Abstract

The aim of this master thesis is to investigate the role of language transfer and metalinguistic awareness in Norwegian students' use and evaluation of grammar in their L2 English. The grammatical elements that are investigated are: Bare nouns, subject/verb-agreement, definite articles, adverbials of frequency and the verb second syntax of interrogative clauses. Twelve 10-year old students and twenty-four 15-year old students performed an error-finding test which aimed at investigating possible negative transfer elements from Norwegian to English, as well as their metalinguistic awareness' impact on the L2 proficiency. The hypothesis' of this project are that Norwegian L2 learners of English make mistakes because they negatively transfer properties from Norwegian syntax to English, and that their metalinguistic awareness in the L2 is a significant factor overall, in their L2 proficiency.

The results indicate a significant development in L2 proficiency, from 10 to 15-year old, which can be attributed to a higher development of metalinguistic awareness in the L2. Also, the results indicate that metalinguistic awareness is an important factor in a learner's L2 proficiency overall. The results in this study cannot be used to say anything conclusive about whether or not the informants are transferring elements from their L1 to the L2, mainly because their metalinguistic awareness is too low to perform error-finding in the L2 consistently.

Preface

I am studying to become an English teacher and therefore wanted to focus my thesis on something I may draw upon when teaching in the future. Second language acquisition was therefore a natural choice. I was especially interested in factors that make Norwegian students commit errors in their L2 English. In conversations with my supervisors Terje Lohndal and Mila Dimitrova Vulchanova it was therefore decided that I would investigate the impact negative transfer from the L1 and metalinguistic awareness in the L2 have on a learner's L2 performance, with focus on some grammatical elements we thought might confuse Norwegian students. I believe that this topic is highly relevant for my future career as a teacher, and that the findings in the project have made me more aware of what needs to be addressed in the English classroom. It has been a challenging, but also very rewarding process, which has left me with valuable experience and an increased understanding and interest in second language acquisition.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed and helped me with my thesis. I would especially like to thank my supervisors, Professor Terje Lohndal and Professor Mila Dimitrova Vulchanova, for their help in designing the thesis and their support, guidance and feedback during the project. I would like to thank all the students who agreed to participate in the project and their teachers for granting me access to their classrooms. Finally, I would like to thank my family, friends and girlfriend for their support. Especially, I would like to thank my father for his guidance during the project, and for proofreading the completed thesis.

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Contents

1.0 Introduction

Ever since the beginning of second language acquisition as a research field, researchers have believed that language transfer from a learner's native language plays an important part in his or her L2 acquisition (Mitchell & Myles 1998). However, exactly which language structures are transferred and how influential language transfer is on the L2 acquisition, have been widely debated. Some researchers believe that transfer only plays an important role in the early stages of L2 acquisition (Schwartz & Sprouse 1996), while others believe that it is also important in the later stages (Treffers-Daller & Sakel 2012). Research has shown that L1 transfer may be both advantageous and disadvantageous in L2 acquisition, in that it may allow a learner to acquire elements in the L2 easier, but it may also cause the learner to make mistakes in the L2 (Ellis 1985). This is because learners often use transfer as a sort of "applying what is known-strategy", where they turn to their L1 for backup, when facing difficulties in the L2 (Ellis 1985). This may cause both positive transfer (where the elements are similar in both languages) and negative transfer (where the elements differ in the two languages). Most theorists believe that negative transfer is an important source of error and interference in the L2, because L1 habits are so deeply rooted in our mind that learners use them even when they do not match the target language (Mitchell & Myles 1998).

A factor that is viewed as particularly important in language transfer and L2 acquisition is the learner's metalinguistic awareness (Mora 2001; Bialystok 2007; August & Shanahan 2006). Metalinguistic awareness is awareness around the choices one makes in linguistic decision-making (Gombert 1992), or "the ability to view and analyze language as a "thing," language as a "process," and language as a "system" (Mora 2011: 1). Research has shown that there is a close link between learners' metalinguistic awareness and their level of L2 proficiency (Ellis et al. 2009; Birdsong 1989; Han & Ellis 1998). Research has shown that learners with a higher metalinguistic awareness have a higher linguistic development in the L2 (Bialystok 2007), as well as more developed language abilities, symbolic development and literacy skills (Mora 2011), than learners with a lower metalinguistic awareness. This suggests that a learner with well-developed metalinguistic awareness should be less prone to negative language transfer than a learner with lower metalinguistic awareness.

The aim of this MA thesis is to investigate whether Norwegian learners of English are negatively transferring language elements from the L1 to the L2 in a test situation, and whether or not the learners' metalinguistic awareness in the L2 affects language transfer and

their performance in the L2. The grammatical elements that were tested are bare nouns, subject/verb-agreement, definite articles, adverbials of frequency and the verb 2 syntax of interrogative clauses. The English usage of these grammatical elements differs only slightly from Norwegian usage, which might lead one to believe that they should be easily acquired by the learners. However, because they are similar, it is expected that the learners will make mistakes. This is because they might be confused by the similarities, and apply Norwegian usage in their English.

It was decided to use informants from two different age-groups (ages ten and fifteen), where one group was expected to be more proficient than the other. The main reason for this choice was to investigate the impact development in the L2 over time has on a learner's use of language transfer and metalinguistic awareness.

The two main hypotheses were that (i) Norwegian learners of English make mistakes in their L2 performance as a result of negative transfer from the L1, and (ii) Norwegian learners' metalinguistic awareness in their L2 is an important factor in determining both whether or not they negatively transfer elements from the L1, and how proficient they are in their L2 performance.

The participant pool consisted of twelve 10-year olds and twenty-four 15-year olds, who had volunteered to participate in the project. The proficiency within both groups was expected to vary, as the students are only learning English as an obligatory subject in school. Both groups performed an error-finding test that was adapted to their age and expected proficiency. The test was divided into three parts: Identifying errors, correcting the identified errors and explaining the identified errors. The errors in the tests were within the five grammatical elements mentioned above. Error-finding is an important part of L2 acquisition because the consequences of poor error-finding might make learners unable to edit their own texts or critically assess production by others.

This thesis is divided into an introduction, four main chapters and a conclusion. In chapter 2, the theoretical background for the thesis is presented. Chapter 3 introduces the participants and the method used. Chapter 4 presents the results of the testing. Chapter 5 is a discussion of these results, based on the theoretical background presented in chapter 2. Finally, in chapter 6, the conclusions of the thesis are presented.

2.0 Theoretical background

In this chapter, I am going to present some of the theoretical background for second language acquisition, language transfer and metalinguistic awareness. In section 2.1, I discuss what second language acquisition is, and what separates it from first language acquisition. In section 2.2, I discuss what language transfer is and what role it has in second language acquisiton. In section 2.3, I discuss how metalinguistic awareness in L2 may influence the learner's L2 performance. In section 2.4, I discuss the five grammatical categories that were investigated in this project, mainly focusing on how they are used differently in Norwegian and English.

2.1 Second language acquisition (SLA)

Acquiring a second language (also commonly referred to as a target language) has become more and more common today, mainly as a result of increased globalization. Gass & Selinker (2008: 1) define a second language as "a non-primary language; that is, a language that is acquired beyond a native language". Second language acquisition is further defined as how learners create a new language system with only limited exposure to a second language. In this process, the result is usually that learners do not achieve the same degree of knowledge and proficiency in the second language as they do in their native language (Gass & Selinker 2008).

One of the main differences between L1 and L2 acquisition is the way in which we learn them. Learning a second language can be said to be a process that requires more attentional control than acquiring our L1, which seemingly happens effortlessly (Saville-Troike 2006). This has likely to do with the fact that L1 acquisition occurs during the first few years of life (commonly referred to as the critical period for language learning). On the other hand, L2 acquisition occurs later in life, possible after the critical period has ended, and is therefore more difficult (Saville-Troike 2006). A bilingual person may be someone who has several native languages (simultaneous bilingual) or someone who has only one native language, but who has acquired another language later in life (sequential bilingual) (Pearson et al. 1993). In this thesis, the former is excluded from the discussion, as the thesis revolves only around sequential bilinguals.

It is generally agreed that we are born with some innate capability for learning language, as almost everyone (the exception are those who suffer from various language difficulties or

brain damage) are able to acquire a native language seemingly effortlessly (Saville-Troike 2006). This innate ability is commonly referred to as "Universal Grammar" (UG), and was originally created by Noam Chomsky (Saville-Troike 2006). Chomsky's theory suggests that we are born with innate parameters for language acquisition that are triggered by the language that fills our environment. This means that we are genetically prewired to acquire language, we only need exposure and experience (Mitchell & Myles 1998).

The idea behind UG is that it embodies, on the one hand, a set of invariant principles that are active in all spoken (or signed) languages in the world, as well as a fixed set of parameters, whose settings differ from language to language. The invariant principles are present in all of us from birth, while the settings differ from language to language and are activated through the child's exposure to his or her native tongue (Mitchell & Myles 1998). Chomsky's approach to language acquisition assumes that

> "one cannot really teach language, but can only present the conditions under which it will develop spontaneously in the mind in its own way. Thus the form of a language, the schema for its grammar, is to a large extent given, though it will not be available for use without appropriate experience to set the language-forming processes into operation" (Chomsky 1965, p. 51).

It is obvious, however, that learning a second language does not work the same way. The L1 acquisition process happens effortlessly, but this is not the case when acquiring an L2. Also, the final linguistic competence of an L2-speaker will only in extremely rare cases be at the same proficiency level as that of a native speaker (Gass & Selinker 2008).

2.2 Language Transfer

Language transfer is a cross-linguistic influence that is commonly believed, by theorists today, to play an important role in L2 learning (Mitchell & Myles 1998). From the beginning of Second Language Acquisition as a research field, it has been commonly accepted that L2-learners' performance in their L2 is influenced by the language, or languages, that they already know. This is obvious in cases such as "foreign accent", where the phonology of the L2 bears traces of the L1, but also in cases where the learners make grammatical errors, as a result of using the syntax of their L1, in their L2 production (Mitchell & Myles 1998). Saville-Troike (2006: 19) points out that "[c]ross-linguistic influence occurs in all levels of IL

[interlanguage, MWE] : vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and all other aspects of language structure and use".

For example, when a native speaker of Norwegian says something in English like "I do always that", it is likely to be the result of the fact that, in Norwegian, this positioning of the adverbial *always* would be correct. In English, the correct utterance would be "I always do that". This kind of phenomenon is captured by the term *language transfer* and is most commonly observed in overt L2 users' production (Carroll 2007). The main claim with regard to transfer is that the learning of task A (a native language) will affect the subsequent learning of task B (a second language) (Gass & Selinker 2008).

Some researchers believe that transfer from the L1 plays such an important role in the beginning of L2 acquisition that the initial state of L2 acquisition is the same as the final state of L1 acquisition, a theory referred to as the full transfer/full access model (Schwartz & Sprouse 1996). Other researchers claim that L1 transfer is not only an important part of L2 acquisition in earlier phases, but also remains an important part of an L2 acquisition process at later stages, as long as there is not enough positive evidence for the learners to progress in their development (Treffers-Daller & Sakel 2012). This implies that if L2-learners receive lesser amounts of L2 input, or in cases where they do not know the correct utterance/grammar in the L2, they might turn to their L1 competence for backup. This strategy, which is commonly referred to as "applying what is known" (Ellis 1985), may create both positive and negative transfer.

From this point of view, L1 transfer may be both advantageous and disadvantageous for the learner, in his or her L2 acquisition. It is believed that the lower a learner's perception of the L2 language structures is, the more prone he or she is for negative transfer from the L1 (Mayo 2009; Ionin, Ko & Wexler 2004; Kellerman 1979). This claim can be seen in correlation with Ellis' (1985) "applying what is known" strategy, in that the less proficient an L2 learner is, the more dependent that learner will be on assistance from the L1.

