook, named *Work Out 7*, was also based on texts representing different genres. According to their teacher of English, they should have been introduced to most of the rules of

English grammar prior to entering the eighth grade. In the eighth grade they concentrated on oral activities with the learning of just a few new grammar rules, and in accordance with *L97*, the learners were encouraged to discover the rules by themselves. Communicative ability was definitely the main focus, and communication in the classroom was consistently in English which provided the learners with systematic L2 oral input. With reference to writing skills, the teacher of English in Group B viewed it as important that the students tried to express themselves in writing without feeling restricted by the need for grammatical accuracy. Hence, the fact that they productively used their L2 in writing became more important than what kinds of errors they made. With reference to the specific grammatical features under study in this thesis, it is held at the Kroken school that the eighth graders are not mature enough to fully understand the differences between the various verb tenses, which are dealt with more thoroughly in the ninth grade. The importance of using one tense consistently when speaking or writing was explained to the students, rather than teaching them categorical rules about the uses of the various tenses.

The high school learners, Group C, had at the time of data collection been taught English for more than seven years. They represented the highest level of proficiency tested, were fairly fluent in English, and able to speak spontaneously about most topics. Despite the fact that these students represented the highest level, they had not yet acquired native-like competence. These students had been taught rules, followed up by exercises, and the teacher had made a habit of discussing the grammatical features in order to make the learners aware of their second language learning process. Since the group in question had both a written and an oral exam at the end of their first year of upper high school, the teacher put emphasis on both written and oral skills. Accordingly, one could say that this group, to a certain extent, had had a focus on form in their latest learning environment. Concerning error correction, the teacher in charge always corrected errors in learners' written production. Errors in the learners' speech production were not consistently corrected, since this was thought to discourage the learners from communicating orally in their L2. As regards the syllabus for Group C, there exist no guidelines as to what grammar to teach and how to teach it. The teacher used only English in class during

English sessions, and claimed that most students, with the help of this input, were able 'to hear' what was grammatically correct or incorrect by the end of the school-year, as far as temporal aspects are concerned. Group C had received instruction, and had done structural exercises on progressive forms, and on present and past tenses. However, this kind of instruction made up no more than a total of five hours in the entire school year. Information technology and computer science are given quite high priorities in the 11th grade syllabus, and the teacher in charge made claims for increased proficiency in English as contact with these fields increased.

3.2 Data Collection

As indicated above, the focal point of this study was to characterize the acquisition of time reference by Norwegian school learners of English; thus the study was based on three different levels of learner proficiency. Furthermore, the data was elicited from these learners by two different instruments. Structural tests are used by many researchers to study subjects' performance with regard to specific grammatical morphemes or syntactic patterns. I therefore decided upon a fill-in-the-blanks test, to ensure a sufficient coverage of all the verb forms under study. Such a test is more demanding than, for instance, a multiple choice test, because it requires productive knowledge and more reliably distinguishes between proficiency levels than do multiple choice items (Gradman and Hanania 1990). Fill-in-the-blanks tests also facilitate comparison across learners because all learners respond to identical contexts. In addition, these tests eliminate avoidance to a great extent, since the learner must supply a form for each specified context (Bardovi-Harlig 1992:258). This was the first test given to the informants, and they spent 15-20 minutes filling in what they felt were the correct forms of the various verbs. Learners were given the base form of the verb and asked to supply the missing word or words in the blank. The target items were determined by native speaker responses. For Group A, a Norwegian version of each English sentence was also provided, and the informants were asked to complete 30 sentences altogether (Appendix II).

Due to the fact that a written test like the one described above merely mirrors a formal context and elicits only planned and carefully monitored language, it was also decided to give the

informants the opportunity to produce more informal and spontaneous speech. As a technique for eliciting such performance data, an oral interview was chosen. This type of test included questions and answers. Conducting a question and answer session is a fairly common means of eliciting SLA data. All three groups were given the same battery of tasks, five altogether. The subjects were given one task at a time, and for the younger learners I would provide the Norwegian translation if necessary, but I consistently encouraged them not to resort to their first language. If the subject was unsure of which verb to use, I supplied him/her with the base form of the target verb. When designing the tasks, I tried to make the elicitation tasks as closed as possible, leaving the subject with minimal opportunity to choose how to solve the task. I was at all times interested in the elicitation of very specific answers.

During the first two tasks the informant was asked to look at a picture/series of pictures (see Appendix III), and answer questions designed to elicit the particular structures under study. The three remaining tasks consisted of questions to the student. Even though constrained in certain ways, this latter part of the test gave the informants some freedom in choosing what topics to discuss. In so doing, it was hoped that they would tend to become more involved in the subject matter of the conversation and consequently produce more spontaneous speech. The oral test was designed to elicit production of the same verb forms as the written test. The target forms included Simple Past Tense, Simple Present Tense, Present Progressive, Past Progressive, Present Perfect, will + inf.-future and be going to + inf.-future. The oral data was recorded with the help of a tape recorder, and later transcribed in standard orthography.

When one collects data for the purpose of carrying out research, different factors are at play, factors which presumably affect the results and outcome of the study. One of the researcher's many important tasks is to control the variables and possibilities of flaws when carrying out a study. It should, however, be noted that some of the intervening variables in this study were uncontrollable, often due to the choice of elicitation task.

A problem with the oral interview was that of the 'question bias'. Were some of the informants' responses simply a result of copying what was uttered by the researcher? If this was the case,

the data recorded did not represent the learner's level of L2 knowledge, but was rather an artifact of the elicitation task.

3.3 Procedures to Adequately Display the Data Collected

Due to a large amount of data collected, there arose a need to decide upon the tools to sort the data correctly. It was soon concluded that statistical procedures would not be taken into account, but there still was certainly far too much data to handle without the help of a computer program. After having struggled with various ways to sort out the data, I decided to make use of a database for that purpose. All the material, both the written data from the fill-in-the-blanks tests and the oral data from the interviews, was then put into Excel, and each verb produced was coded for inflection and temporal reference. The coding of temporal reference was based on contextual clues (where available), including calendric reference, time adverbials and the interlocutor's questions. The responses were grouped into categories according to verbal morphology: regular Simple Past (PA), which included simple past tense forms and regularized past tense forms such as *eated*, irregular Simple Past (PA/irr.), Simple Present (PRE), Present Progressive (PREpro) which also included a verb + -ing with no auxiliary in a present tense context, Past Progressive (PApro) also including verb + -ing with no auxiliary in a past tense context, will + inf.-future (Will-f), be going to + inf.-future (Goto-f), and Present Perfect (PREper) which included attempts at the Present Perfect by the use of *have/has* (or their corresponding contractions -*'ve* and -*'s*) with a main verb. Thus *have go*, *have went* and *have gone* were all coded as attempted Present Perfect.

In addition to the classification in terms of verbal morphology, the responses were also categorized according to time/function (present, past and future) and formal correctness. In the latter, reasons for judging an utterance as formally incorrect could be based on one or more of the following features:

- lack of copula,
- the use of Norwegian verbs instead of English ones,
- omitted or wrongly conjugated verb inflections, despite the right tense used,
- regularizing of irregular verbs.

Following the work with Excel, all the data was transferred into the database program named Panorama. This program enabled the sorting out and counting of data, and gave me the opportunities to get what I wanted out of the data collected. In order to display the findings properly, Excel was again used to make graphs, tables and matrices. What remained to be done after this job was finished, was the actual analysis and discussion of the findings. In the next chapter we will look at the actual findings, and in Chapter Five we will turn to verification, discussion and tentative conclusions.

In this chapter the practical aspects of the study have been presented. The various groups of informants have been discussed, as well as the different types of data on which the analysis is based.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

4.0 Introduction

When choosing a method for analyzing data, one has to consider from what angles and perspectives one wants to interpret the data collected. I have chosen to do the analysis vertically only, to provide information about how the learners did as a group.

One common method for identifying and describing developmental patterns is the **obligatory context analysis**. However, there is one problem with this method of analysis, namely, that it takes no account of the cases when a learner uses a feature in a context for which it is not obligatory in the TL (overgeneralization/overuse). Clearly, the acquisition of a feature requires mastering not only when to use it, but also when not to use it. To take account of overuses as well as misuses, a number of researchers have suggested a procedure known as the **target-like use analysis** (hereafter referred to as the TLU). Pica (1984) has shown that substantial differences in estimates of learner abilities arise depending on whether the obligatory occasion or target-like use analysis is employed. This latter method, TLU, will be employed in section 4.3, whereas the other method, target use in obligatory contexts, will be used in section 4.2, concerning verb usage in English interlanguage. Initially, in section 4.1, we will consider the distribution of IL forms (4.1), whereas towards the end of this chapter we will view the form-function relationships (4.4).

As just mentioned, we will view the learners' production with reference to how they did as a group, and the different levels will be referred to as A, B or C according to their belonging in the A-, B- or C-group. Due to interest in different learner productions according to the two test forms, written and oral distributional results have been listed separately. At later displays, overall performance (written + oral test results) will also be shown, to give the reader an impression of the totality of learners' production. In the table below, a summary of information about the informants is provided.

DATA PRESENTATION

Level	Language background	No. of speakers	sex	Grade/age
A	Norwegian	11	4F/7M	5th (10-11 yrs)
B	Norwegian	11	5F/6M	8th (13-14 yrs)
C	Norwegian	11	7F/4M	11th (16-17 yrs)

Since I make use of codes when analyzing the data, it could be of an advantage for the reader to list the codes for each verb form as introduced in Chapter Two:

Verb forms	Codes used in analysis
simple present	PRE
simple past, regular	PA
simple past, irregular	PA/irr
present progressive	PREpro
past progressive	PApro
present perfect	PREper
be going to + inf. - future	Goto-f
will + inf. - future	Will-f
base form	Ø
past perfect	PAper
present perfect progressive	PREperpro
past perfect progressive	PAperpro
will/shall + inf. - future	Will/shall-f

Table 4.1 Verb forms and codes used in the analysis

4.1 Distributional Analysis

A distributional analysis for each context provided by the fill-in-the-blanks-test and the oral interview shows all the verb forms that the learner supplied for each context. The tables give the percentages of the occurrences of forms fulfilling the various temporal functions, as supplied by the learners[5]. Tables 4.2 - 4.9 give the distributional analysis for the verb forms under study, namely, *be going to-future*, *irregular Simple Past*, *regular Simple Past*, *Past Progressive*, *Simple Present*, *Present Perfect*, *Present Progressive* and *will + inf.-future*, respectively.

"Ø" indicates the use of an uninflected form (e.g. come), and "pro" indicates the use of a verb + *-ing* without the auxiliary *be* (e.g. coming).

Table 4.2 Distribution of IL forms fulfilling the function of *going to + inf. -future*:

	Level	Goto-f	PA/irr	PA	PAper	PApro	PRE	PREper	PREpro	pro	shall-f	will-f	Ø
Goto-f Written	A	11.4	-	6.8	-	-	27.3	-	9.1	-	2.3	15.9	27.3
	B	9.1	9.1	13.6	-	-	11.4	-	34.1	-	-	13.6	9.1
	C	36.4	2.3	-	-	-	-	-	25.0	-	-	36.4	-
Goto-f Oral	A	42.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	38.5	-	15.4	-	3.8
	B	52.2	4.3	-	-	-	8.7	-	17.4	-	4.3	13.0	-
	C	69.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	25.0	-	-	5.6	-

Table 4.3 Distribution of IL forms fulfilling the function of *irregular past*:

	Level	Goto-f	PA/irr.	PA	PAper	PApro	PRE	PREper	PREpro	pro	shall-f	will-f	Ø
PA/irr. Written	A	-	6.1	24.2	-	-	12.1	3.0	3.0	6.1	-	-	45.5
	B	-	42.4	15.2	-	-	27.3	-	9.1	3.0	-	-	3.0
	C	-	93.9	3.0	-	-	3.0	-	-	-	-	-	-
PA/irr. Oral	A	-	17.6	4.9	-	2.9	4.9	-	28.4	-	-	-	41.2
	B	-	52.3	6.3	-	6.3	3.6	-	7.2	-	-	-	24.3
	C	-	93.3	0.8	-	4.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.7

Table 4.4 Distribution of IL forms fulfilling the function of *regular past*:

	Level	Goto-f	PA/irr.	PA	PAper	PApro	PRE	PREper	PREpro	pro	shall-f	will-f	Ø
PA Written	A	-	-	33.3	3.0	-	33.3	-	-	12.1	-	-	18.2
	B	-	3.0	60.6	-	3.0	21.2	-	3.0	6.1	-	3.0	-
	C	-	3.0	78.7	-	15.2	3.0	-	-	-	-	-	-
PA Oral	A	-	1.6	31.1	-	4.9	3.3	-	19.7	-	-	39.3	-
	B	-	-	55.2	-	20.7	-	-	5.2	-	-	18.9	-
	C	-	2.0	93.9	-	2.0	-	-	-	-	-	2.0	-

[5]The sums of the responses range from 99.9% to 100.1% because the figures have been rounded off.

Table 4.5 Distribution of IL forms fulfilling the function of *Past Progressive*:

	Level	Goto-f	PA/irr.	PA	PAper	PApro	PRE	PREper	PREpro	pro	shall-f	will-f	Ø
PApro Written	A	-	-	39.4	-	3.0	15.2	-	-	27.3	-	-	15.2
	B	-	6.1	72.7	-	-	12.1	-	-	9.1	-	-	-
	C	-	-	36.4	-	63.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PApro Oral	A	-	10.0	40.0	-	30.0	10.0	-	3.3	-	-	-	6.7
	B	-	24.1	20.7	-	44.8	3.4	-	-	-	-	-	6.9
	C	-	29.0	3.2	-	67.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 4.6 Distribution of IL forms fulfilling the function of *Simple Present*:

	Level	Goto-f	PA/irr.	PA	PAper	PApro	PRE	PREper	PREpro	pro	shall-f	will-f	Ø
PRE Written	A	-	-	-	-	-	58.2	-	30.9	-	-	-	10.9
	B	-	7.3	10.9	-	-	60.0	-	18.2	-	-	-	3.6
	C	-	-	-	-	-	85.5	-	14.5	-	-	-	-
PRE Oral	A	-	-	-	-	-	48.9	-	42.2	-	-	-	8.9
	B	-	-	-	-	-	90.2	-	9.8	-	-	-	-
	C	-	-	-	-	-	85.1	-	14.9	-	-	-	-

Table 4.7 Distribution of IL forms fulfilling the function of *Present Perfect*:

	Level	Goto-f	PA/irr.	PA	PApro	PRE	PREper	Pperpro	PREpro	pro	shall-f	will-f	Ø
PREperWritten	A	-	-	22.7	-	31.8	29.5	-	2.3	-	-	-	13.6
	B	-	-	43.2	2.3	20.4	20.4	-	-	9.1	-	2.3	2.3
	C	-	-	-	-	-	81.8	18.2	-	-	-	-	-
PREper Oral	A	-	3.1	-	-	-	93.8	-	3.1	-	-	-	-
	B	-	-	4.8	-	9.5	61.9	9.5	9.5	-	-	-	4.8
	C	-	-	2.9	-	-	94.1	2.9	-	-	-	-	-

Table 4.8 Distribution of IL forms fulfilling the function of *Present Progressive*:

	Level	Goto-f	PA/irr.	PA	PAper	PApro	PRE	PREper	PREpro	pro	shall-f	will-f	Ø
PREproWritten	A	-	-	-	-	-	48.5	-	33.3	-	-	1.5	16.7
	B	-	1.5	6.1	-	1.5	31.8	3.0	50.0	-	-	-	6.1
	C	1.5	-	-	-	-	37.9	-	59.1	-	-	1.5	-
PREpro Oral	A	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	64.9	-	-	-	35.1
	B	-	-	-	-	-	16.0	1.3	73.3	-	-	-	9.3
	C	-	-	-	-	-	11.3	1.1	87.6	-	-	-	-

Table 4.9 Distribution of IL forms fulfilling the function of *will + inf.-future*:

	Level	Goto-f	PA/irr.	PA	PAper	PApro	PRE	PREper	PREpro	pro	shall-f	will-f	Ø
Will-f Written	A	-	-	-	-	-	6.1	3.0	36.4	-	-	18.2	36.4
	B	3.0	9.1	3.0	-	-	15.2	3.0	27.3	-	-	27.3	12.1
	C	3.0	-	-	-	-	6.1	-	6.1	-	-	84.8	-
Will-f Oral	A	-	-	-	-	-	41.7	-	-	-	-	58.3	-
	B	45.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	54.5	-
	C	20.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	80.0	-