Bialystok (2008) claims that bilinguals and L2-learners differ from monolinguals not only because they know more than one language, but also because they have to constantly switch between different languages' codes. It has been proposed by researchers such as Treffers-Daller & Sakel (2012) and Cook (2002), that both languages are active at all times, even when only one of them is being used. The idea is that when a bilingual speaker makes use of one of the languages, the other language is still affecting the language in use, and this process works

both ways between the languages. The first language may affect the use and acquisition of the second language, and the second language may affect the use and acquisition of the first language (Treffers-Daller and Sakel, 2012; Cook 2008). This means that bilinguals and L2-learners constantly have to switch one language on, while also switching another language off (Bialystok 2008). If we take Bialystok's point into consideration (that both languages are active at all times), this creates a process of attentional control in the speakers mind, which requires the speaker to constantly have to juggle between the languages he or she knows. This process is not flawless, however, and serves as a reason why speakers sometimes transfer properties of one language to a different language (Treffers-Daller & Sakel (2012).

Treffers-Daller & Sakel (2012: 1) describe the process as follows:

> "The linguistic consequences of this incessant juggling act are that bilinguals and L2-learners cannot keep their languages completely separate at all times, and features of the deactivated language regularly appear in the language the speaker intended to use. These features are often referred to as interference, transfer or cross-linguistic influence".

The difference between these concepts is commonly based on a question of acceptability: Features with a high presence or acceptability value are referred to as positive transfer, while features with a low presence or acceptability value are referred to negative transfer, or interference (Treffers-Daller & Sakel 2012).

Lado (1957: 11), who strongly believes the role of the L1 to be crucial in transfer, claims 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 respectively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and the culture as produced by the natives."

This supports one of the underlying hypotheses of this project: Norwegian students, who are learning English as an L2, transfer grammatical forms of Norwegian onto English, when they, as Lado (1957) puts it; attempt to speak, grasp and understand English as produced by natives.

Even if most researchers agree that transfer plays an important role in second language acquisition, there is still an ongoing debate as to how important the phenomenon is in the L2-

learning process, and what exactly is transferred. This debate began when early SLA research was motivated by a need to disprove the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, which stated that the errors L2 learners produced could be predicted, based on their L1 (Ellis 1985). Later research on transfer has shown that it is not that simple. The contrastive analysis theory began with Lado (1957). He suggested that when we acquire an L2 we have to replace the habits that are established through our L1 first. Lado claimed that

> "[t]he complication is that the old L1 habits interfere with this process, either helping or inhibiting it. If structures in the L1 are similar to those of the L2, then learning will take place easily. If, however, structures are realized differently in the L1 and the L2, then learning will be difficult" (Mitchell & Myles 1998: 24).

Lado also claimed that the possibilities for L1 transfer was a determining factor in deciding whether a second language would be easily acquired or not. He explained the relationship as such:

> "We know from the observation of many cases that the grammatical structure of the native language tends to be transferred to the foreign language … we have here the major source of difficulty or ease in learning the foreign language … Those structures that are different will be difficult (Lado 1957: 58-9).

What Lado implies is that if the structures between the L1 and L2 are different, positive transfer will not happen, but negative transfer might, ultimately causing the L2 acquisition to be more challenging.

More recent studies on the relationship between L1 and L2 were performed by Håkan Ringbom (1987). The studies were carried out in Finland involving Finnish speakers learning English and Swedish speakers living in Finland, who were also learning English. The results showed that the latter group had a massive advantage over the former group, an advantage that was attributed to the similarities that exist between Swedish and English and the lack of similarity between Finnish and English (Gass & Selinker 2008). Ringbom (1987: 134) offered the following explanation, which also supports Lado's theory: "Similarities, both cross-linguistic and inter-linguistic, function as pegs on which the learner can hang new information by making use of already existing knowledge, thereby facilitating learning". Ringbom further concluded that the L1 in L2 learning is absolutely fundamental. If we presume, as Lado (1957) and Ringbom (1987) suggest, that positive transfer occurs when the structures of the

languages are similar, then it is reasonable to assume that if transfer occurs with structures that are different, this transfer will be negative, causing errors to occur. On the other hand, some researchers have found that it is not necessarily the biggest differences that cause the biggest problems for learners, but that items that are only slightly different, or slightly similar, pose the biggest challenges because they produce the greatest level of confusion and interference (Ringbom & Palmberg 1976). White (1991) even claims that partial overlap between languages is the main reason why language transfer occurs.

Within the research field, there are various views on the importance of transfer in L2 acquisition. Behaviorist theorists believe that transfer is an important source of error and interference in the L2, because the L1 "habits" are so deeply rooted in our mind (Mitchell & Myles 1998). Interlanguage theorists, on the other hand, have downplayed the influence of the L1 in L2 acquisiton, with the argument that there are too many errors that cannot be traced back to the learner's L1 (Mitchell & Myles 1998). Followers of Chomsky's principles and parameters theory seem to agree with Lado's (1957) theory. They believe that when the parameter settings for the same principle in the L1 and the L2 are similar, positive transfer from the L1 to the L2 is likely to occur, but when the parameter settings are different, errors are more likely to occur (Saville-Troike 2006). Even if there are various views on exactly what triggers transfer, and to what degree it affects the L2 acquisition, most theorists believe that transfer from the L1 is an important factor in L2 learning.

2.3 Metalinguistic competence and metalinguistic awareness (MA)

Many researchers, such as Mora (2001), Bialystok (2007) and August & Shanahan (2006), believe that a learner's metalinguistic competence and awareness is an important monitor of language transfer, with the idea that a learner who has well-developed metalinguistic awareness in the L2 will allow negative transfer from the L1 to occur less frequently in his or her L2 production. Metalinguistic awareness is also viewed as an important part of bilingual learners' linguistic development (Bialystok 2007). Because of this, an important question is raised: Will a learner with higher awareness concerning how the structures of his or her L2 work, perform better in the L2, and produce fewer cases of negative transfer from the L1, than a learner with lower awareness? Because this is a highly relevant consideration, when conducting an error-finding test which aims at assessing whether or not L2 learners transfer language structures from their L1, this topic will now be addressed.

Metalinguistic competence is a subset of metacognitive knowledge, which is the process of thinking about one's thinking (Myhill et al. 2011). Flavell (1976: 232) describes metacognition as "one's knowledge concerning one's own cognitive process or anything related to them, e.g, the learning-relevant properties of information or data". Taking this into consideration, metalinguistics can be defined as one's ability to think about and describe the rules and structures of one's language(s) (Gombert 1992). Examples of metalinguistic competence are to infer the meaning of a word or sentence from a broader linguistic context in which it occurs, to perform a morphological analysis of a single word and a young person's growing ability to define increasingly difficult words" (Nippold 2006).

The most important aspect of metalinguistic competence is Gombert's (1992) model of metalinguistic awareness, which was designed to further understand oral development and how children learn to read (Myhill et al. 2011). Gombert's model is explained by Myhill et al (2011: 143) as;

"two levels of cognitive control of linguistic knowledge: *epilinguistic*, where linguistic processing is controlled automatically by linguistic organisations in the memory, and *metalinguistic*, when, the individual is in conscious control of linguistic decision-making".

According to Gombert's model (1992), metalinguistic awareness can be defined as an awareness around the choices one makes in linguistic decision-making. More precisely this can be said to be "the ability to view and analyze language as a "thing," language as a "process," and language as a "system" (Mora 2011: 1). However, in order to acquire such competence, one must go through a cognitive shift from implicit to explicit knowledge (Myhill et al. 2011). This shift is described by Gombert (1992) as a developmental hierarchy between epilinguistic control and awareness, where the former is a necessary precursor of the latter. This means that without having developed an internal knowledge of a language, a learner will not be able to explicitly account for the grammar and structure of the language. Gombert's view has been questioned by later researchers, such as Van Lier (1998), who believes that epilinguistic knowledge does not necessarily have to be a precursor of metalinguistic awareness (Myhill et al. 2011). However, Myhill et al (2011: 143) point out that "this principle of a cognitive shift from implicit to explicit knowledge is a prevalent one, including at policy level, such as the national curriculum in England. This means that, at an educational level, Gombert's theory still holds its ground.

Masny (1987: 59) defines metalinguistic awareness as "an individual's ability to match, intuitively, spoken or written utterances with his or her knowledge of language" (cited in Ellis, Loewen, Elder, Erlam, Philp & Reinders 2009). This taken into consideration, metalinguistic awareness may be said to involve implicit rather than explicit knowledge (Ellis et al. 2009). For the present research project, this means that when the test participants are working on the test, their metalinguistic awareness is operating and may aid or restrict the participants in solving the task. This occurs even when neither of the two are signaled through explicit statements. Metalinguistic knowledge, on the other hand, is according to Ellis et al. (2009) analytical rather than intuitive, in the sense that it involves explicit declarative facts. This means that learners will be aware of when they are drawing on it (e.g. to make judgments about the grammaticality of a sentence (Ellis et al. 2009). This competence may draw on the learner's metalinguistic awareness, but this process occurs intuitively. This awareness becomes explicit when a learner, for instance; verbalizes the rules of second language grammar or the distinction between a correctly formulated rule from an incorrect one (James & Garrett 1992). Note that this task does not have to include a technical terminology (metalanguage), but can be presented in the learner's own words.

As mentioned previously, Mora (2011) claims that learners' metalinguistic awareness is an important factor in language transfer and L2 acquisition. This idea was first presented by Cazden (1974) who used the term metalinguistic awareness to describe and explain the transfer of linguistic knowledge and skills across languages (Mora, J. 2001). Cazden defined metalinguistic awareness as the ability to make language forms opaque and attend to them in and of themselves. She also pointed out that this ability is less easily and less universally acquired than the language performances of speaking and listening (Bialystok 2001). Cazden's theory was further shared by other theorists, such as Birdsong (1989), who claims that metalinguistic functioning is a key part of explaining second language performance. Later research by Han & Ellis (1998) makes a strong claim for the role of metalinguistic knowledge in learners' performance of their L2 (Ellis et al. 2009). Han & Ellis' research revealed that learners' explicit knowledge of a grammatical feature was significantly associated with their performance within the same feature (Ellis et al. 2009). Another study, conducted by Elder and Manwaring (2004), revealed that metacognitive knowledge of the L2 was strongly associated with performance on classroom achievement tasks involving writing and reading skills (Ellis et al, 2009). These theorists all claim that there is a close relationship between

metalinguistic awareness and L2 performance, a theory that forms the basis for the second main hypothesis of this project.

An important idea, which is relevant for language testing that involves metacognitive decision-making, is the findings by Renou (2001) and Elder & Manwaring (2004). Their studies reveal an important factor that may affect learner's access to metalinguistic knowledge during testing; that learners instructed via methodologies that place greater value on spontaneous language production than on language analysis may be less able to retrieve their metalinguistic knowledge in performance than those who have been exposed to predominantly form-focused instruction (Ellis et al. 2009). However, it is important to remember, as pointed out by Hu (2002), that a learner's ability to use metalinguistic knowledge in L2 production may vary significantly according to factors such as proficiency, degree of attention to form and time pressure (Ellis et al. 2009).

Regardless of differences in individual learners, research has shown a clear co-relation between metalinguistic awareness and linguistic performance in the L2. For instance, "[r]esearch has shown MA (Metalinguistic awareness, MWE) in bilinguals to be a crucial component because of its documented relationship and positive effects on language ability, symbolic development and literacy skills" (Mora 2011: 1). Also, cross-linguistic transfer research points out how reading ability is enhanced when students are able to apply their linguistic knowledge and literacy skills in the L1 to their L2 (Mora 2011). One may therefore assume that a learner's metalinguistic awareness, in both the L1 and the L2, may influence which language elements the learner transfers.