If we view written and oral results separately, out of the eight target verb forms in the written test, the learners showed the highest rate of target form usage for PRE, PA, PREpro and PA/irr. and the lowest rate for PREper, Will-f, PApro and Goto-f. Of the eight target verb forms in the oral test, the learners showed the highest rate of target form usage for PREper, PREpro, PRE and Will-f., and the lowest rate for PA, PA/irr., Goto-f and PApro. These results are further displayed in tables 4.10 and 4.11 below:

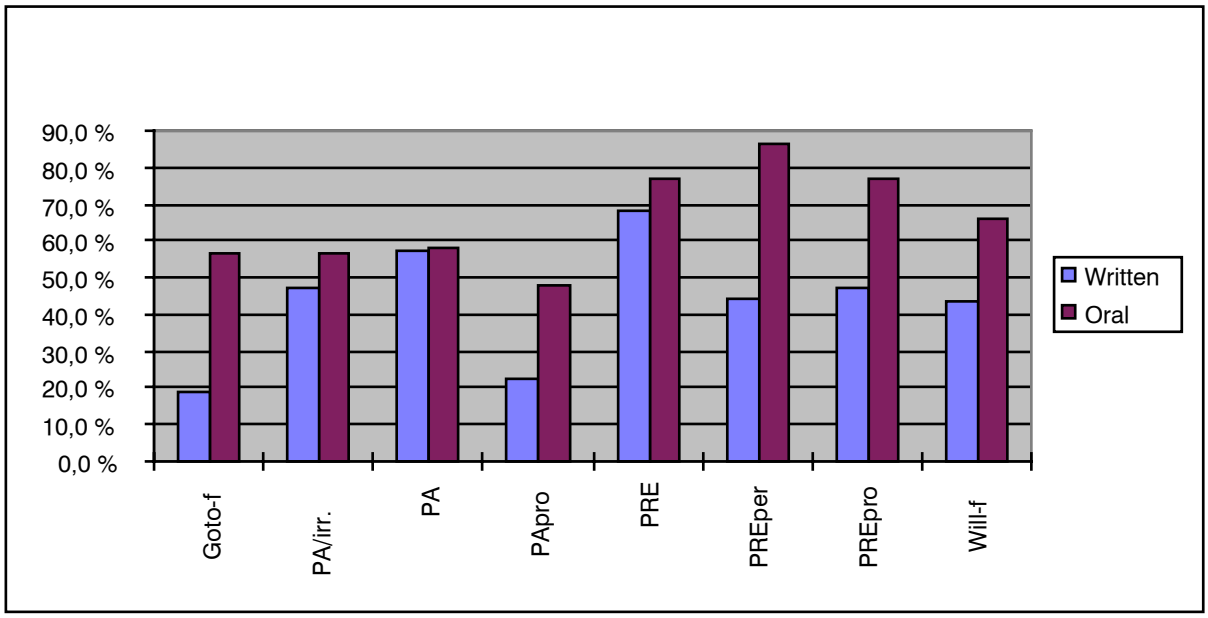

Table 4.10 Written versus oral performance: all three groups

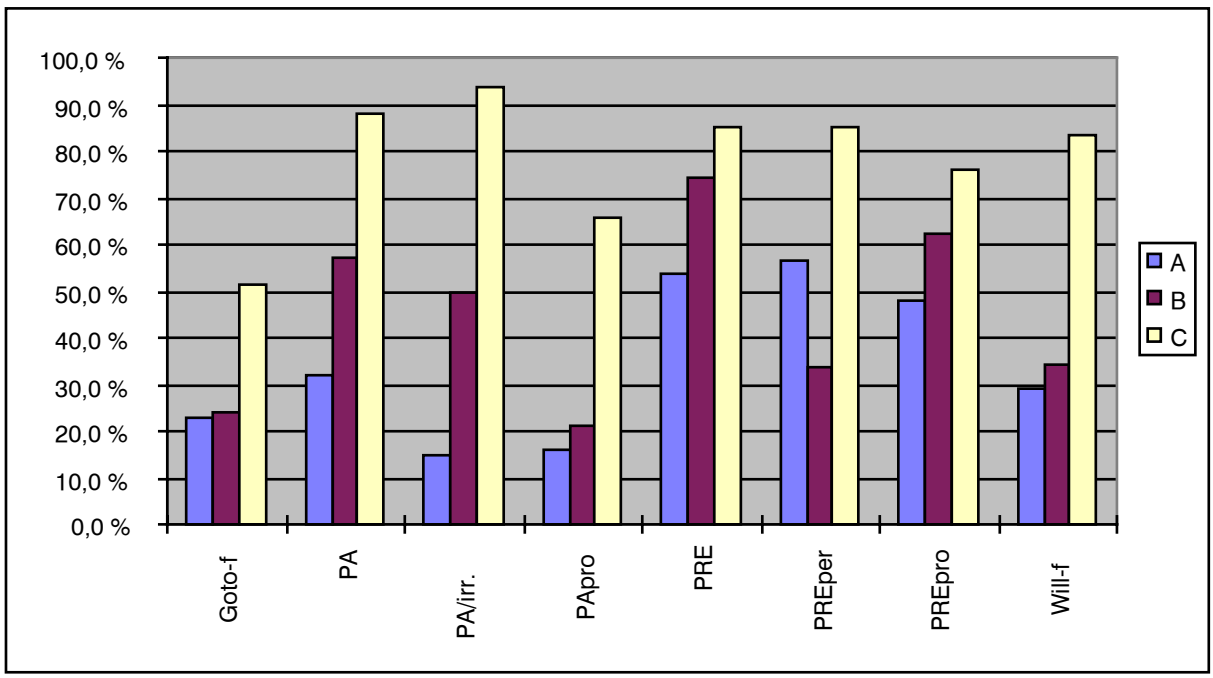

Table 4.11 Overall performance (target form usage), groups divided.

4.2 Verb Usage in English Interlanguage

Terms which will be used to denote the various results:

- Obl. con = obligatory contexts
- TF = target form (the formally correct realization of an L2 form)
- TU = target usage
- non-TU = non-target usage (includes overuse and overgeneralization of forms)

  By target usage, I mean the use of a given form in a context which definitely elicits/demands this form according to the native speaker grammar; however, the form used need not be completely correct formally.

4.2.1 A-group

Analyzing A-group's data, we can see that these beginner level learners produced 706 verb tokens, when the results from both written and oral tests are added. These tokens represented 62 different verbs, in addition to 12 Norwegian verbs which were 'Anglofied' (e.g. 'to dush', from Norwegian 'dusje' which means 'to shower').

In this group's oral samples, seven verbs were provided more than ten times, and here are the formally correct (target form) realizations of these seven verbs:

	PRE	PREpro	PA	PA/irr.	PREper	PAPro	Goto-f	Will-f.	raw score %
(44) **GO**	1	4		5			2		12/44 27.3%
(44) **PLAY**	1	5	3		3				12/44 27.3%
(40) **BE**	6			11	3			7	27/40 67.5%
(39) **SWIM**	9	5					2		16/39 41.0%
(37) **EAT**		7				3			10/37 27.0%
(17) **TAKE**				2					2/17 11.8%
(10) **LIVE**					2				2/10 20.0%

Table 4.12 A-group's formally correct realizations of the seven most used verbs.

This tells us something about how the A-group did on their oral tests according to formal correctness, but attempts were also made at producing the target form in obligatory contexts, the results of which were not judged as formally correct. One must not just consider learner

productions in terms of being totally correct or erroneous, since attempts made by learners at producing the target form are also valuable evidence of learners being in the process of acquiring this form. See table 4.14 (next page), which displays the occasions where target usage and form used by the learner coincided. To summarize oral results from the beginner level group (A-group), one could say that PREper was the verb form with the highest ratio of target usage (93.8%), but it was not the form the learners managed to produce in the most formally correct manner. Will-future, on the other hand, had 100 % formal correctness, but was only supplied in 58.3 % of the contexts where this form should have been used.

Verb use in written samples was more limited, due to the nature of the task. The fill-in-the-blanks test used in this study ensured coverage of all the verb forms, but it did not involve a great variety of verbs. The informant was in no position to choose verbs him/herself, but was forced to use the verb provided in the text. The learners were asked to complete 31 verb phrases (VPs), which involved 18 different verbs. The verbs *go* and *rain* were each supposed to be used in five verb phrases, *live* in four VPs, *be* and *walk* in two VPs, whereas the remaining 13 verbs were expected to be used once.

Since the learner's verb repertoire was restricted to limited contexts, there is little point in looking closer into the frequency of the particular verb use. What is more interesting regarding the written data, however, is how the learners used their verb forms (table 4.13), in addition to a comparison between written and oral production (table 4.14).

Written			
VERB FORM	no. of obl. con	TU	non-TU
Goto-f	44	5	-
PA/irr.	33	2	-
PA	33	11	34
PApro	33	1	-
PRE	55	32	80
PREper	44	13	2
PREpro	66	22	35
Will-f	33	6	8

Table 4.13 Group A: suppliance of verb forms, written data.

To summarize these written results, great difficulty seemed to be involved in the actual use of verb forms such as PApro, PA/irr., Goto-future and Will-future, whereas PRE and PREpro appeared somewhat easier to supply. As regards the extent to which this group managed to supply the target forms, PApro and PA/irr. (due to such low suppliance and no overuse) had a 100 % formal correctness. PRE and PA also had quite good formal accuracy rates, 84.4% and 81.8% respectively. Below follows a display of how the A-group did on their tests, both written and oral (table 4.14).

	Written			Oral		
VERB FORM	**no. of obl. con**	**TU**	**non-TU**	**no. of obl. con**	**TU**	**non-TU**
Goto-f	44	11,4 %	-	26	42,3 %	-
PA/irr.	33	6,1 %	-	102	17,6 %	37,9 %
PA	33	33,3 %	75,6 %	61	31,1 %	47,2 %
PApro	33	3,0 %	-	30	30,0 %	40,0 %
PRE	55	58,2 %	71,4 %	45	48,9 %	40,5 %
PREper	44	29,5 %	38,5 %	32	93,8 %	-
PREpro	66	33,3 %	61,4 %	57	64,9 %	66,1 %
Will-f	33	18,2 %	57,1 %	12	58,3 %	-

Table 4.14 Group A: suppliance of verb forms, written and oral data.

Thus, already in the A-group, the informants produced several English verb form categories, a feature which suggests a certain level of morphosyntactic competence.

What concerns the reasons for differences in proficiency between written and oral production, this issue will be discussed at a later point in the thesis. We will at this point merely note that there is a difference, which again will be discussed in the next chapter, Chapter Five.

4.2.2 B-group

In the course of B-group's data analysis, it was revealed that these supposedly intermediate level learners produced 720 verb tokens, when results from both written and oral tests are added. These tokens represented 67 different verbs, in addition to two Norwegian verbs which were 'Anglofied' (e.g. 'to børst', meaning 'to brush'), suggesting a slightly richer verb repertoire than that of the A-group.

11 verbs in oral testing were provided more than ten times, and here are the formally correct realizations of these 11 verbs:

	PRE	PREpro	PA	PA/irr.	PREper	PAPro	Goto-f	Will-f.	raw score %
(41) **EAT**	2	8		9					19/41 46.3%
(40) **BE**	10			14	1		2	5	32/40 80.0%
(38) **GO**	4	4		13			3	1	25/38 65.8%
(35) **PLAY**	1	8	8		4				21/35 60.0%
(17) **SWIM**	7	5							12/17 70.6%
(17) **TAKE**	1			7			2		10/17 58.8%
(15) **DO**	1			9	1		1		12/15 80.0%
(15) **HAVE**	2	4		1		1			8/15 53.3%
(12) **WATCH**			4						4/12 33.3%
(11) **MAKE**	1	2		3					6/11 54.5%
(10) **LIVE**					5				5/10 50.0%

Table 4.15 B-group's formally correct realizations of the eleven most used verbs.

As we pointed out when discussing A-group's production, it is important not just to consider learner productions in terms of being totally correct or erroneous, since attempts made by learners at producing the target form are also valuable evidence of learners being in the process of acquiring this form. See table 4.16 below, which displays the occasions where target usage and the correct form coincided (TU).

Oral			
VERB FORM	no. of obl. con	TU	non-TU
Goto-f	23	12	5
PA/irr.	111	58	10
PA	58	32	14
PApro	29	13	19
PRE	51	46	21
PREper	21	13	1
PREpro	75	55	22
Will-f	11	6	3

4.16 Group B: suppliance of verb forms, oral data.

To summarize oral results from the supposedly intermediate level group (B-group), one could say that PRE was the verb-form receiving the highest target usage score (90.2%), but was not the form they managed to produce with the highest formal correctness. Goto-future, PA/irr, PA, PREper and Will-future, on the other hand, had 100 % formal correctness in B-group. This means that whenever the learners produced the form which was obligatory in this context, it was also supplied as formally correct (supplied as the target form). But as we can see, they

also overused the forms, and this factor will be discussed later, in section 4.3, when the TLU-scores are analyzed.

Considering in turn the results from B-group's written test, as clarified earlier, the learners were asked to complete 31 verb phrases (VPs), which involved 18 different verbs. Since the learners' choice of verb was restricted to limited contexts, there is little point in looking closer into the frequency of the particular verb use. What is more interesting regarding written data material, however, is how they used their verb forms (table 4.17), in addition to a comparison between written and oral suppliance (table 4.18).

Written			
VERB FORM	no. of obl. con	TU	non-TU
Goto-f	44	4	1
PA/irr.	33	14	15
PA	33	20	65
PApro	33	-	3
PRE	55	33	60
PREper	44	9	3
PREpro	66	33	38
Will-f	33	9	8

Table 4.17 Group B: suppliance of verb forms, written data.

To summarize B-group's written results, most of the difficulty seemed to lie in the use of PApro (no suppliance in contexts where this form was obligatory), Goto-future and PREper. Forms with higher occurrence in obligatory contexts were PA, PRE and PREpro. With regard to formal correctness, Will-future (100%), PRE (84.8%) and PA (80.0%) scored highest, whereas PApro (none) and PREpro (42.4%) scored lowest. Note again that overuse is not considered at this point, but will be dealt with in the section concerning the TLU-analysis.

	Written			Oral		
VERB FORM	**no. of obl. con**	**TU**	**non-TU**	**no. of obl. con**	**TU**	**non-TU**
Goto-f	44	9,1 %	20,0 %	23	52,2 %	29,4 %
PA/irr.	33	42,4 %	51,7 %	111	52,3 %	14,7 %
PA	33	60,6 %	76,5 %	58	55,2 %	30,4 %
PApro	33	-	100,0 %	29	44,8 %	59,4 %
PRE	55	60,0 %	64,5 %	51	90,2 %	31,3 %
PREper	44	20,5 %	25,0 %	21	61,9 %	7,1 %
PREpro	66	50,0 %	53,5 %	75	73,3 %	28,6 %
Will-f	33	27,3 %	47,1 %	11	54,5 %	33,3 %

Table 4.18 Group B: suppliance of verb forms, written and oral data.

4.2.3 C-group

In the higher proficiency-level C-group's collected material, 790 verb tokens were produced altogether (written and oral material added). These tokens represented 77 different verbs, suggesting a slightly richer verb repertoire than in both A- and B-group. The results from oral testing of this group reveal 15 verbs which were used at more than ten occasions. These 15 verbs with their target form (formally correct) productions are listed in table 4.19 below:

	PRE	**PREpro**	**PA**	**PA/irr.**	**PREper**	**PAPro**	**Goto-f**	**Will-f.**	raw score %
(55) **BE**	21			11	12		1	9	55/55 100.0%
(50) **GO**	10	8		24			3	2	47/50 94.0%
(26) **PLAY**	3	3	14		3				23/26 88.5%
(25) **EAT**		9		14					23/25 92.0%
(25) **HAVE**	2	1		8		4	3		18/25 72.0%
(17) **TAKE**	2			15					17/17 100.0%
(16) **SIT**	1	10		2					13/16 81.3%
(15) **MAKE**		2		9		1			12/15 80.0%
(15) **RUN**		14							14/15 93.3%
(14) **WATCH**			11				1		12/14 85.7%
(12) **LIVE**					12				12/12 100.0%
(12) **SWIM**	1	7							8/12 66.6%
(11) **BRUSH**			11						11/11 100.0%
(11) **GET**	1	1		9					11/11 100.0%
(10) **READ**		3		5					8/10 80.0%

Table 4.19 C-group's formally correct realizations of the fifteen most used verbs.

When viewing the particular verb use in all three groups, an important linguistic feature is the high frequency of third person copula *be* in the informants' oral output.

As mentioned when considering both A- and B-groups' oral results, it is important to look at how the learners used their verb forms, hence we will in table 4.20 display the occasions where the form obligatory in the context and the form used by the learner coincided (TU).