Because metalinguistic awareness has such positive effects on a learner's L2 performance, one may assume that a learner who lacks such competence and awareness, will have a lower degree of proficiency in the L2, an argument made implicitly by Mora (2011). She argues that there is a kind of metalinguistc awareness that only involves L2-learners and other bilinguals. She defines this as "the ability to objectively function outside one language system and to objectify languages' rules, structures and functions. Code-switching and translation are examples of bilinguals' MA". This is an important consideration, because it means that if a learner is not able to perform tasks such as separating his/her languages, identifying rules and structures of his/her languages or switching codes and translating between his/her languages, this may be attributed to a lack of metalinguistic awareness.

2.4 Grammatical categories investigated

The grammatical categories investigated in this project are; bare nouns, subject/verb-agreement, definite articles, adverbials and verb-second syntax (V2).

2.4.1 Bare nouns

Borthen (2003: 10) defines a bare singular as a "nominal constituent that is countable, singular and indefinite, and that doesn't have a phonetically realized determiner". This definition excludes phrases that are initiated with the indefinite article *a.* Borthen (2003) points out that, in Norwegian, a bare singular is being referred to as indefinite. This is because (i) Norwegian bare nouns lack the definite suffix on the noun and the determiner that precedes the noun and (ii) the bare singular does not have a semantic value that some non-determiner singular noun phrases include. Because there is no affix for indefiniteness, bare singulars and *a*-expressions, such as "John was a lawyer", are written in the same way; marked by a preceding indefinite article and the root form of the noun (Borthen 2003).

The difference between English and Norwegian is that while the indefinite article is required consistently with countable nouns in English, it is not in Norwegian (Borthen 2003; Hasselgård et al. 2012). As shown in (2-1) and (2-2), the indefinite article preceding the noun is non-existent in Norwegian.

> (2.1) John ønsket å bli   doktor.   or   (2.2) John var advokat.
>
>   John wanted to become doctor   John was lawyer
>
>   'John wanted to become a doctor.'   'John was a lawyer'.

The nouns in 2.1 and 2-2 also both describe professions. Hasselgård et al (2012) state that English noun phrases that are used in a predicative position and that characterize a person with regards to religion, nationality or profession, do require an indefinite article (Hasselgård et al. 2012). As shown in 2.1 and 2.2 this is not the case in Norwegian, where the article is left out. Leaving out the indefinite article in the English examples, however, would create ungrammatical sentences such as 2.3 and 2.4 (Hasselgård et al. 2012).

> (2.3) *John wanted to become doctor.

> (2.4) *John was lawyer.

However, if Norwegian learners of English were transferring this property to English, they might not be able to identify the errors in sentences such as 2.3 and 2.4.

2.4.2 Subject/Verb-agreement (S/V)

Subject/Verb-agreement (also known as grammatical concord) is defined as "agreement in person and number in the present tense between subject and verbal" (Hasselgård et al. 2012: 266).

Even if it is usually relatively straightforward to decide person and number of the subject, S/V-agreement can be difficult for Norwegian students to execute properly (Hasselgård et al 2012). The reason is that there is no such grammatical element as subject/verb-agreement in standard Norwegian language. In Norwegian, all verbs are inflected as what is singular form in English, regardless of whether the subject is singular or plural. This difference is exemplified in 2-5 and 2.6.

> (2.5) En gutt trenger hjelp.   (2.6) To   gutter trenger hjelp.
>
> A   boy needs   help.   Two boys need   help.
>
> 'A boy needs help'.   'Two boys need help'.

Because Norwegian students do not have to consider S/V-agreement, when speaking their native language, they might not be able to see that sentences such as 2.7-2.9 are ungrammatical (Hasselgård et al 2012).

> (2.7) *Two boys wants help.
>
> (2.8) *Cats jumps.
>
> (2.9) *They is here.

2.4.3 Definite articles

Definite articles are a non-lexical category and have a strictly functional content (Huddleston & Pullum 2002). They can be used to modify all types of common nouns in both Norwegian and English, and in both languages the definite article specifies that a given referent can be identified based on clues in the situation or the surrounding text (Hasselgård et al. 2012). The most common use is anaphoric reference, where the identification is based on the preceding text (Hasselgård et al. 2012), as exemplified in 2.10.

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(2.10) Det var en gammel man der. Den gamle mannen…

There was an old man there. The old   man…

In English, the definite article is a prenominal free morpheme, which does not vary for gender, and is associated with both singular and plural countable nouns (the boy, the girls), as well as mass nouns (the air) (Huddleston & Pullum 2002).

In Norwegian, the definite article can be realized as a prenominal free morpheme (like in English), but it may also be realized as a suffixed bound morpheme (Delsing 1993). While the English definite article 'the' may be associated with both singular and plural nouns, the Norwegian suffixed morpheme provides the same information, by being inflected for either singular of plural form. This grammatical modification has no equal in the English language. The difference is demonstrated in 2.11 and 2.12.

(2.11) Dame-n   (2-12) Dame-ne

Lady-DEF(SG)   Lady-DEF(PL)

'The lady'   'The ladies'

In the Norwegian examples the preceding determiner is replaced by the suffixes 'n' and 'ne', which provide the same syntactical information as 'the' does in the English examples; that we are talking about a specific lady, or a specific group of ladies. If the determiner 'the' was left out before such nouns in English, the sentences would be ungrammatical (Delsing 1993), as exemplified in 2.13-2.15.

(2.13) *He kicked at pavement.

(2.14) *One of ladies attacked him.

(2.15) *Police led him away.

However, if Norwegian students transfer this property to English, they may not be able to identify the errors in sentences such as 2.13-2.15.

2.4.4 Adverbials

Adverbials have the same role in Norwegian and English, in that they usually refer to some aspect of the circumstances of the action, described by the verb phrase, most commonly the when, where, how and why of the clause (Hasselgård et al. 2012). However, their positioning can differ in the two languages, depending on the type of adverbial. One type of adverbial that

is positioned differently in Norwegian and English is adverbials of frequency. These adverbials are, in both languages, placed in the position referred to as medial position. However, medial position denotes several slots, including (i) between the subject and the verbal and (ii) between the verbal and an object or a predicate (Hasselgård et al. 2012). For positioning of adverbials of frequency, the former is used in English, and the latter in Norwegian, as in 2.16 and 2.17.

(2.16) Jeg gjør alltid det.   (2.17) Jeg trodde aldri det.

I do always that.   I thought never that.

'I always do that'.   'I never thought that'.

The main difference here is that the English sentences do not allow the verb to be separated from its direct object. Doing so would create ungrammatical sentences such as 2.18 and 2.19 (Haegeman & Guéron (1999).

(2.18) *Thelma does often that.

(2.19) *He though never that this could happen.

However, saying something like 2.18 and 2.19 in Norwegian would be just fine, which means that if Norwegian students transfer this positioning of adverbials of frequency to English, they may not be able to see that sentences such as 2.18 and 2.19 are ungrammatical.

2.4.5 Verb-second syntax (V2)

Even if both Norwegian and English typically use SVO word order, there can be differences in word order between the two. One instance of this is in past tense interrogative sentences. The main difference here is the word-order and use of auxiliaries. In English, interrogative sentences have subject-auxiliary inversion. Typically, the auxiliary *do* is used as an operator if the verb phrase has no other auxiliary (Hasselgård et al. 2012). The main difference is that in English; *wh*-interrogative sentences, such as 2.20 and 2.21, must have an auxiliary before the subject. In Norwegian, on the other hand, the finite verb stands alone (Hasselgård et al. 2012).

(2.20) Hva spiste du til middag?   (2.21) Hvorfor gjorde du det?

What ate you for dinner?   'Why did you that?

'What did you eat for dinner?'   'Why did you do that?'

There are two important differences here: First of all, the main verb in the English clauses are in infinitive form, and the past tense is marked by the auxiliary. In the Norwegian clauses the main verb themselves are inflected for past tense, and there are no auxiliaries. Secondly, the word order is different. In *wh*-questions, the subject precedes the main verb in English, while it is positioned after the main verb in Norwegian (Lohndal 2012). In English, excluding the auxiliary, while using the main verb to mark past tense instead, would cause ungrammatical sentences, such as 2.22 and 2.23 (examples from Lohndal 2012).

> (2.22) *What ate John for dinner?

> (2.23) *Why bought John a new bicycle?

However, because Norwegian speakers are used to doing so in their native language, they may transfer this property onto English, and if so, they may not be able to identify the errors in sentences such as 2.22 and 2.23.

2.5 Summary

Second language acquisition is very different from first language acquisition and L2 learners will only in extremely rare cases be able to acquire a native-like proficiency in an L2. Because the L1 is so deeply rooted in the learner, he or she is likely to transfer elements from the L1 to the L2 (Mitchell & Myles 1998). This process, which is commonly referred to as language transfer, can be acceptable in the L2, but it can also cause errors (interference) (Ellis 1985). Interference often occurs when the elements are similar, but have slight differences, which may be difficult for the learner to separate. In these cases, the learner may rely on his L1, which causes an error in the L2. There are many aspects that affect the L2 acquisition process and the transfer of structural elements. One factor, which is generally believed by researchers to have a big impact on these processes, is the learner's metalinguistic awareness. Metalinguistic awareness is what makes us able to think and talk about languages; both the ones we already know and the ones we are in the process of learning. It is generally believed that the better our metalinguistic awareness in a language is, the higher our proficiency in the language is.

3.0 Method

In the following chapter, I describe benefits and drawbacks of the method that is used in this project, the test used to gather data, how the testing was conducted and the selection of research candidates.

3.1 Using an error-finding test as method

The data for the project was collected by testing one 5th grade primary school class (10-year olds) and one 10th grade lower secondary school class (15-year olds). The results of twelve 10-year olds and twenty-four 15-year olds are used in the analysis.

The data I was looking for, was one that could potentially answer whether Norwegian students, who are learning English in school, are making errors in their English performance as a result of negatively transferring properties of Norwegian syntax to it. Also, the data should be able to answer whether a learner's metalinguistic awareness in the L2 affects the process of language transfer and the learner's L2 proficiency. Because the thesis is investigating Norwegian students, it was reasonable to collect the data in schools, where the students were actively and formally learning English. It was expected that the 15-year olds would be significantly more proficient than the 10-year olds and that they would show fewer signs of negative transfer (interference).

In order to be granted access to entire classes of students, it was important that the testing resembled a normal teaching method. It was also important to run the tests in a way which allowed the students to obtain some learning outcome as a result of their participation in the testing. This would make it easier to convince the teachers to leave me in charge of one of their classes for a full teaching lesson (45 minutes), which was the time I needed to run the tests.

The best way to fulfill these requirements was to present the students with a text filled with errors, and have the students try to locate, correct and explain the errors. This kind of test would be suitable for collecting the kind of data I was looking for, and error identification is something most students have performed in school before. It also provided an opportunity to teach the students a thing or two about the differences between Norwegian and English grammar, when going through the correct answers afterwards.

The participants were informed that the text they were reading was full of grammatical errors, which means that they would actively be looking for parts of the text that would be ungrammatical. In this way error-finding functions as a kind of acceptability judgment test (Ellis 1991). An acceptability test asks participants to judge whether or not a string of words forms an acceptable sentence in a given language (Schütze & Sprouse 2012). Many scholars refer to these tests as grammaticality tests, bases on the idea that the participants will judge only the grammaticality of the sentences they are reading (Sprouse & Almeida 2012; Dabrowska 2010). However, as Chomsky (1965) argued, they should be called acceptability judgment tests, based on the conclusion that grammaticality is only one of several factors that determine whether a participant views a sentence or phrase is acceptable or not. Other factors that Chomsky (1965) claims will influence the acceptability judgments are the likelihood of the sentence to be produced in spontaneous conversation and whether the sentences sounds unnatural or not.

Error finding gives access to judgment data indirectly, because when the participants mark a grammatical element as an error, and then attempt to correct it, this suggests that they are viewing the element as unacceptable. This also works the other way around. When the participants leave a grammatical element unmarked, this can be interpreted as the participant viewing the element as acceptable, and therefore he or she does not attempt to correct it. The participants were told to correct the errors they located, as this would rule out any guessing and luck, and indicate more clearly that the participants were certain that the errors are errors. In the post-test analysis, the participants' ability to correct the errors was viewed as less important than their ability to find and explain errors.