Oral			
VERB FORM	no. of obl. con	TU	non-TU
Goto-f	36	25	3
PA/irr.	120	112	10
PA	49	46	3
PApro	31	21	6
PRE	67	57	11
PREper	34	32	1
PREpro	97	85	19
Will-f	15	12	2

Table 4.20 Group C: suppliance of verb forms, oral data.

To summarize C-group's oral results, it appears that the learners more or less managed to supply the forms which the contexts required. Two forms show occurrence rates below 80 %, and these two forms are PApro (67.7%) and Goto-future (69.4%), whereas the other forms occurred in more than 80 % of the contexts where they were obligatory.

Regarding formal correctness, six of the forms were supplied as formally correct in more than 98% of the contexts, but PApro (66.6%) and Goto-future (80.0 %) were supplied below that level. This indicates that the C-group learners, to a large extent, had acquired most of the verb forms under study, but still had problems with the forms PApro and Goto-future. Let us turn to their written test results (table 4.21), and see whether the same picture emerges in this task.

Written			
VERB FORM	no. of obl. con	TU	non-TU
Goto-f	44	16	2
PA/irr.	33	31	2
PA	33	26	13
PApro	33	21	5
PRE	55	47	29
PREper	44	36	-
PREpro	66	39	21
Will-f	33	28	17

Table 4.21 Group C: suppliance of verb forms, written data.

Occurrence in obligatory contexts (target usage) seems slightly lower in written data than what we witnessed in the preceding display of oral data. Four verb forms show less than 80% occurrence in obligatory contexts: Goto-future (36.4%), PREpro (59.1%), PApro (63.6%) and PA (78.8%). Despite the lower target usage suppliance in the written test than in the oral one, the C-group learners managed to supply as many as five of the eight verb forms under study 100 % formally correct (when supplied). The remaining three forms, PA/irr., PRE and PREper, all reached more than 93% formal correctness. These results seem to support the choice of this group as representing a higher level of proficiency. As to the differences between written and oral data, these are provided in the table below (table 4.22), and will be dealt with in the discussion chapter, Chapter Five. With regard to target usages (occurrence in obligatory contexts) in all three groups, these are displayed in table 4.23. We will now pass to the TLU-scores.

	Written			Oral		
VERB FORM	**no. of obl. con**	**TU**	**non-TU**	**no. of obl. con**	**TU**	**non-TU**
Goto-f	44	36,4 %	11,1 %	36	69,4 %	10,7 %
PA/irr.	33	93,9 %	6,1 %	120	93,3 %	8,2 %
PA	33	78,8 %	33,3 %	49	93,9 %	6,1 %
PApro	33	63,6 %	19,2 %	31	67,7 %	22,2 %
PRE	55	85,5 %	38,2 %	67	85,1 %	16,2 %
PREper	44	81,8 %	-	34	94,1 %	3,0 %
PREpro	66	59,1 %	35,0 %	97	87,6 %	18,3 %
Will-f	33	84,8 %	37,8 %	15	80,0 %	14,3 %

Table 4.22 Group C: suppliance of verb forms, written and oral data.

	A	B	C
%	TU	TU	TU
0-10			
10-20	PA/irr		
	PApro		
20-30	Goto-f	PApro	
	Will-f	Goto-f	
30-40	PA	PREper	
		Will-f	
40-50	PREpro		
50-60	PRE	PA/irr	Goto-f
	PREper	PA	
60-70		PREpro	PApro
70-80		PRE	PREpro
80-90			Will-f
			PREper
			PRE
			PA
90-100			PA/irr

Table 4.23 Target usage, all three groups.

4.3 Target-Like Usage (TLU) Scores

In the previous section, section concerning verb usage in English IL, we looked at how the learners in question performed with reference to suppliance in obligatory contexts and formal correctness. As mentioned in the introductory part of this chapter, a method such as 'suppliance-in-obligatory-contexts' provides detail on how accurate a learner is in those contexts where a given form is required, but it does not give information about possible generalizations to inappropriate contexts. Another method, namely the 'target-like-use' analysis, is a method of analyzing which incorporates the notion of distributional patterns. Thus, 33 learners' use of English verb forms was analyzed in terms of the target-like usage score (TLU) developed by Stauble (1978). This score expresses the ratio of the frequency with which forms are (a) correctly supplied, (b) omitted, and (c) incorrectly supplied. TLU-scores give some indication of learners' grammatical accuracy, that is how well they are performing in relation to the target language norm. It also provides baseline data according to which different learners

can be compared or according to which different stages in the development of the same learner can be compared (Housen 1993). In the 'target-like-use' analysis, the numerator consists of the number of instances of correct suppliance in obligatory contexts and the denominator consists of not only the obligatory contexts, but also the non-obligatory contexts. Hence, the formula used can be represented in the following way:

$$\frac{\text{Number of correct suppliance in obligatory contexts}}{\text{Number of obligatory contexts + number of suppliance in non-obligatory contexts}}$$

The results of applying this analysis to my data are displayed in the four tables below, initially showing written results (4.24), oral results (4.25), and the two added (4.26). Finally, the TLU-scores in table 4.26 are converted into percentages, and displayed in another table according to the three groups' scores (4.27).

Written	A	B	C
Goto-f	0,022	0,066	0,347
PA/irr.	0,060	0,229	0,828
PA	0,134	0,163	0,565
PApro	0,030	-	0,552
PRE	0,200	0,243	0,523
PREper	0,108	0,148	0,772
PREpro	0,019	0,134	0,448
Will-f	0,097	0,219	0,560

Table 4.24 TLU scores, written data

Oral	A	B	C
Goto-f	0,307	0,428	0,512
PA/irr.	0,159	0,479	0,861
PA	0,205	0,444	0,884
PApro	0,138	0,166	0,378
PRE	0,350	0,583	0,730
PREper	0,343	0,590	0,914
PREpro	0,193	0,546	0,724
Will-f	0,583	0,428	0,705

Table 4.25 TLU scores, oral data

W + O	A	B	C
Goto-f	0,128	0,205	0,423
PA/irr.	0,136	0,408	0,854
PA	0,172	0,282	0,734
PApro	0,086	0,095	0,466
PRE	0,242	0,374	0,623
PREper	0,205	0,289	0,835
PREpro	0,117	0,333	0,605
Will-f	0,207	0,272	0,597

Table 4.26 TLU scores, written and oral added

	A	B	C
%	TLU	TLU	TLU
0-10	PApro	PApro	
10-20	PREpro		
	Goto-f		
	PA/irr		
	PA		
20-30	PREper	Goto-f	
	Will-f	Will-f	
	PRE	PA	
		PREper	
30-40		PREpro	
		PRE	
40-50		PA/irr	Goto-f
			PApro
50-60			Will-f
60-70			PREpro
			PRE
70-80			PA
80-90			PREper
			PA/irr
90-100			

Table 4.27 TLU percentage scores, oral and written added

4.4 Form - Function Analysis

This type of analysis is based on a study of the different functions which a specific form performs at different stages of IL development. I will now demonstrate which forms were used for which functions at the three levels of development, i.e. by A-, B- and C-groups. I will investigate the eight verb forms under study, and show the number of target usages (occurrence in obligatory contexts) of the form in question, overuse to other functions and non-target forms used to denote the target form. The actual numbers of occurrences are given in parenthesis, and a few examples of the informants' production are also provided. Next to the examples, the number and group of the informant are listed. As to the examples provided, italics indicate that they are sentences from the written fill-in-the-blanks test.

4.4.1 Simple Present

A-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS	TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages	NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
PREpro (32) PREper (14) PA (13) Goto-f (12) PA/irr (9) PApro (8) Will-f (7)	⇐ PRE (54)	⇐ PREpro (36) * *John is a factory worker. He* <u>working</u> *at Kværner* (11A) Ø (10)

Simple Present was the form used in most contexts where the learners were unsure of which form to use. This is reflected in the extensive overuse and overapplication of this present tense form to all the other seven verb forms under study. Hence, the Simple Present was used for several different functions, expressing present, past and future time reference.

V-ing and Simple Present were used in apparently free variation, but still supplied properly in contexts demanding their use between 50 and 60 times each.

B-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS		TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages		NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
PREpro (33) PA/irr (13) PREper (11) Goto-f (7) PA (7) PApro (5) Will-f (5)	⇐	PRE (79)	⇐	PREpro (15) * *I like Bergen, although it* raining *here every day* (8B) PA (6) PA/irr (4) Ø (2)

As in A-group, Simple Present was overused, and seemingly used in many cases where the student did not know which form to provide. An overuse to all the other verb functions under study suggests that the form-function mappings of this present tense form have by no means been sorted out.

C-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS		TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages		NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
PREpro (36) Will-f (2) PA (1) PA/irr (1)	⇐	PRE (104)	⇐	PREpro (18) * *My family and I* are going *to France every year* (7C).

Here we can see a large reduction in verb functions to which the use of Simple Present was extended, but the mixing of the two present tense forms still took place.

4.4.2 Present Progressive

A-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS		TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages		NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
PRE (36) PA/irr (30) Goto-f (14) PA (12) Will-f (12) PREper (2) PApro (1)	⇐	PREpro (59)	⇐	PRE (32) * *It* rains *right now* (9A) Will-f (1) Ø (31)

As with Simple Present, the progressive was largely overextended to all other verb functions under study, indicating that the form-function mappings of this verb form have not at all been sorted out. Both the base form and Simple Present were used in the contexts requiring the use of Present Progressive.

B-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS		TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages		NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
Goto-f (19) PRE (15) PA/irr (11) Will-f (9) PA (4) PREper (2)	⇐	PREpro (88)	⇐	PRE (33) * *A: What are you doing in the kitchen, Carl ?* *B: I* bake *a cake* (2B). PA (4) PREper (3) PA/irr (1) PApro (1) Ø (10)

Also here the use of the progressive is overextended to most of the verb functions under study, with the exception of Past Progressive. Overuse has been reduced in comparison with the A-group, but what regards functions of this form, it was used to denote present, past and future. Thus, this form was used in contexts definitely not allowing for such use. The mixing of present tense forms is still a problem, as we noted when describing the use of Simple Present.

C-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS		TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages		NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
Goto-f (20) PRE (18)	⇐	PREpro (124)	⇐	PRE (36) * *My car is in the garage, so for the time being I* go *by bus to work* (5C) Goto-f (1) PREper (1) Will-f (1)

C-group's informants chose to use Present Progressive in several of the future-referring contexts, where the 'be going to + infinitive'-construction was required. This shows that the mapping of form and function of Present Progressive to a large extent has been sorted out and limited to the use of this form in future time and present time contexts only. As we have seen when analyzing the two present tense verb forms under study, the mixing of Simple Present

and Present Progressive was more or less extensive at all three levels, emphasizing the problems which the progressive represents to the Norwegian learner.

The markedness relationships, discussed in chapter two, predicted that "those areas of the TL that differ from the NL and are more marked than the NL will be difficult" (Eckman 1996: 197), and the Present Progressive is an example of such an area.

4.4.3 Irregular Simple Past

A-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS	TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages	NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
PApro (3) ⇐	PA/irr. (20)	⇐ PREpro (30) PA (16) ∗ Yesterday... he <u>eated</u>... and <u>sleeped</u> (3A) PRE (9) ∗ Yesterday John...<u>sleeps</u> (11A) PApro (3) "pro" (2) PREper (1) Ø (42)

A-group informants used PA/irr. in three contexts where PApro would be the correct form to use, and had trouble supplying the PA/irr. form at all. Instead, they made use of various other forms, and we witness an extensive overuse and overgeneralization of V-ing in this group, as well as high suppliance of PRE and base form only. The same also applies to the regularizing of irregular verbs, as in the examples above (∗eat<u>ed</u>, ∗sleep<u>ed</u>).

B-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS	TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages	NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
PApro (9) Goto-f (4) Will-f (3) PRE (4) PREpro (1) ⇐	PA/irr. (12)	⇐ PRE (13) PA (12) ∗ *Did you catch any fish? Yes, I* <u>catched</u> *many!* (7B) PREpro (11) "pro" (1) Ø (28)

In this group, PA/irr. was used for PApro nine times. This was probably caused by the poor knowledge and avoidance of PApro in this group, and the learners' tendency to systematically

use Simple Past forms (PA and PA/irr) in contexts requiring PApro. The written test, on the other hand, revealed this group's use of PA/irr. to denote Simple Present and even future time referring forms.

In contexts clearly requiring PA/irr., the base form of the verb was supplied in a number of contexts, and regularizing (see the example above) also took place in this group. As in most of the contexts, the tendency to overuse V-ing was also evident here.

C-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS		TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages		NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
PApro (9) Goto-f (1) PA (1)	⇐	PA/irr. (143)	⇐	PApro (5) ∗ What did you do there? - we <u>were</u> just <u>running</u> around. (6C) PA (2) Ø (2) PRE (1)

This group had relatively few problems with the suppliance of PA/irr. PApro was used five times to denote PA/irr., and PA/irr was used nine times to denote PApro.

In C-group, the irregular Simple Past was the form which attained the highest suppliance of target usage, whereas the same form received the lowest suppliance of target usage in A-group. With regard to the TLU-scores, this form scored highest in both B- and C-groups. The fact that irregular verbs must be learnt individually may contribute to the high level of TLU-scores. Once memorized, the irregular verbs form a solid and permanent type of knowledge.

4.4.4 Regular Simple Past

A-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS	TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages	NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
PApro (25) PA/irr (13) PREper (10) Goto-f (3)	⇐ PA (30)	⇐ PRE (13) * I walks to school yesterday (3A) PREpro (12) * [yesterday] he is playing football (6A) "pro" (4) PApro (3) PA/irr. (1) PAper (1) Ø (30)

With regard to the overuse of regular Simple Past, A-group informants mainly used this form to express past time functions. Since these learners showed very little suppliance of the Past Progressive form, they frequently made use of Simple Past in contexts clearly requiring Past Progressive. Hence, extensive overgeneralization to the function of PApro took place. As was pointed out when demonstrating the use of irregular Simple Past above, the beginner level learners in this study extensively overused and overgeneralized both the present time forms under study (Simple Present and Present Progressive), which also happened in contexts requiring regular Simple Past.

B-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS	TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages	NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
PApro (30) PREper (20) PA/irr (12) PRE (6) Goto-f (6) PREpro (4) Will-f (1)	⇐ PA (52)	⇐ PApro (13) * Then he was walking to school (2B) PRE (7) PREpro (3) "pro" (2) PA/irr. (1) Will-f (1) Ø (11)

The same overuse of the regular Simple Past form to contexts demanding Past Progressive took place in this group. Again, we see that the regular Simple Past form was overused in past time contexts (for past time functions) more than in present and future time contexts. However, the learners belonging to this group supplied the Past Progressive form to larger extents, and thus

used this form in 13 contexts where Simple Past would have been appropriate. The overuse of present time forms has also decreased somewhat in comparison with A-group.

C-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS		TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages		NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
PApro (13) PA/irr. (2) PREper (1)	⇐	PA (72)	⇐	PApro (6) * *Today the weather is fine, but yesterday it* <u>was</u> <u>raining</u> a lot. (4,6,8,10,11C) PRE (1) Ø (1)

C-group's informants had pretty much sorted out the form-function mappings of Simple Past by the time the data was collected from this group. In a few contexts, Past Progressive was preferred at the expense of regular Simple Past, and likewise, PA was used in 13 contexts requiring Past Progressive. What regards the suppliance of PA in contexts demanding this form, C-group's informants provided this form in more than 80 per cent of these contexts. When overuse and undersuppliance were considered, this group's TLU-scores revealed a ratio higher than 70 per cent. In sum, the two Simple Past forms under study (regular and irregular) were mainly used for past functions. The regularizing of irregular forms was a feature evident in both A- and B-group's data. Due to the fact that the learners in these two groups seemed to be unaware of the Past Progressive form, Simple Past was largely used to denote the progressive aspect in contexts demanding the use of Past Progressive.

4.4.5 Past Progressive

A-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS		TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages		NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
PA (3) PA/irr (3)	⇐	PApro (10)	⇐	PA (25) * *When I* <u>walked</u> *home yesterday I saw a car accident*..(5A) "pro" (9) PRE (8) PA/irr (3) PREpro (1) Ø (7)

The level of suppliance of the Past Progressive form in this group was extremely low. Hence, non-target forms were used in most of the PApro-requiring contexts. Whenever provided, PApro was used in past time function, and thus never overused to present or future-referring contexts.

B-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS	TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages	NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
PA (13) PREpro (1) PREper (1)	PApro (13)	PA (30) * *Yesterday between four and six o'clock I* played *tennis*. (7B). PA/irr (9) PRE (5) "pro" (3) Ø (2)

Low mean suppliance of this form resulted, as in A-group, in non-target forms used in contexts clearly demanding the use of Past Progressive.