Another good thing about error-finding tests, as pointed out by Ellis (1991), is that unlike acceptability judgments tests that only ask learners to discriminate between well-formed and deviant sentences, it is not possible to respond to an error-finding test purely intuitively. This is because locating, correcting and describing errors require some degree of conscious analysis. In addition to forcing the participants to consciously analyze the material, this will show whether the participants are able to justify their answers or not, which is a good indicator of their meta-linguistic awareness.

As mentioned in chapter 2, Lado (1957) claims 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 respectively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and the culture as produced by the natives. The aim of using this kind of test was to show if this was the case when Norwegian students attempted to interpret text material in English (their L2).

3.1.1 Benefits

There are many benefits of using this kind of method: First of all, the quality of the data would be suitable for this kind of thesis. Acceptability judgments are superior to other sources of linguistic evidence when it comes to obtaining information about which expressions of a language are ill-formed (Schütze 2011). Schütze (2011) also points out that there are no known brain measure or behavioral measure techniques that are sensitive to only the ungrammatical sentences in a given language. The ungrammatical sentences should therefore be presented alongside grammatically correct sentences, too see if the candidates judge them differently. In the texts used for error-finding in this project, the ungrammatical sentences only comprise a small portion, compared to the grammatically correct sentences.

Another advantage is that judgments can provide immediate information about the status of any string a researcher is interested in, while there is no guarantee that such a string, even if grammatical, will occur in spontaneous language within a given amount of time (Schütze 2011). Considering that this particular project seeks information about strings which display certain syntactic features, using judgment data is a good way to make sure this is achieved, as it is up to the researcher to decide what material is being presented to the informants. By using an error-finding test, I could guarantee that I would get the participants' judgments of the exact set of grammatical errors that were of interest. This was a good way to ensure I got the data I was looking for, as these errors rarely, or perhaps even never, occur in spontaneous English language data.

Finally, acceptability judgments tests are very practical. Data can be obtained from a number of speakers within a short amount of time and at little or no cost (Schütze 2011). Neither does it require a speech lab, or any other high-tech equipment. In this case it was also a necessity to use a method that could be brought to the participants, and not the other way around. This further enhanced the practicality of this kind of test, as it is an easy way of collecting acceptability judgment data, and it can be brought to the participants.

3.1.2 Drawbacks

Sprouse and Almeida (2012) report that one of the main reasons for the criticism of acceptability judgment testing has been its reported tendency to be unreliable due to producing results that show false negatives and false positives. False negatives mean that the test does not report any difference between the tested conditions, even when there actually is a difference. False positives are when the test reports a difference between the tested conditions, even when there is no true significant difference between them. However, Sprouse and Almeida (2012) found that a comparison to the number of tests that have shown correct results, made the ones that failed comparably small, and that acceptability judgment tests should still be used.

A second drawback of using such a method for gathering data is that it does not provide very detailed knowledge about what the participants are thinking when they judge a sentence as acceptable or not. The quantitative information gathered through this kind of test only displays whether the participants are able to find the right errors, what they think the correct alternative is and their explanation of why. This offers a clear understanding of whether the participants are familiar with the correct usage of the grammatical elements or not, but does not provide insight to all the different aspects which might affect the participants' judgments, something a qualitative study might be able to do. As Chomsky (1965) argues, several factors are likely to influence participants' judgments.

A drawback is that we cannot know for sure if all the candidates understand every part of the text (it is a second language, after all), and even if they do not understand the text they might not ask for help to do so either. This would leave a question of validity: How do we view their grammatical judgments if they do not understand the content of the sentences they are judging? Also, the evidence from error analysis is not conclusive, because it is difficult to say which errors can and cannot be attributed to the L1. This leaves a problem in coding the errors in the analysis post-testing (Ellis 1985).

There is also no way of knowing if a candidate has misunderstood the assignment or if their judgments are simply wrong. In this project, for instance, many 10-year old informants attempted to correct typing-errors, even though they were specifically told to only look for grammatical errors. It may also be difficult to provide evidence, if the participants ignore a certain kind of error, that this is the result of transfer, and not some other psychological or cognitive factors, improvisation or other parts of the participants' linguistic knowledge. As

mentioned previously, Chomsky (1965) argued that there are many factors influencing acceptability judgments. However, as Schütze (2011) points out, every single piece of evidence has it flaws, but that does not mean that it is not useful. Each piece can be used as a source of converging evidence for claims that are made, and provide empirical evidence from a particular technique, which will in turn contribute to the strongest results: Those that appear when multiple research methods point towards the same conclusion (Schütze 2011).

Finally, it is important to remember that there is a difference between what an informant knows and what he or she is able to produce. Error-finding and language production are different processes, and it is possible that the informants' production of English does not contain as many errors as the number of errors they overlook in an error-finding test.

3.1.3 Using a quantitative research method

Some of the drawbacks previously mentioned are side-effects of using a quantitative research method. Quantitative research does not grant a thorough insight into the participants' mind and decisions, like a qualitative method can (Postholm & Jacobsen 2011). However, a quantitative research method has the benefit of granting judgment data from a larger group, which can be used for analytical generalization. Such generalization can then be applied to the average student, and therefore, to a larger degree, provide information about the general public (Postholm & Jacobsen 2011). This is more difficult to do when using a qualitative research method, which usually only selects a few research candidates.

3.2 Participant selection

The testing was done on a total number of 41 students, but only 36 of these participants' results were used in the project. Of these 36 there were twelve 10-year olds and twenty-four 15-year olds. Among the 10-year olds there were 6 girls and 6 boys and among the 15-year olds there were 12 boys and 12 girls. The testing was run in full classes but some test-results had to be removed in order to make sure the test results used in the post-test analysis included the same number of boys and girls. In the 15-year olds' class, there were 12 participants of each gender, so no adjustments had to be made there, but the 10-year olds' class consisted of 11 boys and 6 girls. A random selection of 5 boys' test results was removed from the post-test analysis, in order to maintain gender equality. The reason twice as many 15-year olds' as 10-year olds' results were included in the analysis is because the main interest was in the 15-year

olds. The 10-year olds were mostly included as a comparison group, in order to illustrate Norwegian students' development over a five-years period as L2 learners.

The age groups were selected because the age gap between 10 and 15 years old is one where a significant development of linguistic growth occurs (Nippold, M 2006). Also, the use of sophisticated grammatical constructions increases during this developmental period (Berman & Voerheven 2002; Scott 1988; Nippold 2006). Furthermore, it is noted by Cacciari (2000) that, when passing from childhood into adolescence, learners develop more complex metalinguistic abilities and a broader knowledge base, which is typical for older speakers.

Including candidates of both genders was done in order to secure as big a diversity within the study group as possible, but also to see if the genders performed differently. Students who listed English as one of their native languages were allowed to participate in the testing, but their results were not used in the project. The same goes for students who suffered from different learning or language difficulties, such as dyslexia, ADHD, Asperger's etc. Although these students were allowed to participate in the testing, they are not part of the thirty-six participants previously mentioned, and their results were not used in the analysis. This is because they had either an advantage or a disadvantage, compared to the other participants.

3.3 The test design

The test consisted of an information sheet and the text the students were to investigate for errors. For the 15-year olds a glossary was also included, as the text included words that the participants might find difficult to understand. The information sheet and the texts that were used in the testing are included in the appendix.

3.3.1 The information sheet

The information sheet had to be completed by all the students, within both age groups. The information sheet was important to make sure the students had the proper qualifications for their results to be used in the analysis. It also provided other information that could be useful to make different comparisons. The information sheet was divided into two sections: personal information and language background.

In the personal information section, the candidates filled in only their age and gender. Asking for the participants' age was done in order to make sure the participants were within the right age group. Asking for gender was done in order to make comparisons between the genders, to

see if there were differences in their performance. The candidates were assured that they would not provide any sensitive information, as the study was entirely anonymous.

In the language background section, the students were asked to write their native language(s) and to tell if they had ever lived (or stayed for a longer period of time) in an English speaking country. The native language check was performed in order to make sure the participants were native users of Norwegian, and at the same time did not have English as a second native language, as this would give them an advantage and contaminate the test. Asking if the participants had lived in, or stayed for a longer period of time, in an English speaking country, was done for the same reason. If a participant did not fulfill these requirements, his or her results would not be used in the analysis.

In the information sheet, I originally also planned to have the participants list any language/learning difficulties they might have (as having any such difficulties would make their test results unsuited for the analysis). However, because I figured the students might not be completely honest about such information, I skipped including this in the information sheet and simply had their teachers exclude the results of the candidates this might apply to, without me knowing who they were. This was viewed as a better option than simply denying certain students to participated in the test. After all, I wanted the students to learn something from this project, even those whose results would not be used in the analysis.

3.3.2 The main test

The 10 and 15-year olds worked with one text each. Both of the texts used for the testing were collected from teaching material used in schools, and the complexity of the texts is appropriate for the given age groups. The 10-year olds worked on the short story "The voyage of the animal orchestra" by Carolyne Ardron, while the 15-year olds worked on the short story "The purse is mine" by Thomas Rapakgadi. Both of these texts are included in the appendix. The original texts did not include any errors, so I implemented them myself. Errors within five different grammatical categories were added to the text: Bare nouns, subject/verb-agreement, definite/indefinite articles, adverbials of frequency and verb second syntax. These categories were chosen because they display small differences between Norwegian and English, where Norwegian students can easily make mistakes because of negative transfer or lacking metalinguistic awareness.

The text used in the 10-year olds' test was no more than one page long, and contained 11 errors (two errors within each grammatical category plus one distractor item that would cause an error in both languages). The text used in the 15-year olds' test was three pages long and contained 27 errors (five errors within each category plus two that would cause errors in both languages). Both texts were presented with 2.5 spacing, in order to leave room for the students to write comments in between the lines.

3.3.3 How the testing was conducted

Before running the test I spent some time informing the participants about my MA project, the information sheet, how much time they were given for the task (approximately 30 minutes), the test and how it would be scored. After explaining the test, I made it very clear that the students were only to look for grammatical errors. I told the students not to waste time looking for misspellings, punctuation and such. I did so because we did not have much time and I did not want the participants to waste time looking for things that were not relevant. I did not, however, provide any information about which specific grammatical elements to look for, only that the participants should try to identify things that seemed abnormal, out of position, missing etc. The participants were not informed about how many errors there were in the text either, as this could colour their judgments.

In addition to looking for errors, the candidates were told to attempt as best as they could to correct the errors they found and that that they should try to write comments to each error, describing how the grammatical element works or why it is causing an error. This was done in order to see if the students were able to explicitly describe the grammar they were dealing with. This task was expected to be the most difficult part of the task, as for such young age groups it would be quite impressive if they were able to do this in their L2.

During the test, I was present the whole time to assist the participants by answering questions, clarifying misunderstandings, providing further explanation about the test (to those who needed it) etc. However, I did not give the participants any form of help in solving the tasks, not even in cases where the students only requested confirmation to suspicions they had.

Almost all of the errors in the texts displayed properties of Norwegian syntax, making them grammatically incorrect in English, although the words in the sentences were normal. The only exception to this was a few cases where missing articles would cause errors in both

languages. These were added as random samples to see if the candidates could identify these errors more easily.

Having the errors display Norwegian syntax was done in order to see if the candidates would judge these sentences as grammatical, even though they were not. If so, this could indicate that the candidates were using their knowledge about Norwegian grammar, and applying it to English as well. For instance, if the participants only located the missing articles in the cases where they would cause an error in both languages, this could indicate that they were "thinking Norwegian", even when reading texts in English.

The reason for disguising the errors as grammatically correct (if translated to Norwegian) was to see whether the candidates would ignore errors because they were transferring properties of Norwegian syntax to English or "thinking in Norwegian" when reading English text. One of the main hypotheses of this project was that this would be the case.