C-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS	TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages	NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
PA (6) PA/irr (5)	PApro (42)	PA (13) * *When I arrived in Tromsø¿ last night, it* rained (2, 5 and 7C) PA/irr (9)

The target usage of this form increased, and the form was used to denote past time reference only, indicating that the function of this form had been largely acquired. Simple Past forms were still used in contexts demanding the use of PApro, but their number has been reduced when compared with A- and B-groups.

4.4.6 Present Perfect

A-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS	TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages	NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
PA/irr (1) Will-f (1)	PREper (43)	PRE (14) * *John really likes France. He* lives *there for ten years now* (3A) PA (10) PREpro (2) Ø (6)

This verb form was frequently supplied at this level, and had higher target usage than expected. Possible reasons for this will be dealt with in the following chapter, and we will only note the observed fact at this point. Non-target forms occasionally used instead of Present Perfect were Simple Present and Simple Past.

B-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS	TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages	NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
PREpro (3) Will-f (1)	PREper (22)	PA (20) * I lived in Tromsø all my life (8B). PRE (11) "pro" (4) PREper (2) PREperpro (2) PApro (1) Will-f (1) Ø (2)

The number of target usages of Present Perfect was reduced in this group when compared to the beginner level A-group. The overuse of the form did not increase, but the occurrences of non-target forms used in PREper-requiring contexts increased.

C-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS	TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages	NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
PREpro (1)	PREper (68)	PREperpro (9) * *John really likes France. He* has been living *in Paris for ten years now* (3C). PA (1)

An increase in target usages took place, and there was a minimum of overuse of PREper. The form which was used to denote PREper in nine of the PREper-requiring contexts was Present

Perfect Progressive. The latter was supplied in this group only, suggesting that this is a verb form apparently acquired at a later stage in L2 development.

4.4.7 Be going to + inf.-future

A-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS		TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages		NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
none	⇐	Goto-f (16)	⇐	PREpro (14) ∗ *Look at those big dark clouds! It* raining *soon* (10A). PRE (12) Will-f (8) Shall + inf. (4) PA (3) Ø (13)

As we can see, beginner level A-group never used this form to express other forms, but on the other hand, they made use of several other verb forms to denote Goto-f. The Present Progressive form was used extensively.

B-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS		TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages		NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
Will-f (6)	⇐	Goto-f (16)	⇐	PREpro (19) ∗ *Watch out! There is a car in our lane, we* are crashing*!* (7B) Will-f (9) PRE (7) PA (6) Ø (4)

The B-group also used several of the other verb forms under study to denote Goto-f, and in addition used this form in places where Will-f would be the adequate form to supply.

C-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS		TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages		NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
Will-f (4) PREpro (1)	⇐	Goto-f (41)	⇐	PREpro (20) ∗ *Sheila is pregnant. She* is having *a baby in June* (11C). Will-f (18) PA/irr. (1)

This group made extensive use of Will-f and PREpro when expected to produce Goto-f, but also supplied the Goto-f construction correctly in the vast majority of cases. Regarding the use of Goto-f in contexts normally not allowing for such use, C-group used this future time form to denote Will-f and PREpro.

Thus, a gradual development both in mean suppliance and on TLU-scores from a poor to a more sufficient use of this future referring construction took place. In the previous chapter, Chapter Two, we demonstrated that this form was a *marked* one, which can explain why Goto-f neither reached a very high TLU-score (< 0.50 TLU-score in C-group) nor high levels of mean suppliance. Due to the fact that this construction does not exist in the Norwegian language, transfer of this form was unlikely. It should be noted that the two verb forms (except from Goto-f itself) which were used most often to denote Goto-f are both future referring forms. Hence, the informants under study provided forms with somewhat the same functions, but with slightly different semantic overtones. All in all, the learners in the C-group (representing the 11th grade) were clearly aware of the Goto-f construction and used it properly in several contexts

4.4.8 Will + inf.-future

A-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS	TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages	NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
Goto-f (7) PREpro (1)	⇐ Will-f (13)	⇐ PREpro (12) * *Next year I* <u>being</u> *thirty years old* (1A). PRE (7) * I think there <u>is</u> sun [tomorrow] (7A). PREper (1) Ø (12)

'Will + infinitive'-future was hardly ever used for other functions than future time, but overextended to 'be going to + infinitive'-future, denoting 'future result of the present' (Goto-f). Present Progressive was also used to perform the future function, despite the fact that the contexts did not involve future events 'arising from present plan, programme or arrangement'. (cf. section 2.3.2).

B-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS		TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages		NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
Goto-f (6) PA (1) PREper (1)	⇐	Will-f (15)	⇐	PREpro (9) * *A: There is no milk in the refrigerator.* *B: Okay, I* going *to the store and buy some* (3B) Goto-f (6) PRE (5) PA/irr (3) PA (1) PREper (1) Ø (4)

Also at this level Will-f was used in the Goto-f requiring contexts, and the learners used PREpro to denote the 'neutral future of prediction' or 'volition' (cf. section 2.3.1), as did A-group's informants. However, the number of target usages of the form increased somewhat, and the non-target use of Goto-f and PREpro indicate that the learners of the B-group were aware of the future function.

C-group

OVERUSE TO OTHER FUNCTIONS		TARGET FORM w/ number of target usages		NON-TARGET FORMS USED IN THIS CONTEXT
Goto-f (18) PREpro (1)	⇐	Will-f (40)	⇐	Goto-f (4) * I think it is going to be sun outside [tomorrow] (9C). PRE (2) PREpro (2)

Again, there is an increase in target uses of the form, but the differentiation among the two future-referring verb forms under study seems to involve problems for learners in this group. Goto-f was used in the Will-f-requiring contexts, whereas Will-f was overextended to Goto-f-requiring contexts. The confusing of the two results in low TLU-scores and low suppliance in obligatory contexts for both forms.

4.4.9 Form - Function Relationships and Variability

We recall from Chapter One (section 1.1.4) that some of the recent developments in interlanguage theory concern variability. Ellis (1985) has argued that in addition to systematic variability, there is non-systematic variability (or 'free variation') in interlanguage. By distinguishing these two types of variability, Ellis attempted to account for the basic instability and unpredictability of interlanguages.

When considering the form-function relations, there is no doubt that support for the existence of both systematic and non-systematic variability can be found in the Norwegian learner data collected for the purpose of this thesis. Non-systematic variability is especially evident in the beginner level learners' (A-group) use of base forms. They tended to supply this form of the verb in all different contexts and for all temporal references. The number of base forms supplied was highest in contexts requiring irregular Simple Past (42), Present Progressive (31) and regular Simple Past (30). When the function to express was present time, the same learners seemed to use Simple Present and Present Progressive in apparently free variation, in addition to using base form extensively also in these contexts. Ellis (1994:366) suggests that the learner's IL is composed of competing rules at any stage of its development. This competition is evident in A-group's use of Simple Present and Present Progressive - where these two forms are used in apparently free variation, as well as it is evident in B-group's use of the *be going to*-construction and will + inf.-future.
Informants in the upper level C-group displayed little evidence of non-systematic variation.

With regard to systematic variability, all the learners under study seemed to have established some systematic relations between form and function. Whenever the A-group informants made use of the Simple Past forms (regular and irregular), the Past Progressive form or the Present Perfect form, it was always to refer to past time. In the same manner, they restricted their use of will + inf.-future and be going to + inf.-future to future time reference only. This is actually an interesting case which can be defined somewhere between free and systematic variation. The

fact that Simple Past forms (regular and irregular), the Past Progressive form and the Present Perfect forms are never used to refer to other functions than past time allows for some predictability concerning their usage, so that there is some kind of systematicity. On the other hand, this systematicity is fairly general because we still have no clue as to which of the past tense forms will be used in a given past time situation. Thus, the data collected showed free variation within some generally predictable framework, an observation not dealt with in previous literature.

On the basis of this, it would be fair to claim that Ellis (1985) was right in arguing for the existence of both free and systematic variation. In conclusion, our data seem to confirm that individual learners indeed demonstrate variability while trying to sort out form-function mappings. In the first stage, learners acquire forms which are used to realize only a very limited set of functions, and in the further stages these forms are gradually mapped onto exactly the same functions that they serve in the TL.

The writer of present thesis is aware of the fact that not all researchers support the notion of non-systematic variation. However, I thought it expedient to keep this traditional distinction especially since the research was related to the classroom context where learners are forced to notice many different forms at the same time, as opposed to naturalistic learners.

4.5 Descriptions of Each Level Under Study

Now that I have described the informants' production with reference to distribution (4.1), target use in obligatory contexts (4.2), TLU-scores (4.3) and form-function relationships (4.4), I find it appropriate at this point to summarize the results for each group under study.

4.5.1 Level One (A-group)

This group supplied, as one could expect, the highest number of base form occurrences (166 altogether, out of a total of 706 verb phrases - 23.5%). Regarding their TLU-scores, Simple Present (PRE) received the highest score (>20%), whereas Past Progressive (PApro) scored lowest (<10%). The suppliance of target forms in obligatory contexts showed that Present

Perfect (PREper) and Simple Present (PRE) scored highest (>50%), with irregular Simple Past (PA/irr) and Past Progressive (PApro) (<20%) showing the lowest occurrence.

The functions of the forms used revealed that Simple Present (PRE) and Present Progressive (PREpro) were used not only to perform present time functions but also past and future time functions. Past and future-time referring verb forms, on the other hand, were basically only used to perform the functions of past and future time, respectively. It is obvious that to these learners these forms seemed to be the least marked forms in their functional coverage, possibly because the Simple Present is the most neutral of the time markers in English. We must also take into consideration the fact that Simple Present coincides with the invariant form.

When supposed to mark future time, this group made extensive use of PRE and PREpro. Goto-future received a lower TLU-score than Will-future, but when comparing suppliance in obligatory contexts, they were quite even. Both PRE and PREpro were used instead of Goto-f, and Will-f was also used where Goto-f would be the appropriate form to supply. Due to the low suppliance in obligatory contexts, Goto-f was formally correct whenever used. Goto-f was never used in contexts where Will-f would be correct, but also here we can observe an overgeneralization of PREpro and PRE. Thus, PREpro was incorrectly used in 36.4% of the contexts requiring the use of Will-f, whereas PRE was used in 41.7% of these contexts. Shall + inf.-future was used in this group, instead of Goto-f, which was especially evident in the oral test results. It seems reasonable to use transfer as an explanation for the use of shall + infinitive. This beginner level group was the only one out of the three groups which made use of shall + inf.-future, and the corresponding 'skal' in Norwegian most certainly played a role here. We also saw that the A-group was the only group to seemingly transfer the use of the Norwegian corresponding structure to their Present Perfect usage in English. The learners' perceived language distance may play a role in this context. It can be expected that Norwegian beginning learners assume that the two languages are more alike than they actually are.

When the function to express was present time, these learners seemed to use PRE and PREpro in apparently free variation; they also used the base form very often. They made use of PRE in many contexts where they were uncertain as to which form to use, which resulted in the fact that in addition to functioning as present tense markers, PRE and PREpro were used instead of all other verb forms under study. Thus, the form-function mapping of PRE and PREpro was by no means complete at this level, and the overuse of PREpro was extensive, confirming the fact that this structure represents a serious problem for Norwegian learners.

In contexts where the informants were expected to produce irregular Simple Past forms, A-group informants used base forms more frequently than morphologically marked irregular or regular past forms. PREpro was used in the oral test to refer to irregular past (PA/irr) in several cases, and the written test revealed regularizing of irregular verbs (13/135 - 9.6%). The only time PA/irr. was used for other functions than Simple Past was to represent the Past Progressive (3 times only). It should be noted that among the verb forms under study the irregular Simple Past form (PA/irr) had the lowest suppliance in the contexts where this form was required. As was the case with the other verb forms under study, the base forms, PRE and PREpro, were used extensively instead of the regular past (PA). When the informants made use of PA, it was always to refer to past time (i.e. to represent PA, PA/irr, PApro, or PREper).

An almost total non-occurrence of the Past Progressive (PApro) form made this form the lowest on TLU-scores, as well as quite low in mean suppliance. Instead, PA was used most often to refer to PApro.

A noteworthy observation in this group's data was the relatively frequent target use of Present Perfect (PREper), actually the most frequent target use of all forms. There seemed to be transfer of this form from the L1, which is a reasonable assumption since the target language PREper is formed analogically like the corresponding tense in the learners' L1. However, the occurrences of formally correct forms were not significant, due to the informants' providing of the aux. *'have'* accompanied by an inappropriate verb ending. Lack of past participle gave this form low

TLU scores, despite frequent occurrence. PRE and PA were on some occasions used also instead of PREper. One could argue that the use of PREper in this group had to do with the actual transfer from Norwegian, since the learners had not been taught this form prior to the time the data were collected. As we shall see later, the next level (B-group) did not display this frequent suppliance of PREper, indicating that the learners at this second stage were aware of PREper as a verb form in the target language, and, consequently, made mistakes in the form-function mapping of this form. Again, at level three (C-group), the Norwegian learners were able to use this form correctly.

4.5.2 Level Two (B-group)

The number of base forms used decreased from the beginner level (A) to the intermediate level (B), so that B-group produced 63 base forms, out of a total of 720 verb phrases (8.75%). With reference to their TLU-scores, PA/irr (>40%) and PRE (>30%) received the highest scores, whereas PApro (<10%) received the lowest. Results of occurrence in obligatory contexts showed that PRE (>70%) and PREpro (>60%) scored highest, with Goto-f and PApro (<30%) receiving the lowest score.

An analysis of the functions of the forms used here indicated that PRE and PREpro were used to perform other functions than present time reference, whereas past and future referring verb forms rarely were used for other functions than past and future time reference. respectively. Hence, there was overuse of the present tense forms, which was a feature characterizing A-group.

When supposed to convey future time reference, this group, especially in the written test, made extensive use of PREpro and PRE, but in the oral test, they also used Will-f in the function of Goto-f and vice versa. Will-f showed both higher TLU-score and higher occurrence in contexts demanding that particular verb form than Goto-f. In contexts where Goto-f should have been used, PREpro and Will-f were used several times, and PREpro/Goto-f were used in contexts where Will-f should have been used. In the oral test, one can clearly see a competition between

these two future referring constructions, where the learners attempted to use Goto-f in almost half of the contexts requiring Will-f.

The learners had not yet acquired form-function mappings for the present time verb forms under study; PRE and PREpro. The learners confused the usages of simple present and progressive, but there was a reduction in overuse and random occurrence from what we observed in the beginner level A-group.

The production of irregular Simple Past forms in this group received the highest TLU-score, despite the fact that the regularizing of irregular verbs took place in 12 out of 144 PA/irr-requiring contexts (8.3% regularization). PA/irr. was also used for PApro, and even for future referring constructions like Goto-f and Will-f. The base form of the verb was occasionally used to denote regular simple past, and PApro was also used instead of PA in several cases. The informants' use of PA covered past functions represented by PApro, PREper and PA/irr (regularizing), suggesting that they extended their knowledge of this grammatical form to other past time forms. We should note that there was a shift in the TLU-scores: in the A-group, with reference to occurrence in obligatory contexts, regular verbs scored higher than irregular verbs. In the B-group, however, PA/irr had the highest TLU-score and its exponents were more often formally correct than those of the regular verbs.

As in the A-group, the B-group learners had problems when dealing with the past progressive. Occurrences in contexts requiring the use of PApro increased from A- to B-group, but still remained extremely low (PApro scored the lowest of all forms on occurrence in obligatory contexts at this level). Simple Past was here, as in the A-group, used more than PApro, and the written test revealed no use whatsoever of this form in contexts where it should have been applied, but in the oral test the learners seemed to manage better. In the oral test, the informants supplied PApro in nearly half of the contexts which called for that particular form, whereas simple past constituted the other half.

What is particularly noteworthy in this group's data is the decrease of occurrence of present perfect from what we witnessed in A-group's collected data. Despite a decrease in mean occurrence, the learners managed to supply the form in more formally correct manners, hence an increase in TLU-scores from level one to level two. This feature may be a consequence of the learners beginning to monitor and edit their utterances. They were aware of the fact that there are rules for verb use, and thus disregarded the possibility of using their L1 knowledge to express Present Perfect in the L2. Being aware of the existence of rules, but not having acquired the right usage, may therefore prohibit the learner from making use of the appropriate form. The beginner level learners, on the other hand, had never been acquainted with rules for this form, and thus provided the form which seemed most fitting, relying in this case on a transfer from their L1.

4.5.3 Level Three (C-group)

This group produced the smallest number of base forms (3 out of 790 / 0.37%), and their TLU-scores revealed that PA/irr and PREper received the highest scores (> 80%), whereas PApro and Goto-f received the lowest scores (<50%). Occurrence in obligatory contexts showed that PA/irr (>90%) had the highest, and Goto-f attained the lowest score (<60%). The rest of the verb forms under study had occurrence in obligatory contexts between 60% and 90%.