In each of the two age groups, filling out the information sheet and taking the test took around 35 minutes. Their teacher then collected the tests, after which I spent 5-10 minutes discussing the student's answers and the grammatical categories the errors in the test displayed.

3.4 Summary

The method used in this project was an error-finding test, which is a kind of grammaticality judgment test (Ellis 1991). There are many benefits to using such tests: They are practical and cheap, they allow the researcher to obtain data from the exact strings of language he or she is interested in, and acceptability judgments are superior to other sources of linguistic evidence when obtaining information about the ill-formed expressions of a given language (Schütze 2011). On the other hand, there are some drawbacks as well: As a quantitative method, it does not provide in-depth information about what the participants are thinking as they make decisions. Also, error analysis is not conclusive, which may complicate post-testing analysis (Ellis 1985).

The testing was done on Norwegian students, who are learning English as a foreign language. Two school classes participated in the project; one consisting of 10-year olds and the other consisting of 15-year olds. Each group of participants were given a text filled with grammatical errors. They were told to locate the errors, correct them and explain the underlying grammatical rules. The errors in the test displayed properties of Norwegian syntax, which would cause an error when being directly translated to English. The goal of the project

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was to see if the participants overlooked some of these errors, because they were using

Norwegian syntax when judging the acceptability of sentences in the texts they were reading.

4.0 Results

In this chapter, I present the results from the tests. The results are divided into two sections: One for the 10-year olds and one for the 15-year olds. The results are divided into the following categories: Total amount of errors located and corrected, amount of errors located and corrected within each grammatical category, ability to comment on the located errors, comparison of genders, and results of participants who listed other native languages in addition to Norwegian.

4.1 Results 10-year olds

As expected, the 10-year olds' results were quite slim. The 10-year olds' low performance is not surprising, considering they were being tested in grammar that is quite complex for someone their age. It is also unlikely, at such a young age, that they have been instructed in such advanced grammatical elements, in school. Possible explanations of why the test was too challenging for the 10-year olds will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter 5.

4.1.1 Total amount of errors found and corrected

The twelve 10-year olds found an average of 0.92 out of 10 errors, which is 9.2 %. Their capability of correcting these errors was very low. Out of all the participants, only one participant managed to successfully correct a single error. In other words, out of the 11 errors the class located in total, only 1 was successfully corrected. This means that an average of 9.09 % of the errors that were located, was also successfully corrected. For the other 10 errors that the participants successfully located, corrections were either wrong or, in a few cases, absent.

4.1.2 Number of errors located, within each grammatical category

Table 4.1 illustrates the group's average number of errors located, within each individual category.

Table 4.1

Number of errors located within each grammatical category

A bar chart titled "Number of errors located within each grammatical category" with a y-axis from 0 to 2. The legend shows "Group average number of errors located" (blue). Values: Bare nouns = 0, S/V = 0,33, Def. Art = 0,33, Adverbials = 0,16, V2 = 0,08.
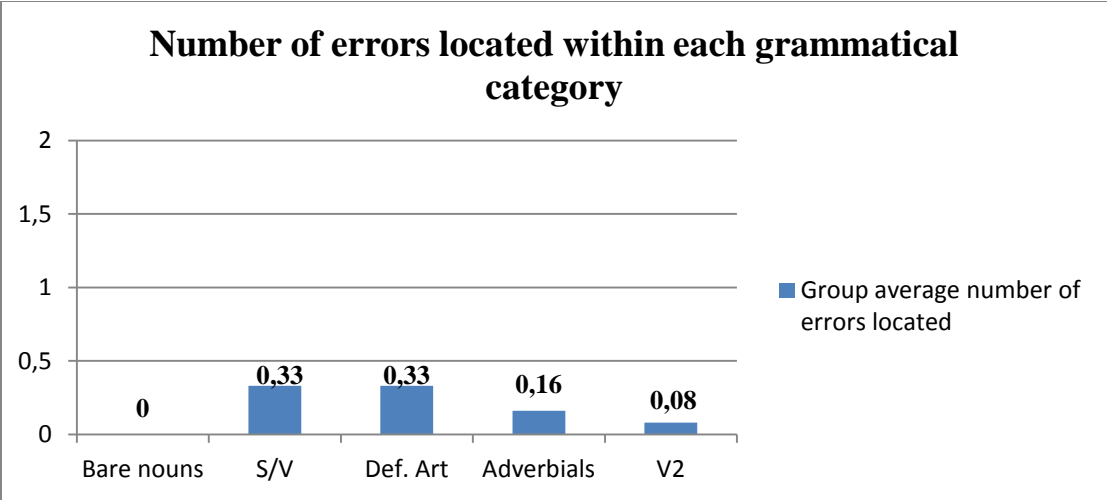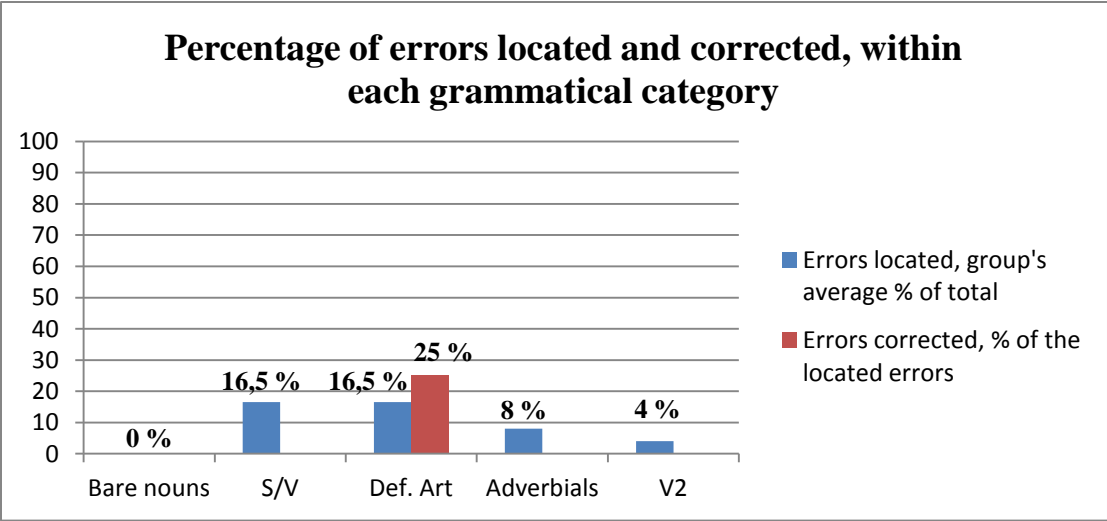
Table 4.2 illustrates the group's average percentage of errors located, within each individual category, as well as the percentage of located errors that was also successfully corrected.

Table 4.2

Percentage of errors located and corrected, within each grammatical category

A bar chart titled "Percentage of errors located and corrected, within each grammatical category" with a y-axis from 0 to 100. The legend shows "Errors located, group's average % of total" (blue) and "Errors corrected, % of the located errors" (red). Values: Bare nouns = 0 %, S/V = 16,5 %, Def. Art = 16,5 % (located) and 25 % (corrected), Adverbials = 8 %, V2 = 4 %.

There were 2 errors within each grammatical category in the test. Out of the five categories, the 10-year old participants located most errors within the categories subject/verb-agreement and definite article errors, with a group average of 0.33 out of 2 (16. 5 %). The lowest number of located errors was within the category bare nouns where the group located an average of 0 errors (0 %).

Out of the whole group of 10-year old participants' test results, there was only one error that was both successfully located and corrected. This error was within the definite article category. A group total of 4 errors was located within this category. As table 4.3 displays, 25 % of these 4 errors was also successfully corrected. In the other categories, the average percentage of corrected errors was 0.

4.1.3 Comments on the located errors

The 10-year olds did not make any attempt to comment on what kind of grammatical phenomena they were dealing with in the test, which suggests that they were not able to. This may indicate that the 10-year olds' metalinguistic competence and awareness in the L2 is not sufficiently developed in order to successfully carry out such a task.

4.1.4 Comparison of genders

The six boys found an average of 1.33 errors (13.3 %), while the six girls found an average of 0.5 errors (5 %), meaning that the average boy found 8.3 % more errors than the average girl. Table 4.4 displays the average percentage of located errors within each grammatical category, grouped by gender.

Table 4.4

Average percentage of errors located within each grammatical category, grouped by gender
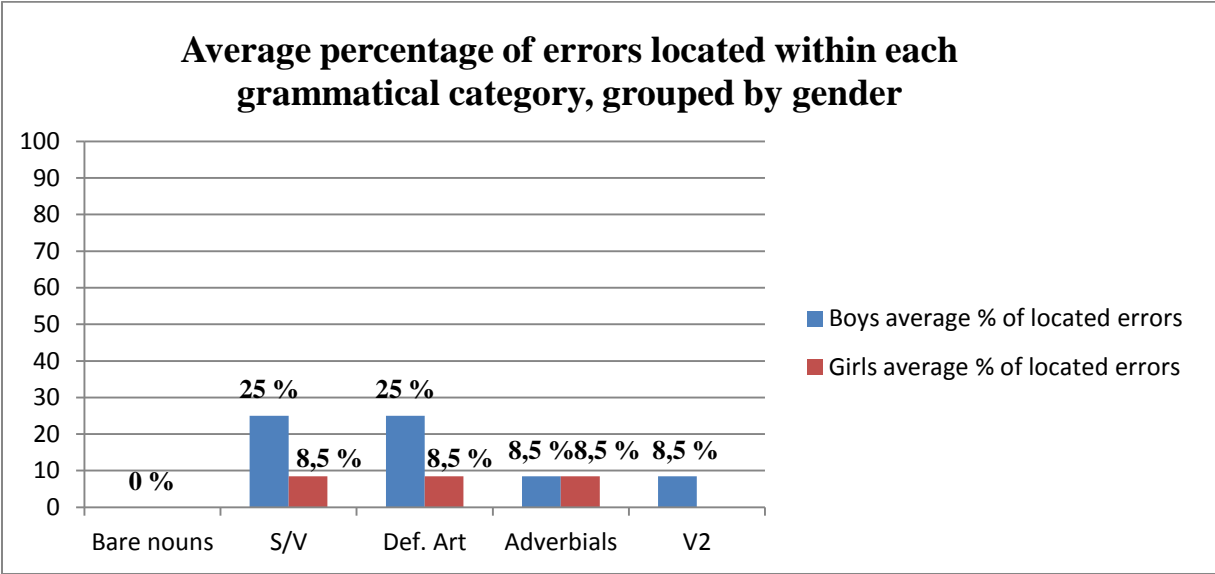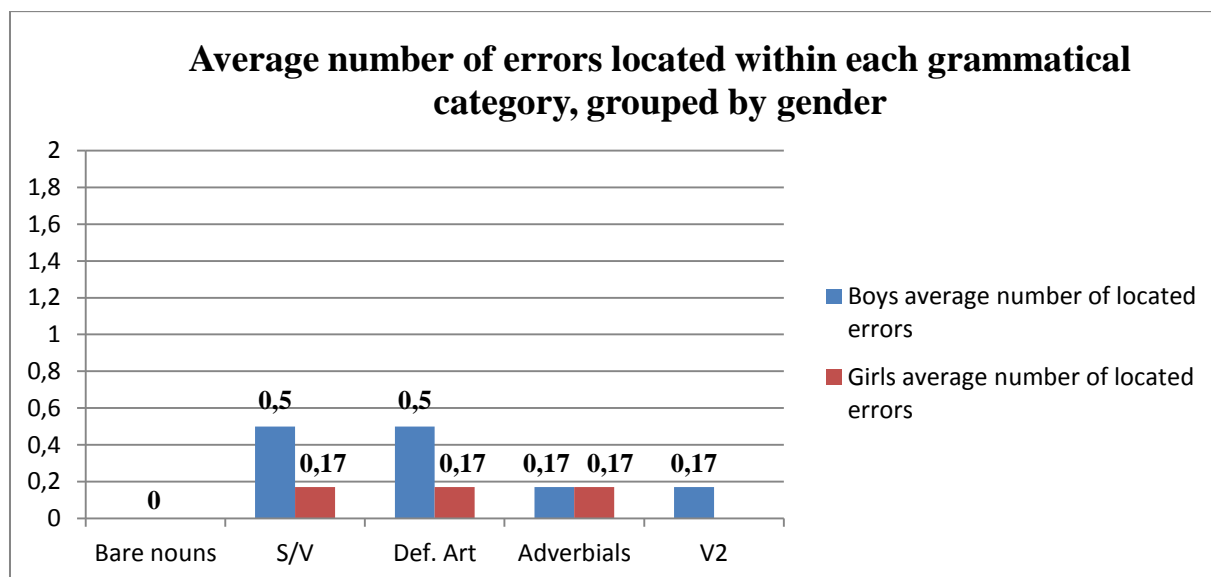
Table 4.5 displays the average number of located errors within each grammatical category, also grouped by gender.