As in the A- and B-groups, future forms were used to convey future only, and the same pattern applied to the past verb forms, which were only used to denote past functions.

A clear tendency of development towards correct target language usage was manifested by the fact that the present forms were not overused or overgeneralized any more. The form-function mappings of the present time forms had at this level been mostly sorted out. The only non-target-like use of present time forms in this group was evident in confused uses of PREpro and PRE. This happened primarily in the context of written testing, where when required to fill in the progressive form, the learners chose to make use of the simple aspect in almost 40% of the contexts. However, this number was reduced to 11% in the oral interview.

With regard to future time reference, Present Progressive and Will-f were extensively used in contexts requiring Goto-f (PREpro 25% in the written test and 25% in the oral test, Will-f 36% in the written test), whereas Goto-f was rarely overused. Goto-f scored low on both occurrence in obligatory contexts and TLU-scores, whereas Will-f scored high on both. The use of present progressive to denote Goto-f was also a clear phenomenon in B-group's data.

Simple present attained higher occurrence in obligatory contexts and higher TLU-score than PREpro, but both forms scored higher than 60 % in both analyses. When the use of PRE was required, the distribution of responses showed that the learners used PRE in more than 85% of the contexts, whereas PREpro was used in 15% of the contexts. A slightly more evident confusion comes to the fore when we consider the distribution of responses when the use of PREpro was required in the written test. In this test, PREpro occurred in almost 60 % of the contexts, and PRE in as many as 37.9%. Again, that number was reduced in oral testing.

In contexts where it was expected that the learner would produce irregular Simple Past forms, the regularizing of these forms was now down to a minimum (1.3% of all Simple Past contexts). PA/irr also had the highest TLU-score and the highest occurrence in contexts requiring that particular verb form in this group. Some confusion with PApro was demonstrated by the fact that Simple Past was used in 30 % of the contexts which required PApro. This feature gave PApro quite low scores on both occurrence in obligatory contexts and TLU-analysis.

PREper increased dramatically from B- to C-group, and received very high TLU-scores in C-group. We recall that this verb form was not at all realized in target like manners in B-group, but evidently these C-group learners had the form-function mapping of this form sorted out by the time the data was collected.

The graphs below show the graphic representation of occurrences in obligatory contexts (4.28) and TLU-scores (4.29) as developed from the A- to the C-group.

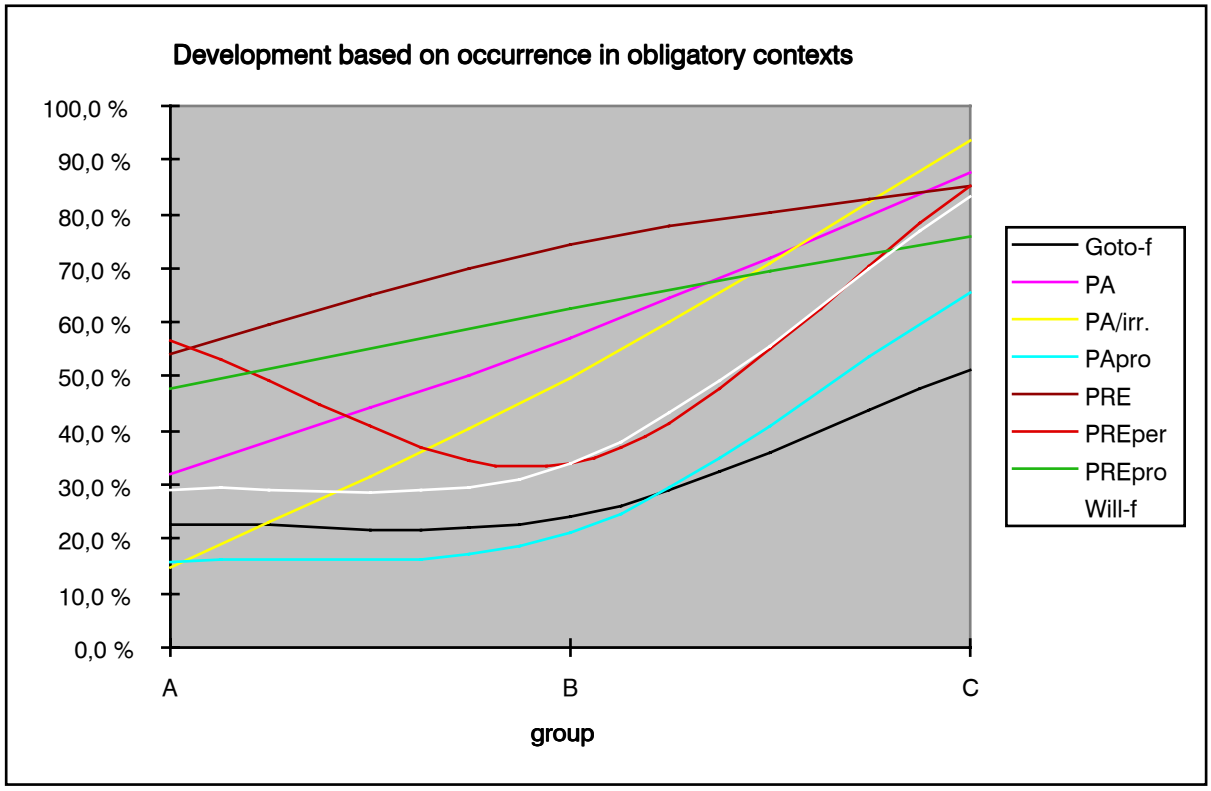

Figure 4.28 Graphic representation of the progress in obligatory context occurrence.

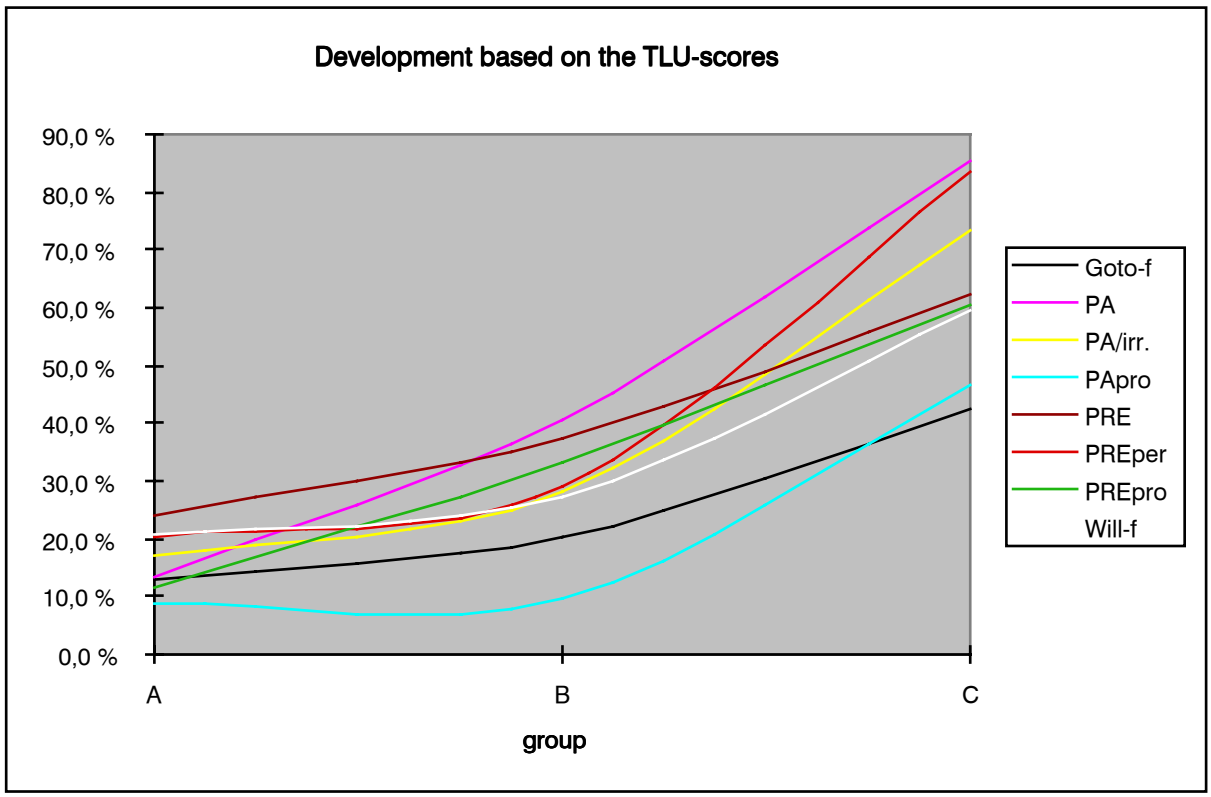

Figure 4.29 Graphic representation of the development based on the TLU-scores.

4.6 The Development of Time Reference – Tentative Stages for Norwegian learners

It should be mentioned that in order to arrive at the below demonstrated developmental stages (table 4.30), differences and variations needed to be glossed over. I have considered the general trends and tendencies from the collected data to arrive at theses stages. This is due to the fact that typical statistical procedures were no part of this thesis, and hence these stages should be viewed as no more than tentative idealized stages of the development of English time reference for Norwegian school learners of English. Characterizing the first stage of development, this writer deduced it from mistakes and errors made by the beginner level learners, which could be interpreted as the evidence for an invariant verb stage.

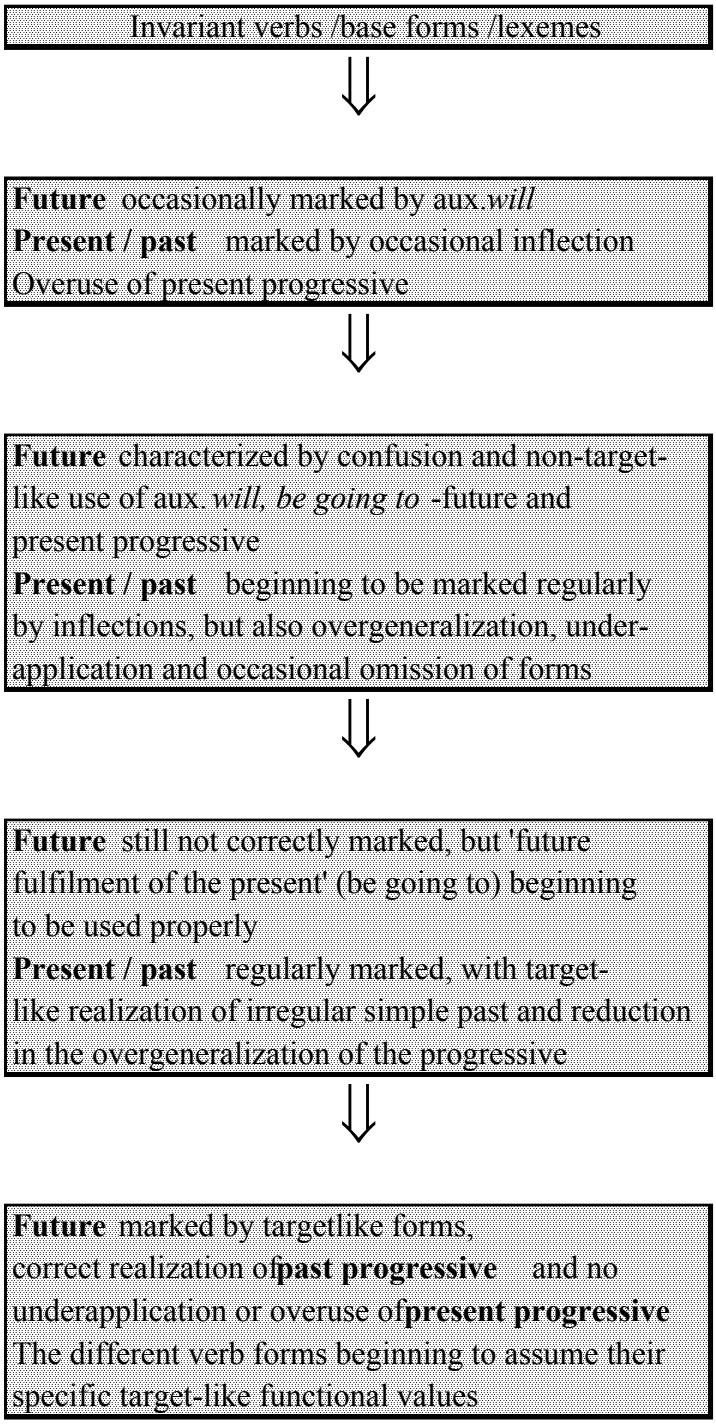

Table 4.30 Tentative developmental stages in the acquisition of time reference by Norwegian learners.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

In this final chapter of this thesis, we will view the results of the study in a somewhat broader context, and thus relate the findings to other research conducted in the area. We will first consider the fact that the results differed according to the test task; secondly, we will relate the findings to the working hypotheses outlined in Chapter Two. Finally, some concluding remarks, implications and recommendations for future research in the area will be presented.

5.1 Written versus Oral Test Results

The written test proved to be more difficult than the oral interview. In Chapter Three, when describing the methodology used for the present study, it was said that one of the main reasons for basing this research on both oral and written learner production was to ensure coverage of all verb forms under study. It was hypothesized that not all the usages of the English verb forms would necessarily appear in an oral interview; hence, a very important consideration was that also the peculiarities regarding the verb forms should be tested, preferably in a structural exercise like a fill-in-the-blanks test.

Distributional analyses, occurrence in obligatory contexts and TLU-analyses all evidenced better results in the oral than in the written test. The number of wrong occurrences, misapplications and strange forms was certainly higher in the written learner productions than in the oral samples. Below, in figure 5.1, we can see the differences between oral and written results displayed, with reference to the relationship between the form required for that particular context and the form used by the learner (occurrence in obligatory context).

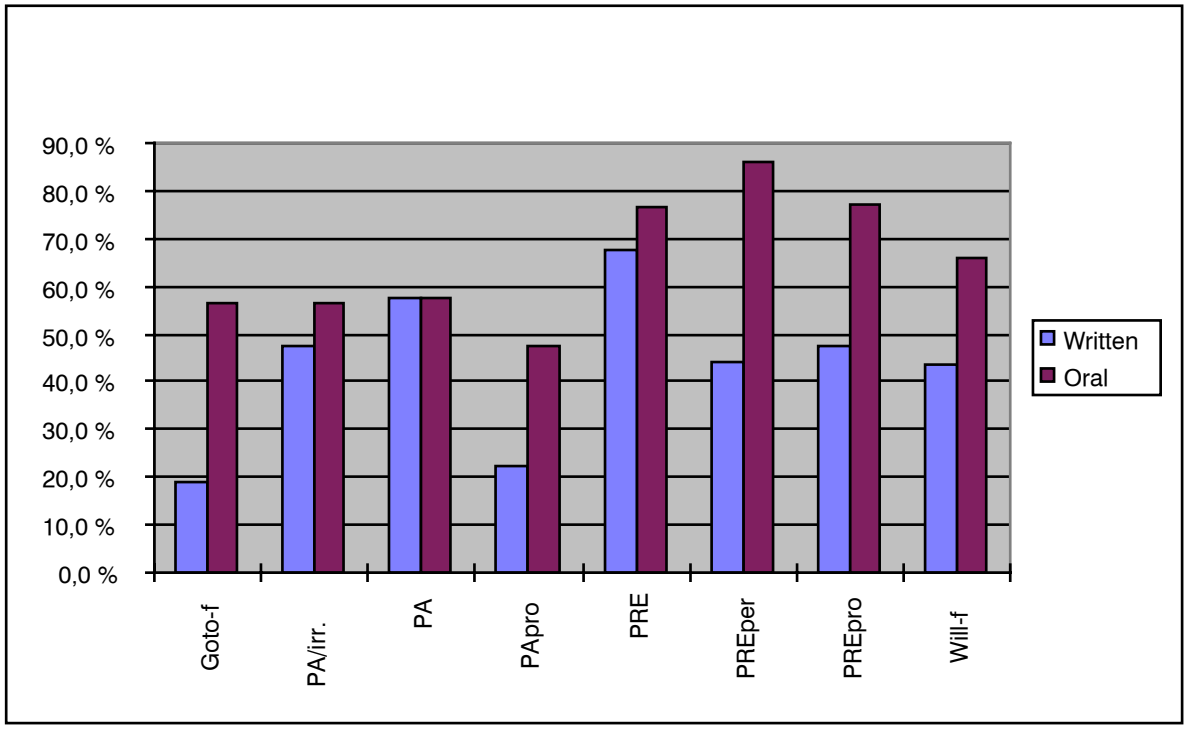

Figure 5.1 All groups: written vs. oral occurrence in obligatory contexts.

A form-focused task, such as the one employed in this study for the elicitation of written data, should allow the learners to have sufficient time for choosing the correct form, nevertheless their production exhibited more errors and fewer occurrences of the target forms than in the oral task. It was expected that in this test the learners would have a strong focus on form, since they were given enough time for reflection and monitoring, and, consequently, perform better than in the oral interview (*to monitor* here relates to the conscious editing of language performance).

The difficulty in the fill-in-the-blanks test was for the learners to interpret the temporal and aspectual clues in each sentence. In addition, this elicitation procedure covered all the verb forms under study, including those with which some of the learners were not acquainted.

Another explanation of why the written test appeared so difficult and complex may be the context for such a task. The setting may resemble a test-like situation for the learner, giving him/her the time to monitor and edit the output several times during the test-period. When the learner is unsure, and has time to evaluate their own productions, he/she may start to question the answers given, which may result in a higher number of wrong occurrences. When this researcher sorted the data, it was evident that correct answers in some contexts were crossed out, and replaced with the wrong responses by the learner.

This could be an indication that in the written test the learners were forced to deal with verb forms for which they were perhaps not developmentally ready. Thus, one could claim that the learners' knowledge of the rules for verb form usage, at least in the lower level A-group, was not very high. This is suggested by the fact that the differences between oral and written performance according to the test task were more significant in the A- and B-groups than in the C-group. This kind of difference was especially salient in the A-group. The displays of the three groups' performances according to the test tasks are provided in the figures 5.2 to 5.4 below.

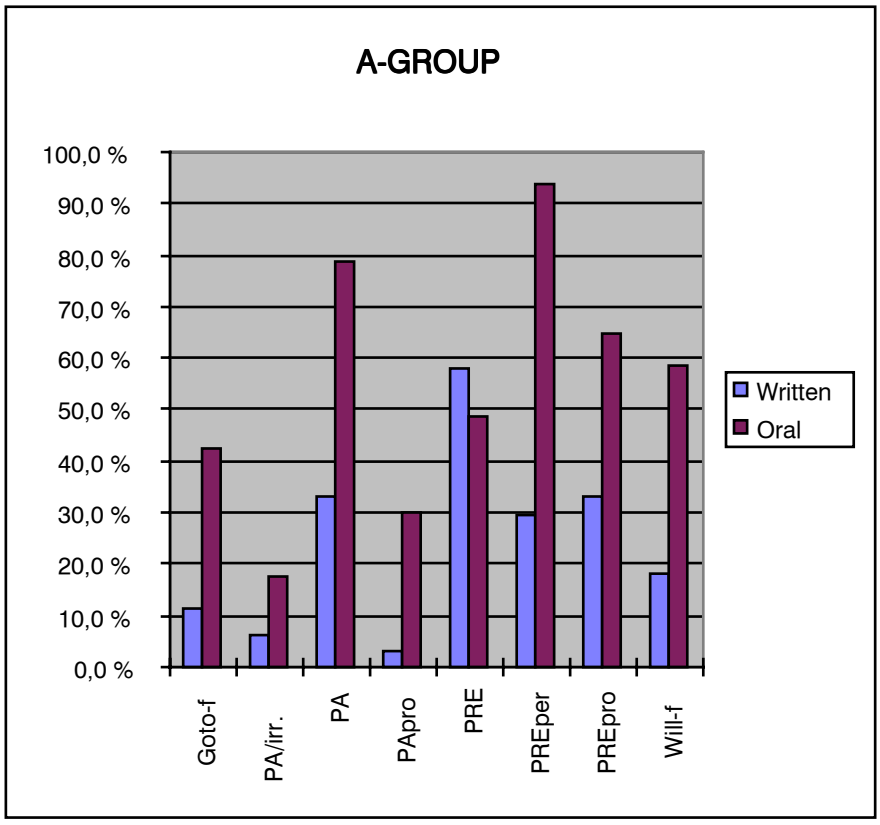

Figure 5.2 A-group: written vs. oral results

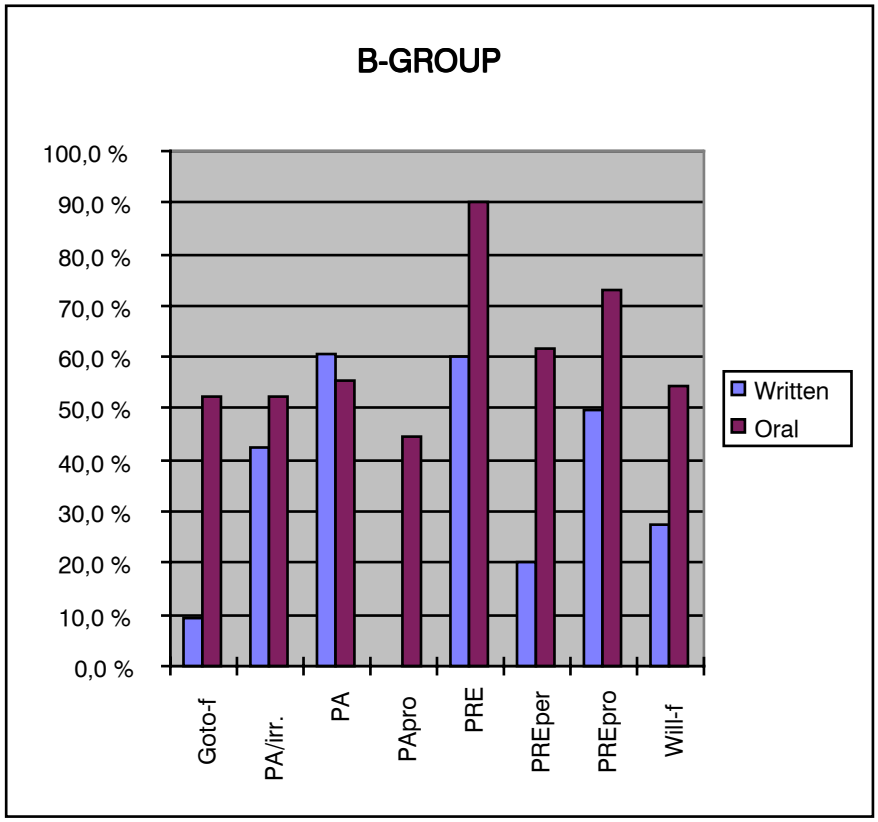

Figure 5.3 B-group: written vs. oral results

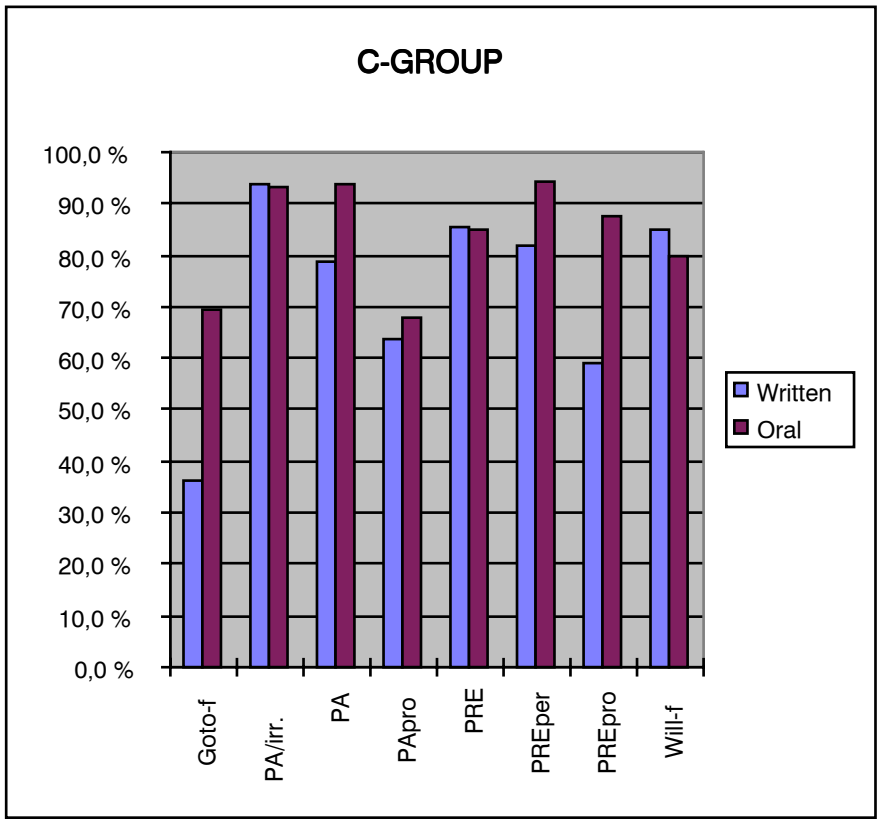

Figure 5.4 C-group: written vs. oral results

So far, we have considered the reasons why the written test caused a lower suppliance of the target forms than the oral test, given the context and content of that particular task. A different explanation of this phenomenon may be that the oral interview was the factor which made the performance differ when compared with the written test. We are aware of the fact that elicitation procedures used in the quest for relevant data have pitfalls and dangers. As Nunan (1997:369) says, "the interview is an unequal encounter in which the power is very much with the interviewer, and this inequity is reflected in the discourse itself". Hence, it could be the instances of involuntary prompting and suggesting by the interviewer, or the facilitating role of a broader communication context which led to the remarkable differences in production according to the task type.

Thus, we have seen that causal factors leading to differences in production according to task types may vary. The decrease in difference between written and oral production from the A- to the C-group indicates that this is a feature which mainly concerns low-proficiency learners.

5.2 The Working Hypotheses as Starting Points for Discussion

At the end of Chapter Two, three hypotheses were formulated as one of the preparatory stages in the development of this research project. Now that the study has been carried out, it is time to return to these issues and see whether the results verified or falsified the hypotheses formulated at the onset of the present study. We will now consider the hypotheses in the same order as they were presented in Chapter Two, repeating them for the reader's sake.

> *1) I expect that the L2 learners will demonstrate gradual development in their use of time reference, from invariant verb forms to the introduction of tense morphology. I furthermore anticipate a progression in the use of time reference from less to gradually more marked forms.*

At the onset of the study I expected that the learners would display a clear development with respect to temporal reference. We will in this chapter compare these developments with the developmental sequences identified in previous research, as presented in Chapter One.

> *2) Instruction may play an interfering role in the acquisition of time reference; it may result in the overuse of a specific verb form and/or in the learner abandoning already acquired rules.*

Due to the fact that the learners who participated in this study were classroom learners, and, in opposition to naturalistic learners, have been subject to instruction, it is relevant to question

whether classroom instruction will affect developmental patterns. Hypothesis number two states that instruction may play an interfering role with regard to the acquisition of time reference.

> *3) Finally, I view the L2 learner's knowledge of his/her native language as representing a facilitation for the learner. Whenever a target-language verb form is similar to the corresponding form in the learner's native language, this will enable correct hypothesizing about the language in target. Interlanguage transfer of unmarked forms is more likely than marked ones, and the learner difficulty will generally result from L1-L2 differences involving a greater degree of L2 markedness, with degree of difficulty reflecting the degree of markedness.*

Hypothesis number three refers to the learner's L1, which in this study is Norwegian, and states that the learner's L1 in certain contexts will facilitate the acquisition of the L2. Hence, the learner's L1 is predicted to influence the production of L2 English.

5.2.1 Development / progress

As we saw in the previous chapter, Chapter Four, there was a clear progress from the beginner level A-group to the C-group. The progress and development consisted in an increasing number of verbs used, decrease in the use of base forms and gradual advancement towards the target language in all respects. Also grammatical correctness, as reflected in the TLU-scores for the three groups, increasingly resembled the TL. A clear increase in mean suppliance and suppliance in obligatory contexts was evidenced, as well as an increasing maturity and advance towards the target form-function mapping, indicating that the first working hypothesis has been verified. Part of the development expected at the onset of this study was also a decrease of the importance of some of the psychological processes which are at play in the context of language learning, such as overgeneralization, undergeneralization (also called underapplication), avoidance and transfer.

We saw that both Simple Present and Present Progressive forms initially were largely overused and overgeneralized to contexts not allowing for such verb forms. This non-target use gradually diminished in frequency, so that the overuse of the forms in question was minimal by the time data was collected from the C-group informants. As to underapplication, the same development took place, with a gradual decline in the underapplication of some forms and progress towards a distribution of verb forms similar to what one could expect from native speakers of English.

The apparently consistent avoidance of Past Progressive in both A- and B-group, with the suppliance of Simple Past instead, was also reduced in the C-group. However, there were still signs of avoidance in the C-group's data, but Past Progressive was used in more than 60% of the contexts in which it was required (whereas Past Progressive was supplied in less then 20% and 30% of such contexts for the A- and B-groups, respectively). The TLU-scores also revealed a clear decline in the underapplication of Past Progressive and a development towards the target usage, despite the fact that this was one of the most difficult forms to acquire for the Norwegian learners under study. (The TLU-scores for Past Progressive: A-group - 8.6%, B-group - 9.5% and C-group - 46.6%). One could argue that the reason for avoiding the use of Past Progressive was related to the Markedness Differential Hypothesis (MDH), which holds that a feature more marked in the L2 than the corresponding feature in the L1 will involve greater complexity, and hence be more difficult for the learner. Since progressive forms are non-existent in our learners' L1 and hence more marked, the persistent problems with acquiring this form may be accounted for by the notion of markedness. Past Progressive was not a verb form apparent in the interlanguage of A-group's informants. A reason for this may be that the learners had some knowledge of the structure but lacked the confidence to use it and therefore may have exhibited an avoidance strategy. Other explanations as to why the structure did not appear in the data may be that the structure was simply not present in the grammar of the learners, or that the learners knew the structure but did not use it as a matter of chance. This last possibility, however, does not really apply to this study, where the learners were confronted with multiple contexts requiring the use of Past Progressive.

With reference to L1 transfer, we will at this point consider transfer which had negative effects on the learners' L2 production, since one of the working hypotheses concerns the facilitating role of the native language and hence will be dealt with at a later point in this chapter.
Transfer of the future-referring construction *shall + inf.* took place in A-group, presumably because the English and Norwegian verb forms were similar enough to encourage the informants' reliance on their L1.

* *Shall buy* (4A)

* I shall be here.... (4A)

* .. because he shall swimming (4A)

* I skal (Norw.) sleeping tonight (7A)

According to the MDH, linguistically unmarked features of the L1 will tend to be transferred, but marked L1 features will not (e.g. Eckman 1977, as discussed in Chapter Two). Linguistic notions of markedness are usually defined in terms of "complexity, relative infrequency of use or departure from something that is more basic, typical or canonical in a language" (Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991:101). Transfer seems to be a strategy available to compensate for lack of L2 knowledge, and in this sense leads the learner to resort to his/her L1, also as far as marking future reference is concerned. According to Ellis (1994), one of the operating principles in L2 acquisition, as proposed by Andersen (1990), is the relexification principle, which is defined as "when you cannot perceive the structural pattern of the L2, use your L1 with lexical items from the L2" (Ellis 1994:381). Transfer of this kind was also evident in the Norwegian learner data, in syntactically incorrect subordinate clauses like the following:

*.., because he not can swim.

Here, the learner uses the Norwegian syntax structure, with lexical items from the L2.

We will now compare the tentative developmental patterns, as demonstrated in Chapter Four, to the sequences found in the literature, most of which were outlined in Chapter One of this thesis. The same sequence of acquisition of 11 functors, obtained by three different methods, was by Dulay and Burt (1974) held to provide strong evidence that children exposed to natural L2 speech acquire certain structures in an invariant universal order. The children under study were Chinese- and Spanish-speaking. According to Dulay and Burt (1974), the functors relevant to the present thesis are acquired in the following sequence: -ing --> regular Simple Past --> irregular Simple Past.

This development correlates with the findings in the data collected for this thesis, when occurrences in obligatory contexts for all the three groups have been added. According to suppliance-scores in this Norwegian data, -ing is supplied more extensively than regular Simple Past, which again is supplied in more contexts than irregular Simple Past. However, the

correlation between Dulay and Burt's findings and the ones resulting from our data is only evident when all the data from the three groups have been put together.

Another natural starting point for a discussion of developmental sequences would be Krashen's 'Natural Order' (1977). As we recall from Chapter One, Krashen postulated a 'natural order' for the acquisition of some grammatical morphemes, consisting of four 'boxes' representing four stages. The items in the boxes higher in the order were regularly found (80 or 90 per cent) accurately supplied in obligatory contexts before those in the boxes lower in the order.