Table 4.5

As shown by table 4.5, the girls' average scores were lower than the boys' score in three of the grammatical categories (S/V-agreement, definite/indefinite articles and V2). In the remaining two grammatical categories (bare nouns and adverbial errors), the girls and the boys had the same average score. Because the group as a whole did not correct more than one error, the tables do not display any information about number of corrected errors.

4.1.5 Participants who listed more than one native language

Among the 10-year olds, only one participant listed a second native language (German). This participant found 1 out of the 10 errors in the test (10 %), but did not correct the error successfully. Compared to the group's average amount of errors located, which was 0.92 (9.2 %), this participant scored 0.8 % better.

4.1.6 The distractor item

There was one variable that stood out in the 10-year olds' test, added as an 11th error. The error was a missing indefinite article which would cause an error in both Norwegian and English. This variable was implemented in the test in order to see if an error that would also

cause an error in Norwegian would be easier for the participants to spot. This however, turned out not to be the case, as not a single participant was able to locate this error.

4.2 Results 15-year olds

Even if there were marked individual differences between the 15-year old participants, their average performance overall was, in every way, dramatically better than the 10-year olds.

4.2.1 Total amount of errors located and corrected

The twenty-four 15-year olds found, on average, 13 out of 25 errors, which is 52 %. The group's average score was 24.25, out of 50 possible points, which is 48.5 %. This scoring is based on the number of errors located (1 point each), and correction of the errors (1 point each). Table 4.6 displays the group's average number of errors located, within each grammatical category.

Table 4.6

Number of errors located within each grammatical category

| Category	Group average number of errors located
Bare nouns	2,71
S/V	1,87
Def. Art	1,96
Adverbials	2,91
V2	3,49
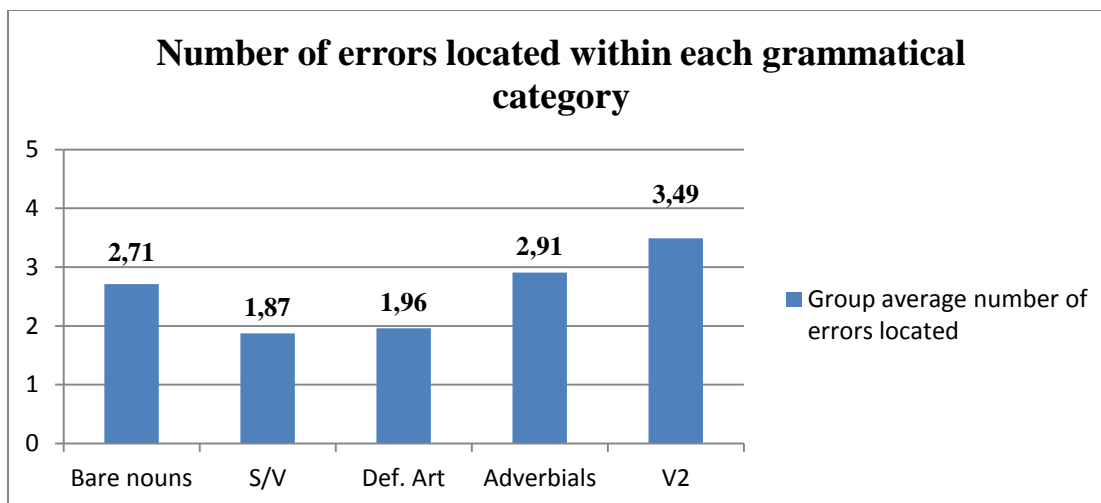
There were five errors within each of the grammatical categories. The participants located most errors within the Verb second category, where they located an average of 3.49 out of 5 errors (69.9 %). The lowest number of located errors was within the category S/V-agreement, where the participants only located an average of 1.87 out of 5 errors (37.4 %).

Table 4.7 displays the group's average percentage of located errors, within each grammatical category, as well as the percentage of located errors that were also successfully corrected.

Table 4.7

Percentage of errors located and corrected, within each grammatical category
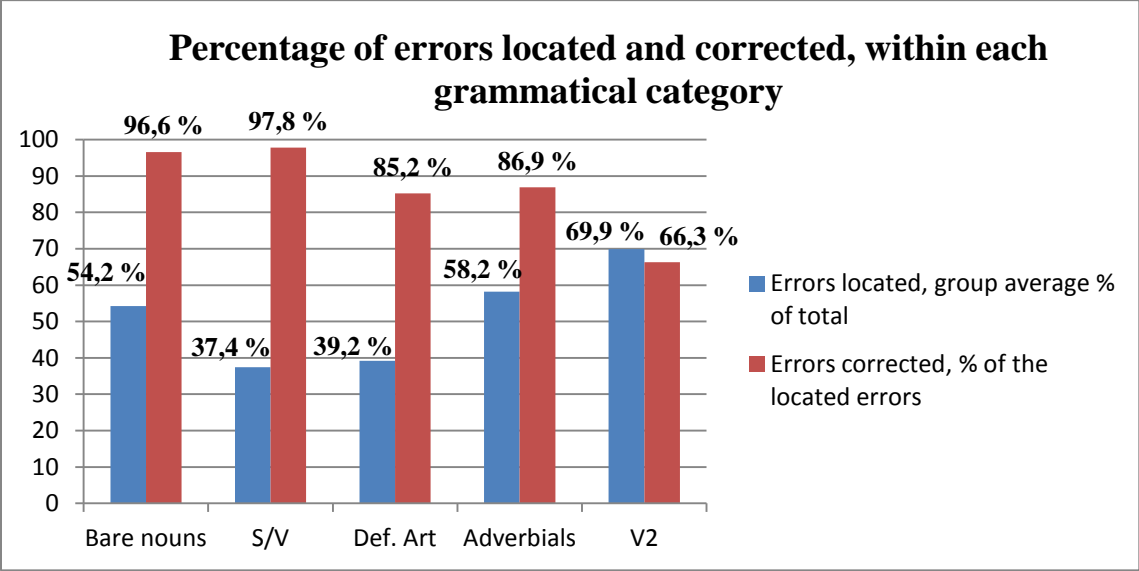
The participants were most successful in correcting errors they located in the categories; subject/verb-agreement (97.8 % of located errors) and bare nouns (96.6 % of located errors). The category the participants were least successful in correcting was verb second syntax. In this category, they were only able to correct 66.3 % of the located errors. On average, the 15-year olds successfully corrected 89.6 % of the errors they had located. For the remaining 10, 3 % of the errors, corrections were either wrong or, in a few cases, absent.

4.2.3 Comments on the located errors

Only a few 15-year olds made any attempt at commenting on the errors they had located, and their comments were in most cases insufficient or wrong. This suggests that, like the 10-year olds, the average 15-year olds' metalinguistic awareness in the L2 is not sufficiently developed in order to perform such a task. It is worth mentioning that the few participants who were able to provide some meaningful comments to the errors they had located, were also the highest scoring participants in the error-finding.

4.2.4 Comparison of genders

The following presents a comparison between the results of the 15-year old boys and the 15-year olds girls. The results are categorized in number of errors located, and how many of these errors that were successfully corrected. Table 4.8 displays the boys' and girls' average numbers of located errors, within each of the grammatical categories.

Table 4.8
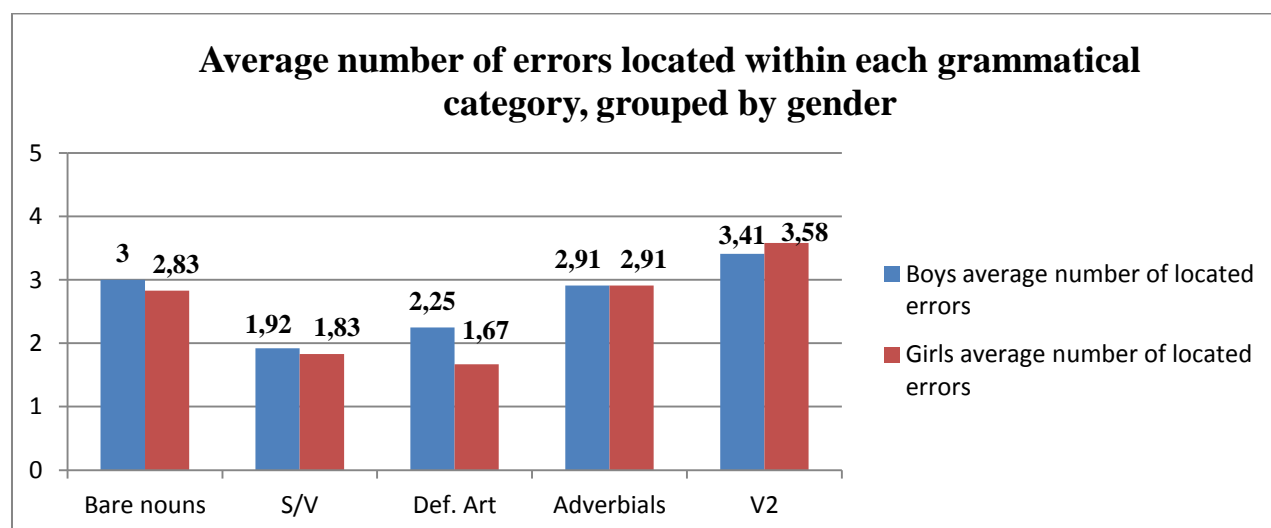
As shown in table 4.8, the boys found located slightly more errors than the girls, overall. The twelve boys located an average of 13.6 errors (54.4 % of total), while the twelve girls located an average of 12.4 errors (49,6 % of total). This means that the average boy located 4.8 % more errors than the average girl.

Table 4.9 illustrates the average percentage of located errors, within each grammatical category, grouped by gender. It also displays the percentage of located errors that were corrected, grouped by gender.

Table 4.9

Average number of errors located within each grammatical category, grouped by gender

Bar chart showing percentages for grammatical categories (Bare nouns, S/V, Def. Art, Adverbials, V2) with four series:
- Errors located, boys' average % of total (blue)
- Errors corrected, boys' % of the located errors (red)
- Errors located, girls' average % of total (purple)
- Errors corrected, girls' % of the located errors (teal)

Bare nouns: 60, 94,3, 48,4, 99,5
S/V: 1,92, 95,3, 36,6, 100
Def. Art: 45, 74,2, 33,4, 100
Adverbials: 58,3, 74,1, 58,3, 100
V2: 68,3, 80,5, 71,6, 90,1

As shown in table 4.9, despite locating a smaller number of errors than the boys, the girls were able to correct the errors they located more consistently. While the boys corrected an average of 82,2 % of the errors they had located, the girls managed to correct an average of 97,2 % of the errors they had located. This means that the average girl corrected 15 % more of the located errors than the average boy.

4.2.5 Participants who listed more than one native language

Among the 15-year olds, two participants listed a second native language (one German and one Italian). The participant who listed German as a second native language was a boy. He located a total of 8 errors (32 %). This is 22.4 % lower than the average boy, and 20 % lower than the group average.