If one is to adopt Krashen's method of analysis, namely, suppliance in obligatory context, the order of the items given in Krashen's 'natural order' as compared to the data collected for present thesis reveals a discrepancy in the acquisition order. When the C-group's data was analyzed according to occurrence in obligatory context, irregular Simple Past occurred most often, whereas Present Progressive occurred least often. Both the A- and B-groups used Present Progressive to a larger extent than they did regular Simple Past, whereas the irregular form occurred least frequently out of the three forms (see figure 5.5 below, which illustrates the differences in acquisition order).

If we add the results from the three groups, Present Progressive received highest suppliance in obligatory contexts out of the three functors described by Krashen, with 63.5 % suppliance, whereas regular Simple Past-requiring contexts had 57.7 % suppliance, and the irregular form had 54.4 % suppliance. If we employ the TLU-scores as a basis for establishing orders of acquisition, the picture is different. Present Progressive, due to the overgeneralization of that particular form, received quite low scores, compared to its occurrence in obligatory contexts. Considering the TLU-results of all three groups put together shows that irregular Simple Past had higher suppliance than regular Simple Past, which again had higher scores than Present Progressive (which resembles the order shown by the C-group in figure 5.5 below). Krashen's argument for the Natural Order Hypothesis is based largely on the morpheme studies. Taking TLU-scores into consideration, shows the inadequacy of applying the procedure of morpheme studies to the study of developmental sequences. When the morpheme studies showed that -ing was better acquired than any other item in the order, this was based on suppliance in obligatory

context (SOC). The results from the C-group's data indicate that counting SOC gives illusory results, since this method of analysis does not take overuse or underapplication into consideration. Using SOC as a method of analysis, is based on the assumption that if a learner supplies a feature like -ing on every occasion that calls for it, he/she should be credited with having acquired it. However, the same learner might also use -ing in contexts that did not require it. To say that this learner had 'acquired' -ing would clearly be misleading. A feature is by no means fully acquired until the learner has mastered the particular grammatical functions that it serves (Ellis 1990).

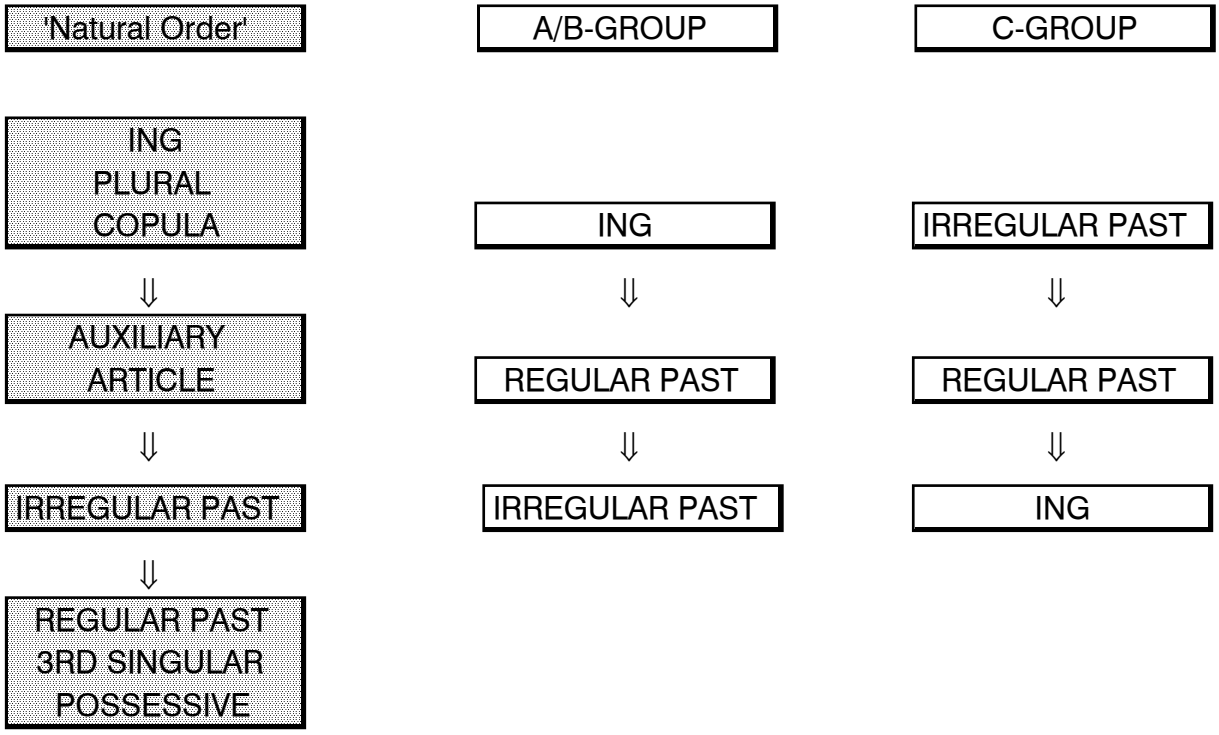

Figure 5.5 'Natural Order' vs. findings from Norwegian learners.

Pienemann and Johnston (1987) also postulated tentative developmental stages in ESL acquisition with reference to the verb system. After passing through the formulaic speech stage, the learner, according to Pienemann and Johnston, moves on to the second and third stages where v-ing and irregular verbs are supposedly acquired. At the end of stage three, V-ed is acquired, whereas the acquisition of auxiliaries *be/have* + V-ed and the auxiliary *be* + V-ing takes place in the fourth stage. Stage five allows for the acquisition of third person singular -s, and at stage six the learner is able to convert V-ing to noun (gerund). When comparing

Pienemann and Johnston's developmental stages to the TLU-scores obtained from our data, it seems as if the orders basically correspond, except for the use of Present Perfect (see figure 5.6 below). As pointed out earlier, this use among Norwegian learners may be due to transfer from their L1, and hence the sequence, as obtained by Pienemann and Johnston, is not fully comparable with Norwegian learner data.

STAGE	VERB
1:	'WORDS' or FORMULAE
2:	IL-ing IRREG
3:	-ED
4:	AUX_EN AUX_ING
5:	3SG_S
6:	(GERUND)

STAGE	VERB
1:	'WORDS' or FORMULAE
2:	IL-ing IRREG AUX_EN
3:	-ED
4:	AUX_ING
5:	
6:	

Figure 5.6 Tentative developmental stages in ESL development (Pienemann and Johnston 1987:82), vs. the TLU-scores for all three groups, Norwegian learners.

Havranek (1993) conducted a longitudinal study of four Austrian learners of English as a foreign language. The study was carried out during a period of two years. The aim of this study was to show that the verb system of Austrian learners of L2 English can be described in its own terms, and that the learner language is systematic enough to allow the formulation of rules appropriate to different stages.

It may seem as if the stages which Havranek postulated (cf. section 1.2.4, Chapter One), and the tentative developmental stages arrived at on the basis of the Norwegian data correlate to a large extent. There is no doubt that the A-group informants show traces of an earlier invariant verb stage, which, according to Havranek, is the first stage. The other tentative stages also seem to correlate, indicating that the Austrian learners in Havranek's study and the Norwegian learners in this study developed along the same lines. However, also here the emergence and

use of the Present Perfect in the Norwegian data does not fully correlate with the use of this structure by the Austrian learners in Havranek's study.

Finally, in this part concerning development and progress, it should be noted that according to the Primacy of Aspect Principle (PAP), verb morphology is distributed across VPs according to one or more aspectual distinctions but independently of any specific tense distinction. However, when I analyzed the A-group's data, investigating the relationship between past/nonpast time reference and the various IL verb forms, it was clear that already at this beginner level Norwegian learners used contrasting forms to discriminate between past and nonpast time. This correlates with Housen's (1993) findings in his study of Sue. Both in the A-group and B-group, Present Perfect, Past Progressive and Simple Past forms almost exclusively referred to past time situations. These forms can thus be said to be primarily marked for past time contexts. The Simple Present form, on the other hand, seemed to be more time-neutral in the A-group; it not only appeared in nonpast time contexts, but also, though less frequently, in past time contexts (105 occurrences in nonpast time contexts - 44 occurrences in past time contexts; 29.5%). In B-group, however, the occurrences were slightly more confined to nonpast time contexts (124 occurrences in nonpast time contexts - 36 occurrences in past time contexts; 22.5%). [C-group: 142 occurrences in nonpast time contexts - 2 occurrences in past time contexts; 1.4%]
This is further illustrated in table 5.7, which shows the distribution of verb occurrences in the study according to tense:

	A-group		B-group		C-group	
	nonpast tense forms	past tense forms	nonpast tense forms	past tense forms	nonpast tense forms	past tense forms
Nonpast time reference	267	4	303	35	351	2
Past time reference	61	179	55	264	2	363
Totals	328	183	358	299	353	365
	18.6%	2.2%	15.4%	11.7%	0.5%	0.5%

Table 5.7 Distribution of verb occurrences in the study according to tense.

Due to the results shown in the above table, it can be suggested that the Primacy of Aspect Principle was not operative in A-group's and beginner level learners' IL. If it had been, the distribution of English past tense morphology, apart from being governed by some aspectual distinction, would have first and foremost been independent of any particular tense-distinction and past and nonpast tense forms would have been randomly (i.e. more or less evenly) distributed across past and nonpast time situations. This seemed not to be the case: the number of past tense forms in the beginner level A-group's IL referring to nonpast time situations is negligible (2.2% of all past tense references). According to Housen, this corresponds with both Meisel (1987) and Vogel (1989), who are both sceptical about the validity of the PAP for SLA. Hence it can be concluded that the PAP, at least in its original formulation, did not operate in the IL of the beginner level A-group's informants at the time of data collection. However, table 5.7 also shows that contrary to the past tense forms which are hardly ever used in nonpast time contexts, nonpast tense forms are more randomly distributed across the two basic tense categories and do occur in past time contexts. This is the case for both A- and partly for B-group, where quite a significant number of verb forms in past time contexts are nonpast tense forms (18.% and 15.4% respectively). In the higher level C-group, the nonpast tense forms have assumed their target functions and appeared exclusively in nonpast time contexts (only 0.5% of the nonpast tense forms appeared in past time contexts). As Housen did, we may on the basis of this data raise the question of whether the formal distinction between the past and nonpast tense forms in the past time contexts reflected some deeper aspectual distinction after all (as held by the PAP). Housen quoted the same type of evidence in his 1993 study, and argued for a weaker version of the PAP.

According to Housen (1993:100), it is also hypothesized that the "effects of these [Aspectual Semantico-Cognitive] universals would overrule transfer effects from the learner's native grammatical temporality system". As to the overruling of transfer effects, it is not confirmed by the Norwegian data collected for the purpose of this thesis. The informants in the beginner level A-group evidently transferred the use of the Norwegian structure corresponding to Present Perfect in English, and hence positive transfer occurred.

5.2.2 The Role of Instruction

Since the learners who participated in this study were classroom learners, it is relevant to ask whether classroom instruction affected the developmental patterns described in the previous section of this chapter. However, due to the fact that the focus of this thesis was on learner production, the form of instruction the informants received was not observed. The information gathered to give a picture of the types of instruction and curriculum is based exclusively on reports from the teachers in charge of each group. For this reason our consideration of the possible role of instruction and its comparison with the relevant parts of Chapter One are only speculative in nature.

When contrasting the learner language with the target language in Chapter Two, it was suggested that Norwegian learners' overuse of progressive forms could be textbook induced, "because teaching materials produced for beginning learners often over-use progressive forms to avoid the problematic auxiliary *do* " (Johansson and Lysvåg 1987:158). The data collected for this thesis show obvious overuse of present progressive in the initial stages of development. There seems to be a tendency to use the Present Progressive form too frequently and in inappropriate contexts. The table (5.8) below shows the overuse of present progressive in the three groups under study (overuse of the form/total production of the form, and the percentage of Present Progressive overuse):

A-group		B-group		C-group	
raw score	percentage	raw score	percentage	raw score	percentage
107/166	64.5%	60/148	40.5%	38/164	23.2%

Table 5.8 Overuse of Present Progressive, all three groups.

In the part concerning the analysis of collected data we saw that Simple Present and Present Progressive (nonpast forms) were used by the A- and B-group informants in most cases where they were uncertain about which form to supply. In these two groups, the progressive was largely overgeneralized to all other verb forms under study, but not used in Past Progressive environments. Overuse of Present Progressive in the C-group mainly took place in the future

referring contexts, especially when the *be going to*-construction should have been used. Examples of the extensive V-ing overuse are provided by informant 1A, as given below:

* ... *and then he go sleeping* (Simple Past would be appropriate here: went to sleep)

* *Yesterday on this time I read* (Simple Present form) *and writing* (Past Progressive would be appropriate here: ..I was reading and writing)

* *John is a factory worker. He working at Kværner* (Here, Simple Present would be the correct form to supply: He works)

* A: *There is no milk in the refrigerator.*

B: *Okay, I going to the store and buy some* (Will + inf.-future would be the appropriate form in this context: I will go to the store...)

* *I living in Tromsø for the past six years* (Present Perfect would be appropriate: have lived)

* *When I being a young boy, I living in Paris* (Here, Simple Past would be the appropriate form to use: When I was a young boy, I lived in Paris)

Reasons for this extensive overuse, 64.5 % in the beginner level A-group, are probably many, but it seems as if Norwegian school learners at the beginner level favored this construction. Its peculiarity and novelty might appeal to these learners, and make them utilize the form whenever they were unsure which form to employ. It seems plausible to claim that the awareness of V-ing was the cause of the overuse, because no intensive instruction in this feature took place in the Fifth grade (thereby excluding analogy to Lightbown's (1983) study of Canadian high school learners, where she attributed the informants' overlearning/overuse of V-ing to intensive instruction). I would argue that the L2 marked feature, Present Progressive, represents an unfamiliarity which draws the learner's attention towards this form when he/she is exposed to it in the input, hence causing overuse of the construction. This novelty wears off as the learner becomes aware of other productive forms, which again results in a movement towards the TL norm.

In studies involving adolescents and adults, a variety of explanations was given for early acquisition of the progressive. Bailey, Madden and Krashen (1974) reported that the progressive was the least difficult English morpheme for learners of diverse language backgrounds, but failed to explain why. In the study of grammatical development of a five-year-old boy named Homer, Wagner-Gough and Hatch (1975) hypothesized that the simplicity of the form of the progressive may have accounted for its early acquisition. Referring to the *-ing* suffix, they noted that the perceptual salience, regularity and non-stem-changing nature of progressive morphology could account for its ease of acquisition. The form of the progressive was learned before the function, they felt, because Homer's use of progressive was not tied up to the appropriate function.

Frith (1977) also claimed that the progressive was used in free variation in the initial stages of its learning by adolescents, who were inconsistent in their use of progressive forms and functions, many times failing to distinguish the Past Progressive from the Present Progressive. Similarly, Olshtain (1979) concluded that her seven-year-old subject was learning form before function because the subject sometimes used the progressive where the Simple Present was required, showing that its functional distribution had not been properly understood.

The common assumption in much second-language literature is that, especially in the classroom setting, the Past Progressive is learned together with the Present Progressive because of its nearly identical form and the essential closeness of meaning. Frith presents this point when she says:

> The Present Progressive forms should not be explained in a completely different way from the Past Progressive forms. The Present Progressive form is a descriptive background to the actual moment of speaking, just as the Past Progressive is a descriptive background to another act in the past (Frith 1979: 69).

If this was true, we should not expect more learning difficulty with one form than the other, and we should also expect an equal distribution of errors related to these structures. This is <u>not</u> true of the data collected, which by no means show the same usage of Present and Past Progressive. The results showing occurrence in obligatory contexts and TLU-scores (table 5.9) reveal that all

the three groups under study used Past Progressive in considerably fewer contexts than they did Present Progressive:

SUPPLIANCE IN OBLIGATORY CONTEXTS		
Group	**Past Progr.**	**Present Progr.**
A	15.9%	48.0%
B	21.0%	62.4%
C	65.6%	76.1%

TLU-SCORES		
Group	**Past Progr.**	**Present Progr.**
A	8.6%	11.7%
B	9.5%	33.3%
C	46.6%	60.5%

Table 5.9 Present and Past Progressive occurrence in obligatory contexts and TLU-scores.

Since the data in the present thesis did not confirm Frith's (1979) position, it is necessary to view the progressive somewhat differently. I think we can assume that Present and Past Progressive forms definitely represented different levels of difficulty for the learners under study, with Past Progressive involving greater difficulty than Present Progressive.

Bailey (1989) tries to display the meaning of the progressive, and thereby find solutions to why claims like those by Frith do not hold for her findings. She combines theories from Hopper and Thompson (1980) and Woisetschlaeger (1980) to create a more complete picture of the contrasting background and foreground functions of the Progressive in the Present Tense and in the Past Tense. Hopper and Thompson (1980) claim the Progressive represents background information and Woisetschlaeger (1980) claims the progressive to be phenomenal or observable rather than structural and known. The latter does not specify that his theory is limited to Present Tense, but Bailey (1989) assumes this to be the case.

According to Bailey (1989), in the Present Tense, the Simple Present supplies background information, whereas the Present Progressive tells what is happening at the moment. An example of this is the sentence *John teaches at the university. He is writing a book on negation.* The Simple Past represents foreground events which are separate and completed, and the Past Progressive describes the setting in which the actions took place, e.g. *It was raining when I arrived in Tromsø.* The progressive *raining* in this sentence describes the background activity to the punctual foreground event *arrived*. As the result of its background discourse function, the Past Progressive commonly occurs in subordinate clauses and, therefore, has a more complex

syntactic usage than the Simple Past, in which a single event can be mentioned in isolation or two or more past events can be related without the aid of an adverbial clause, as in the sentence *I went to bed, turned off the light and fell asleep*.

The foreground function in discourse and the chronological order of mention both predict that the Simple Past will be acquired earlier than the Past Progressive. This order of acquisition which differs from that for present time reference, in which the Present Progressive is acquired before the Simple Present is, according to Bailey (1989) caused by the greater importance of the foreground function over the background function in discourse.

In addition to discourse function, the semantic meaning of the progressive is more difficult in the past than in the present. The Past Progressive contains elements of both the Present Tense (ongoingness) and the Past Tense (completion). Comrie (1976) and Halliday (1976) call it a present in the past. All of these meaning factors predict the late acquisition of the Past Progressive, just as the data collected for this thesis indicates.

In addition to the overuse of V-ing, another interesting observation is the occurrence of strange forms (besides those strange forms which can be attributed to transfer from the learner's L1) which can appear in instructed learners' L2 production. These are forms which do not occur in the speech of naturalistic learners, and which therefore could be attributed to instruction, e.g.:

* *'cause he <u>is</u> <u>not</u> <u>can</u> swim* (1A)

If we recall the argument of Adjemian (1976) discussed in Chapter One, that interlanguages are natural languages, then we would expect that no developmental forms other than those that characterize natural language development should appear in the interlanguages of L2 learners. However, my data show that the informants sometimes produced very bizarre forms which are usually not to be found in the production of naturalistic learners. Such bizarre forms can be caused by instruction, which often makes the learner use very complex forms for the acquisition he/she is not developmentally ready. The strange form presented above could also very well be a classroom induced error based on formulas, an error-type which never appears in L1 learner data and data collected from naturalistic L2 learners.

It was hypothesized that instruction may play an interfering role in the acquisition of time reference; it may result in the overuse of a specific verb form and/or in the learner abandoning already acquired rules. It seems that this hypothesis has been verified by the fact of V-ing overuse.

5.2.3 The Learners' Native Language as a Facilitator

As indicated in section 5.2.1, L1 transfer seems to be a strategy available to compensate for lack of L2 knowledge. In the learner data collected for the present study, we can find several traces of transfer from the learners' L1 (Norwegian), especially in the beginner level A-group's data. The role of transfer in L2 learning has been a widely discussed phenomenon, and it was analyzed even before the field of SLA as we know it today was established. Lado claimed that:

> ...individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture - both productively when attempting to speak the language and to act in the culture and receptively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and the culture as practised by natives (Lado 1957:2).

This claim can be corroborated by anyone trying to learn a second language. The frustrating phenomenon of a foreign accent is maybe one of the most familiar interfering effects of the L1. The negative role, or the interfering effects of transfer were briefly discussed in section 5.2.1, hence we will now concentrate on the facilitating role of the L1 and on positive transfer as evidenced in the Norwegian learners' data.

As pointed out earlier, the use of Present Perfect showed that the beginning learners transferred this use from Norwegian (see examples below), and in a half of the contexts apparently did not know the correct form of the participle and hence used the infinitive or base form in many instances:

* I have live in Tromsø (1A)
* I have play football in one and two years (2A)
* I have play the piano in three years (4A)

[20 out of 43 occurrences of Present Perfect were infinitives /base forms, and 19 out of 43 occurrences were correctly formed].

The learners under study also transferred 'will + inf.-future' from their L1 to the L2. The similarity between the Norwegian 'vil + inf.' and the corresponding English form is great, and the usage of this future-referring construction is nearly the same in the two languages. By relying on their L1, the learners under study made correct hypotheses about the language in target; thus, the transfer of this future-referring form was of a positive kind, and helped the learner in the acquisition process. This supports the view that transfer takes place when the similarity between the languages (L1 and L2) is perceived as great, and when the structures involved are unmarked, as is the case with will + inf.-future.

A learner's proficiency level also seems to be a relevant factor in determining when transfer will occur. In the present study, beginners seemed more willing to transfer items regardless of the markedness relations. The intermediate level informants were more conservative about transferring usages, possibly because they had committed enough errors by this stage to know that, although similar, the two languages differ in detail a great deal. Limited L2 competence may make beginners especially dependent on the L1, and so initially more willing to transfer marked as well as unmarked items.

As we saw in the previous chapter, occurrence of the Present Perfect in contexts where its use was required was initially high (due to transfer), then fell and finally rose again in the C-group. This creates the 'U' shape in a graphic representation of the data (see figures 5.10 and 5.11 below). However, the TLU-scores were initially quite low, then rose to some extent, before the form finally gained a near-target realization in group C.

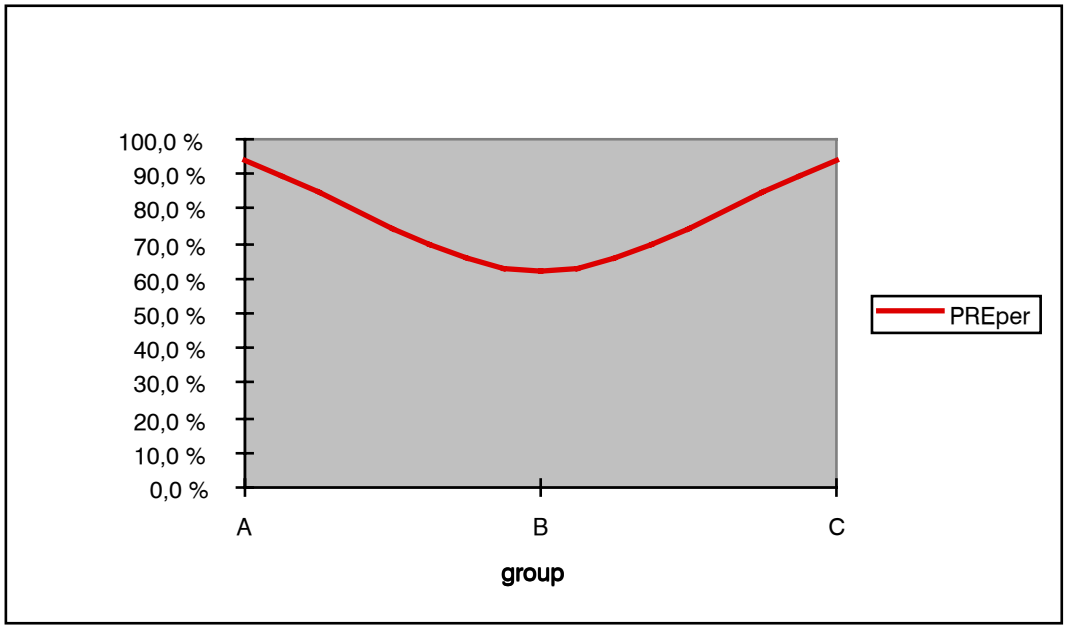

Figure 5.10 Present Perfect: U-shaped behavior, derived from oral results

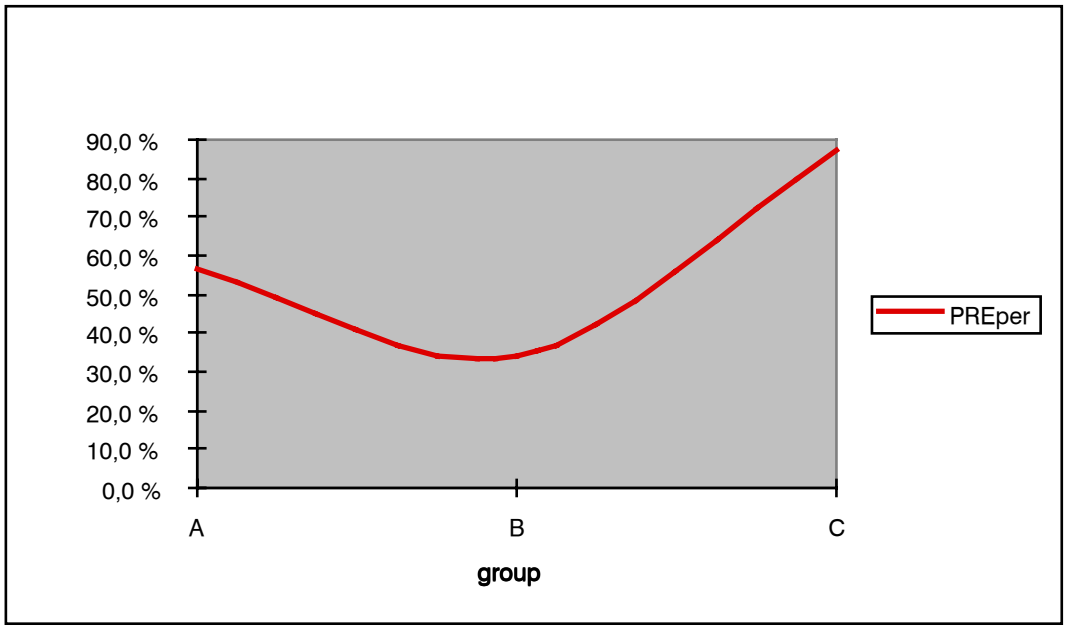

Figure 5.11 Present Perfect: U-shaped behavior, derived from oral and written results added

As we can see, the U-shape is most obvious in the oral data material, but also evident when results from the two test tasks are added. We should note that as one form-function association becomes established in interlanguage, it affects other existing and emerging associations as well. In this case, overgeneralizations of the Simple Past to Present Perfect environments (as seen in section 4.4.4), will cause an apparent decrease in the rate of appropriate use of the

Present Perfect. Thus, in spite of the fact that the tense/aspect system as a whole is developing, the rate of the appropriate use of individual tense/aspect forms may appear to decline.

It was hypothesized at the onset of the present study that whenever a target language form was similar to the corresponding form in the learner's native language, it would facilitate correct hypothesizing about this target form. The examples provided above verify this working hypothesis, and lead us to the conclusion that Norwegian learners, due to the similarity between their L1 and L2, tend to transfer their knowledge of the Norwegian corresponding form, and hence make correct hypotheses regarding the use of this form. Additionally, it was anticipated that the transfer of unmarked forms would be more likely than the transfer of marked forms. The data analysis confirmed that marked forms were less transferable than unmarked ones.

5.3 Regularity versus Irregularity

The learners' choice of tense was found to be influenced by the complexity of form as well as the complexity of meaning, as seen in the distribution of regular and irregular verbs. Since irregularity is such an outstanding feature of the Simple Past formation, a special analysis was conducted of all the verbs used by the intermediate level B-group in one of the two tasks, namely, the oral test. This is due to the fact that the written structural exercises did not allow for any choice of verbs, since the verb to fill in was provided in the text.

All the Simple Past or the Past Progressive occurrences in this task were categorized according to whether they had regular or irregular Simple Past forms. The verbs that were used in the Simple Past in the oral task were then sorted into regular and irregular categories, and the same was done for verb use in the Past Progressive. After having counted instances in each category, it turned out that 66 out of 112 (58.9%) verb forms that B-group subjects chose to use in the Simple Past were irregular. This in itself was not surprising. Kucera and Francis (1967) report that of the 30 most frequent verbs used in the Past Tense, 22 are irregular. What was more striking, however, was that exactly the reverse ratio of irregular to regular verbs use was found for the Past Progressive. Here 19 out of 32 were regular (59.4%).

An explanation for this systematic skewing of the regular and irregular verb use could be that it is a form effect. Learners may find it slightly harder to come up with the progressive form of an

irregular verb because that involves using the stem. One learner, for instance, used the form *woking* (for waking) in the progressive, apparently unable to override the more frequently used Simple Past irregular. This close association of pastness and irregular form in the learners' minds may result in some avoidance of irregular verbs in the Past Progressive. Using mostly regular verbs in the Past Progressive may be a formal means by which learners keep its meaning and use distinct from the Simple Past.

5.4 Concluding Remarks

My study examined the development of time reference based on both oral and written data from 33 Norwegian school learners learning English as a second language, and my major purpose was to ascertain whether Norwegian school learners follow the patterns of development established in earlier research and literature. The fact that this study was based on cross-sectional data should allow for some generalizability; this accounts for my belief that these findings largely represent Norwegian learners' development of time reference in general. The results of my study cannot be characterized as ground-breaking; the tentative developmental sequences that I identified followed, to a large extent, the sequences for the development of time reference already established in previously conducted research. However, there were indications in our data that the developmental sequences could be altered, or at least that the learners' L1 could facilitate the acquisition of a form at an earlier stage in the development. The fact remains that the emergence and use of the Present Perfect in our data did not conform to any of the other reported research findings. Due to the facilitating role of the learners' L1, the informants were able to use a feature commonly assumed to be 'late stage' even before 'early stage' features. As to the PAP's claim of universals overruling transfer effects, it was not confirmed by the Norwegian data collected for this thesis. I have, on the basis of this, argued for the importance of the learners' first language in the acquisition process. A recommendation for future L2 instruction may then be that second language learning at a low-proficiency level can be facilitated by concentrating on the areas of structural similarity (if any) between the learners' L1 and the target language.

An interesting finding with reference to variation in the Norwegian learners' IL, was that the data collected showed free variation within some generally predictable framework, an observation not dealt with in previous literature.

When this writer compared the tentative developmental stages derived from the Norwegian data with earlier findings within this area, it became evident that measurement in L2 research is highly debatable. Taking TLU-scores into consideration showed the inadequacy of applying the procedure of the morpheme studies (SOC) to the study of developmental sequences. I believe that there is a need for future investigation of the methods employed in the measurement of L2 proficiency, and I am glad that measurement in L2 research is one of the areas which will be in focus at the 19th Annual Second Language Research Forum, a conference to be held in Minnesota in September 1999.

Due to the thoughts and intentions underlying the teaching material, as outlined in Chapter Three, the learners in the A- and B-groups were not heavily instructed in the area of temporal reference. Hence, the task of tracing interfering effects of instruction became impossible. The author of the material used for teaching in the A-group's classroom intended, in line with Doughty (1998), to accommodate rather than interfere with the learners' development, and the material was designed to provide input which would stretch all the learners' linguistic capabilities. The intentions behind this teaching material, in combination with the teacher's oral input, seem to provide good grounds for language acquisition. The provision of input should be viewed as an important part of the language acquisition process, and it would be interesting to see future research on this topic, as related to Norwegian learners.

The acquisition of Past Progressive and be going to + inf.-future seemed extremely difficult for the Norwegian learners in this study (cf. table 4.27, which shows lowest TLU-scores for these two forms in the C-group). Despite large amounts of exposure to the L2 in the classroom, this in itself is clearly not sufficient. It is possible that some special pedagogical measures could be of help in this case, that is, offering traditional grammar explanations and exercises, systematic corrective feedback or some other currently used forms of input enhancement (e.g. printing the

exponents of the target structure in bold types in order to make it more salient to the learner). In conclusion, we should emphasize the importance of attention, which seems to be a necessary condition for SLA development.

With reference to the role of transfer, I have argued that the importance of the L1 in L2 learning is absolutely fundamental. As Ellis (1994) so truly points out, a theory of transfer is likely to be a general theory of L2 acquisition, in that the role of the L1 cannot easily be separated from other factors that influence development. "The theory, then, must account for how L1 knowledge interacts with input in shaping the learner's interlanguage system and also how both L1 and interlanguage knowledge are drawn on in L2 production" (Ellis 1994:335-336). In conclusion, I believe that beginner level learners will use first language structures to solve the riddle of second language forms, especially where there is syntactic congruity between structures or morphological similarity. In this sense, cross-linguistic influence may result in learners taking different paths to target-language mastery. Thus, Krashen's claim that an invariant natural order is always to be found in acquisitional data is simply not true.

Very little research on Norwegian school learners' acquisition of English has been carried out, it would therefore be interesting to see more future research within this area, preferably research of a complementary nature, addressing the questions of SLA development from multiple theoretical perspectives. I hope that this thesis, as a contribution to SLA research in Norway, will encourage further research in the area of language acquisition, and that this study has shed some light on some of the mechanisms at play in an ESL context. The Norwegian school system has recognized the importance of English as a second language for many years already, and, with rapid progress in the field of communication technology, I believe that L2 learning will maintain its importance in the new millennium.

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