The participants who listed Italian as a second native language was a girl. She located 18 errors (72 %). This is 22.4 % more than the average girl, and 20 % better than the group average.

The two participants successfully corrected all the 26 errors they located (100 %), which is 10.3 % better than the group's average.

4.2.6 The distractor items

In the 15-year olds' test, there was added both a missing indefinite article and a missing definite article, which would cause errors in both English and Norwegian. This was

implemented in the test, as a 26th and 27th error, in order to see if the fact that they would cause errors in both languages made them easier for the participants to identify, compared to variables that would only cause an error in English. The average 15-year old located 1.16 out of these 2 errors (58.2 %), which is 1.49 times better than the 15-year olds' ability to locate the other article errors.

4.3 Summary

The test results indicated that the task at hand was quite challenging for the participants, in both age groups and with little difference between sexes. However, as expected, the 15-year olds performed better overall than the 10-year olds. While the average 10-year old was not able to locate more than 9.2 percent of the errors, the average 15-year old located 52 percent of the errors. Also, while the 10-year olds were not able to correct the errors they located, the 15-year olds were able to successfully correct 89,6 percent of the errors they located. Another difference between the age-groups is that, while the 10-year olds did not manage to locate the variable that would cause an error in both Norwegian and English, more than half of the 15-year olds located this variable.

The final part of the test, which was to explain what kind of errors they located, indicated a slight difference between the age-groups. Neither of the groups seemed proficient enough to make such comments consistently, which indicates that the participants did not have a developed metalinguistic competence and awareness in the L2. However, the few 15-year olds who were able to provide such comments, were also the highest scoring participants in the error-finding.

Gender differences slightly favored the boys when it came to error finding, and the girls when it came to correcting the located errors. However, the differences between genders were very slim. It seems that both gender's linguistic development is approximately the same. Of the two participants who listed more than one native language, one performed a lot better than the average participant, but the other performed worse. In this case, it is therefore difficult to say anything about whether having several native languages benefits L2 learners or not. A more thorough discussion around these results is presented in the following chapter.

5.0 Discussion

The testing conducted in this project investigates Norwegian students' metalinguistic awareness in the L2, and language transfer from the L1 to the L2, as influential factors on their L2 English proficiency. In this chapter, I shall attempt to give analytical comments to the test results based on the theoretical background presented in chapter 2. In section 5.1, I discuss the participants' metalinguistic awareness (or lack of such) as a factor in determining the outcome of the test. I argue that the informants' lack of metalinguistic awareness in the L2 may explain why they overlooked many errors in the test, and why most of them were not able to explain the errors they had located. I also discuss the informants' metalinguistic awareness as a factor in determining what we can say about language transfer. In section 5.2, I address language transfer from the L1 to the L2. In this section, I discuss whether or not it is likely that the informants negatively transfer language structures from Norwegian to English, based on the test-results and the discussion in section 5.1. Section 5.3 is a critical discussion of the method used in the project. In this section, I discuss which information the method provides and which it does not, my experiences with conducting an error-finding test, which weaknesses that should be considered in the post-test analysis and which conclusions that can still be made, after such considerations.

5.1 Metalinguistic awareness

The texts that were used in the tests were collected from an internet page and a text book intended for ages ten and fifteen, and should be suitable for the age-groups tested in the project. We may therefore assume that the texts themselves were not significantly challenging for the participants to understand. Still, the informants' results were fairly low. In this section, I shall discuss to which extent the informants' metalinguistic awareness in the L2 may be an influential factor on the outcome of the test.

As pointed out in Chapter 2, it is commonly believed that a learner's metalinguistic awareness in the L2 is an important factor in L2 acquisition and performance (Mora 2001; Bialystok 2007; August & Shanahan 2006), and most theorists agree that a developed metalinguistic awareness has a positive effect on the linguistic performance in the L2 (Mora 2011). Myhill et al. (2011) and Gombert (1992) point out that in order to acquire the competence that allows one to explicitly account for the grammar and structures of a language, one must first have developed some explicit internal knowledge of the language (metalinguistic awareness). As mentioned in chapter 2, this awareness is important when a learner verbalizes the rules of

second language grammar or the distinction between a correctly formulated rule and an incorrect one (James & Garrett 1992). We may therefore assume that metalinguistic awareness is an important factor in the kind of test used in this project. The test results in this study are still fairly low, which suggest that the participants have not yet developed their metalinguistic awareness to a degree that allows them to perform tasks such as identifying errors or verbalize the grammatical rules in their L2.

Ellis et al. (2009) argue that learners use their metalinguistic competence (explicit knowledge) when judging whether a sentence is acceptable or not, but that this process draws intuitively on their metalinguistic awareness, seen as implicit knowledge. Ellis et al. (2009) further argue that the amount of metalinguistic competence and awareness acquired by the learner will be a determining factor in how well the learner is able to perform such a task as judging whether a sentence is acceptable or not. The results in this study support these views, in that there is a connection between metalinguistic awareness and L2 proficiency.

Considering Gombert's model (1992), which defines metalinguistic awareness as an awareness surrounding the choices one makes in linguistic decision making, it seems reasonable to conclude that without a sufficiently developed metalinguistic awareness in the L2, the participants may not be able to locate or explain the errors in the tests used in this study. This is exactly what the results of this study seem to indicate. The results suggest that the 10-year olds do not have this ability at all, as they were not able to locate almost any errors. The fact that the 10-year olds' metalinguistic awareness seems to be too underdeveloped for them to perform error finding in the L2, also affects what we can say about their language transfer. If they are not able to perform the test, it is difficult to say whether they transfer elements from their L1 to the L2, or not. This is because it is hard to say whether or not the 10-year olds' metalinguistic awareness in their L2 is sufficient enough for them to even perform error finding. If this is not the case, we cannot use error finding to conclude much about language transfer.

The 15-year olds found approximately half of the errors in the test This result indicates that the 15-year olds' metalinguistic awareness in the L2 is substantially more developed than in the 10-year olds', but that they still face some problems when performing error finding. This reasoning implies that the 15-year old participants' metalinguistic awareness is only developed to a point where it is still difficult for them to identify errors in the L2, which means that their metalinguistic awareness in the L2 is still only partially developed. However,

unlike the 10-year olds, the 15-year olds were able to find half of the errors, which suggests that they are able to perform error finding in the L2. This result provides some basis for discussing whether negative language transfer is a factor or not, but considering how limited their results were, it may still be difficult to make strong claims.

Also, we have to consider that the individual participants' results varied considerably, which indicates varying L2 proficiency among the participants. This may be viewed as the result of the participants having different degrees of metalinguistic awareness in the L2. As Hu (2002) points out, learners' ability to use metalinguistic knowledge in L2 production may vary significantly according to factors such as proficiency, degree of attention to form and time-pressure (Ellis et al. 2009). This makes it equally difficult to say anything conclusive about language transfer among the lowest scoring 15-year olds, as it is for the 10-year olds.

On the average, there is a general gap, however, between the 10-year olds and the 15-year olds. The results indicate that the participants metalinguistic awareness, in the L2, is under development (at least for the 15-year olds), but has not yet developed to a point where they are able to consistently identify errors, and explicitly account for the grammar and structures of their L2. This is suggested by how the participants, in addition to overlooking many errors, were not able to provide any comments on the errors they had managed to locate. As mentioned previously, James & Garrett (1992) claim that a learner requires some metalinguistic awareness in order to perform such a task. It is obvious that the 10-year olds are not even close to having this ability, since they have not made any meaningful comments to the errors. This is understandable, as it is likely that their metalinguistic awareness even in their L1 is not very well developed, and providing explanations to errors requires a more complex understanding of grammar than what locating errors does (James & Garrett 1992). This supports the theory that metalinguistic awareness (internal knowledge of language) is a precursor to metalinguistic competence (explicit knowledge of language) (Gombert 1992; Myhill et al. 2011). The 15-year olds managed to provide useful comments to a few errors, which seems to show some development of these skills. However, their metalinguistic awareness is clearly not developed to a point where they are able to perform this kind of task consistently.

The participants may not have developed significant metalinguistic L2 skills, even if they are able to speak and read the language. As Cazden (1974) points out, this ability is less easily and less universally acquired than the language performances of speaking and listening (cited

in Bialystok 2001). This means that the participants' lack of metalinguistic L 2 awareness may result in their overlooking errors and negatively transferring language elements from the L1, even if they are perfectly capable of speaking and reading English.

Research conducted by Birdsong (1989) and Han & Ellis (1998) makes a strong claim for metalinguistic awareness being a key part in explaining learners' performance in their L2 (Ellis et al. 2009). Han & Ellis' research (1998) revealed that learners' explicit knowledge of a grammatical feature was significantly associated with their performance within the same feature (cited in Ellis et al. 2009). This means that if the participants in this study were able to give explicit comments on how a specific grammatical element worked in their L2, they should also have been able to identify cases where the same grammatical element was being used wrongly, and vice versa. However, it seemed that the participants' metalinguistic awareness was too low to perform any of these tasks consistently.

Also, Mora (2011) points out that L2 learners and other bilinguals have a unique metalinguistic awareness which enables them to objectively function outside one language system and to objectify languages' rules, structures and functions. On the other hand, if the learners are not able to identify rules and structures of his/her languages or switch codes between the languages, this can be attributed to a lack of metalinguistic awareness. Their observation matches the results of the testing in this study, where the participants were not able to provide explicit information about the grammatical elements, and at the same time overlooked many of the errors in the test.

It seems reasonable to assume, based on Mora's (2011) claim, as well as Birdsong's (1989) and Han & Ellis' (1998) research, that if a learner has a higher metalinguistic awareness in the L2, he or she will have a higher L2 proficiency. This should cause the learner to locate errors in the L2 more easily, and also make him or her more capable of describing the grammar of the L2. A higher L2 proficiency should also cause negative transfer from the L1 to occur less frequently. This matches the test results in this study, only on the other side of the scale. The results, in this study, indicate that learners with a lower metalinguistic awareness in their L2, have an ability to identify and explain errors in the L2 that is equally low. The results also indicate that the 10-year olds are more reliant on their L1 (in L2 production), than the 15-year olds (who have a more developed metalinguistic awareness in the L2). The relation between metalinguistic awareness and L2 proficiency provides a possible explanation for why the distractor elements that caused errors in both languages, and not only in English, were more

consistently located and corrected by the participants. In these cases, the participants might have been able to draw on their metalinguistic awareness in the L1, which is more developed than in the L2 (Ellis 1985). It also explains why the few participants who were able to give some meaningful comments to the error they located, were also the highest-scoring participants in the error-finding. It seems evident that higher metalinguistic awareness leads to higher L2 proficiency overall, as the participants who were able to locate errors in the L2 more consistently, were also the ones who displayed a higher metalinguistic awareness.

The hypothesis that metalinguistic awareness and performance in the L2 are closely related, is further supported in a study conducted by Elder and Manwaring (2004). This study revealed that metalinguistic awareness of the L2 was strongly associated with performance on classroom achievement tasks involving writing and reading skills (Ellis et al, 2009). Such a relation seems to be the case in this study as well, especially considering that the few students who were able to provide some sufficient comments on errors they had located, were the group's highest scoring participants in the error-finding part of the test. Overall, the informants' metalinguistic awareness seems to be a significant factor in determining how well they perform in both error-finding and explaining the structures of a language. It seems evident, based on the results in this study, that a learner with a higher metalinguistic awareness performs better in such tasks, than a learner with a lower metalinguistic awareness.

Research conducted by Kemp (2001), Donaldson (1978), Bialystok (1991), Elder & Manwaring (2004) & Ellis et al (2009) indicates that instructive grammar teaching has a positive effect on the learner's metalinguistic competence and awareness (Ellis et al. 2009). This study does not include any information about this parameter, but it would be interesting to know more about how these students have learned English. Such information could serve as an interesting basis for comparison between the L2 proficiency of Norwegian learners of English who have been instructed specifically in order to develop metalinguistic awareness, and students who have not.

5.2 Language transfer

The 10-year olds overlooked almost all of the errors in their text, while the 15-year olds over-looked almost half of the errors in their text. In this section I discuss language transfer as a potential factor in explaining these results.

Considering the fairly low results, and that the errors that were implemented in the tests would work just fine if translated to Norwegian, it is possible that the participants' knowledge of the Norwegian language is interfering with their L2 production and interpretation. This phenomenon is to be expected, at least to some degree, according to Lado's (1957) theory that individuals tend to transfer forms, meanings and the distribution of forms and meanings from their native language, when attempting to understand a foreign language. It is also in accordance with most theorists' view on transfer (interlanguage theorists being the exception), as most theorists believe that transfer from L1 is an important source of error and interference in the, because L1 habits are so deeply rooted in the learner's mind (Mitchell & Myles 1998). Considering these theories, it is reasonable to believe that the participants overlook errors in the test, because negative transfer from the L1 is telling them that the errors are not errors. However, it is difficult to provide evidence for this claim, based on the test results of this study, mainly because the informants' metalinguistic awareness in the L2 is so low that they are not be able to perform error-finding in their L2 consistently (at least not in the grammatical categories that were investigated in this study).

If, however, the informants are negatively transferring elements from the L1 to the L2, this is most likely occurring in cases where the participants are unsure of whether an item is acceptable or not. Ellis (1985) claims that in cases where L2-learners do not know the correct utterance/grammar in the L2 they might turn to their L1 competence for backup. This strategy, which Ellis (1985) calls "applying what is known" may in these cases result in negative transfer. This is because, even if Norwegian and English are in many cases similar languages, there are certain grammatical differences between them, and some of these differences are what has been employed in the tests in this study.

Ellis' (1985) "applying what is known" strategy may also explain why the 15-year olds located the least amount of errors in the subject/verb-agreement category (only 37.4 %), considering that there is no subject/verb-agreement in Norwegian. If we assume that the participants are using their L1 competence as backup more actively when facing grammatical elements they are unsure of, it is only understandable that negative transfer occurs more frequently when the participants are judging a grammatical element they have never used in their L1. This possibility is in accordance with the principles and parameters view on transfer, which claims that when the parameter settings for the same principle in the L1 and the L2 are different, negative transfer (errors) is more likely to occur (Saville-Troike 2006).

The fact that subject/verb agreement seems to be the most difficult category for the participants to locate errors in, may also be explained by metalinguistic awareness as a contributing factor. The participants' metalinguistic awareness in their L2 seems to be under-developed when it comes to identifying errors. This should be even more difficult when the grammatical element is further away from their L1, because it means that the participants cannot use their L1 metalinguistic awareness as support either. Research conducted by Ringbom (1987), has showed that similarity between the L1 and the L2 is a massive advantage in the second language acquisition process, which may explain why the 15-year located more errors in the categories where the differences between Norwegian and English are smaller, such as adverbials, bare nouns, and V2 syntax.

On the other hand, as Ringbom and Palmberg (1976) have pointed out: Several researcher has found that it is not necessarily only the biggest differences that cause the biggest problems for learners, but that items that are only slightly different, or slightly similar can pose big challenges because they produce a greater level of confusion and interference. This could explain why the participants also overlooked several errors within the categories that are more similar in the two languages.

The 10-year olds' low performance, as compared to the 15-year olds is obviously a matter of proficiency in the L2. After all, they have not just been learning English in school five years less than the 15-year olds, but they have also received five years less of L2 input from everyday life. It appears as if the 10-year olds allow more frequent cases of negative transfer from the L1 to occur, possibly because they rely more on their L1 than do the 15-year olds. This supports the theory that the lower a learner's perception of the L2 structures is, the more prone to negative transfer from the L1 the learner will be, a claim made by Mayo (2009). Ionin et al (2004) and Kellerman (1979).

The 10-year olds are not necessarily just transferring negative elements. It is more likely that they are using both negative and positive transfer from the L1, to aid them in the L2 acquisition. They might even be basing most of their understanding of the structures of English on their knowledge of Norwegian, a theory known as the full access/full transfer theory (Schwartz & Sprouse 1996). Schwartz and Sprouse (1996) argue that L1 transfer (both positive and negative) is so important in early second language acquisition that the early process of second language acquisition is a reflection of the learner's current knowledge of the L1. As the learners grow older, and gain a better understanding of the structures of the L2,

they become less reliant on their L1. This development slowly makes the learner more aware of the elements that may be positively transferred from the L1, and, at the same time, causes the learners to use negative transfer less frequently. This kind of development seems to be indicated in the test results of this study, as the 15-year olds outperform the 10-year olds in all aspects of the test.

The results in this study show that the distractor items that would cause errors in both languages were more consistently located and corrected (48.5 % better), by the 15-year olds. This suggests that the participants' L1 is a factor when they are using their L2, likely to cause both negative and positive transfer from the L1.

Although the results indicate traces of language transfer in the participants' results, it is difficult to draw any safe conclusions based on the data collected. This is mainly because it is difficult to say anything about negative transfer when the informants' metalinguistic awareness is low. If the informants' metalinguistic awareness is too low to perform error finding, it is difficult to attribute their poor results to other factors as well. In other words, the fact that the participants overlooked many errors may be a result of negative transfer, but it may also be a result of other factors. The results show that the participants overlooked many errors, and also that they were not able to explain the errors they located. This suggests that the informants' metalinguistic awareness is insufficiently developed, in order to perform tasks such as error finding and describing grammatical structures of their second language. This would be a reasonable explanation for why the informants' test results were fairly low. The method used in this study seems to be useful for offering conclusions about metalinguistic awareness in the L2, as an influential factor on L2 acquisiton and proficiency, but it does not seem as equipped to offer conclusions about language transfer.

5.3 A critical review of the method used in the project

When analyzing the results of an acceptability judgment test, it is important to consider what the test can provide answers to, and what it cannot. Certain reservations must be done during the post-test analysis, because the conclusions that can be made after such reservations are more indicative than others. These considerations also offer an opportunity to consider what one might, in hindsight, have done differently. Before presenting the conclusions of this thesis, I will therefore critically discuss the method that is used in the project.

There are some drawbacks when using this kind of error-finding test that should be considered. As mentioned in the method chapter, it is difficult to say exactly what the participants are basing their judgments on. As Chomsky (1965) points out, this could potentially be a range of factors, among which it is difficult to say which ones influence the participants the most. More detailed information about the participants' judgments could be provided through a qualitative study. However, with a quantitative study such as this one, we do get some insight in the L2 competence of a bigger group, which makes it easier to analytically generalize the findings. If we assume that these twenty-four 15-year olds' metalinguistic awareness is a central factor in their L2 proficiency, we may assume that the same applies for other 15-year olds as well, statistical representativity aside. Such generalizations are more difficult to make if we base our findings on one or two informants.

Ellis (1985) points out that error-analysis is not conclusive, because it is hard to say which errors trace back to the L1 and which ones do not. This is something to consider when analyzing these results as well. If a participant overlooks ten errors, it is very difficult to say which ones should be attributed to negative transfer, and which ones should be attributed to other factors. Other factors may be the sentences' lexical content and semantic value, the likelihood of the sentences to be produced in spontaneous conversation and whether the sentences sound unnatural or not (Chomsky 1965). Also, as shown by this study, it is very difficult to make strong claims about transfer when the informants' metalinguistic awareness is low.

My experience with conducting an error-finding test is that it is a simple and very efficient way of gathering data. The kind of data error-finding provides is very useful for analyzing the informants' metalinguistic awareness. However, error-finding may not be useable as a test of transfer, because it relies so heavily on the informants' metalinguistic awareness being sufficiently developed. It is also important to note that there is a difference between what an informant knows and what he or she can produce, and the testing conducted in this study only provides information about what the informants know. The informants' production of English does not necessarily contain as many errors as the number of errors they overlook in an error-finding test. It may be that their metalinguistic awareness is too low to identify the errors in an error-finding test, although they do not necessarily commit these errors in actual L2 production. This possibility should be considered when analyzing the results of this study.

If I were to conduct a similar study again I would consequently be more explicit when explaining the test for the 10-year olds. For instance, I would show them the difference between grammar and simple punctuation, to make sure that they only look for what is relevant in the test. I would also grant the participants more time, as a few participants experienced heavy time pressure during the test, which might have had a negative impact on their results. I would also tell the participants that they have to provide comments to each error, instead of doing it only if they felt able to. This is because even though their comments might be mistaken or insufficient, this is still a stronger indication that they do not have the required metalinguistic awareness than a missing answer is. I also think it might have been better to gather data regarding level of metalinguistic awareness and error-finding in two separate tests. The first test would only investigate the informants' metalinguistic awareness. The second test would be error-finding and explaining errors. This kind of design would more clearly indicate the relationship between metalinguistic awareness and performance in error-finding than gathering all of the data in the same test.

5.4 Summary

The results from this study indicate that the participants' metalinguistic awareness is an important factor in their linguistic performance in the L2, which was to be expected according to Mora (2001), Bialystok (2007), Birdsong (1989), Han & Ellis (1998 and August & Shanahan (2006). The participants were not able to locate a significant amount of errors or provide explanations to the errors they did locate. This finding suggests that they do not have sufficiently developed metalinguistic awareness to perform such a task. The few participants who were both able to locate a majority of the errors in the test and provide comments to the errors they located, also displayed a more developed metalinguistic awareness in the L2, through meaningful comments on the L2 grammar. This finding indicates that metalinguistic awareness is an important factor in L2 acquisition and proficiency.

The results also seem to indicate that language transfer is a factor in the informants' L2 acquisition and proficiency, but that it is difficult to say exactly what is being transferred based on the data gathered in this study. If the participants transfer structures from the L1 to the L2, they are most likely using it as a sort of "applying what is known" strategy, when facing grammatical elements they are unsure of, a theoretical assumption that was first formulated by Ellis (1985). This is likely to occur more often when dealing with grammatical elements that are realized differently in the L1 and the L2 (Saville-Troike 2006. Lado 1957.

Ringbom 1987). If negative transfer occurs in these informants' L2 production, it does so less frequently among the 15-year olds than the 10-year olds. This empirical difference is probably influenced by 15-year olds having a more developed metalinguistic awareness in the L2, but also by their having a higher L2 proficiency overall.

Using an error-finding test has some drawbacks which should be considered in the post-test analysis work. Ellis (1985) points out that error-analysis is not conclusive, because it is hard to say which errors trace back to the L1 and which ones do not. Also, Chomsky (1965) points out that there is a range of factors that influence learners when they perform acceptability judgments. This point makes it difficult to say anything conclusive, especially about negative language transfer. The method used in this study seems to be better equipped to offer conclusions about how a learner's metalinguistic awareness affects his or her L2 proficiency than how negative language transfer does.

6.0 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to look at the effect that language transfer from the L1 to the L2 and metalinguistic awareness in the L2 have on Norwegian students' proficiency in their L2 English. Twelve 10-year old students and twenty-four 15-year old students performed an error-finding test where they attempted to identify, correct and explain grammatical errors. The grammatical categories investigated in the test were bare nouns, subject/verb-agreement, definite articles, adverbials of frequency and verb second syntax in interrogative clauses. The informants who participated in this project were all imbalanced bilinguals who are learning English as a school subject.

The results from this study indicate that Norwegian 10-year old learners of English do not have a substantially developed metalinguistic awareness in the L2. This finding is not unexpected, as it is likely that their metalinguistic awareness even in their L1 is not yet substantially developed. It rather seems that the 10-year olds' lack of metalinguistic awareness in the L2, may be a major reason why they were not able to perform tasks such as identifying errors, correcting errors and explaining grammatical structures in the L2. Although there might be other factors affecting the 10-year olds' results, their metalinguistic awareness should still be considered as a significant factor. This reasoning is in accordance with Mora (2001), Bialystok (2007) and August & Shanahan's (2006) claim that a learner's metalinguistic awareness in the L2 is an important factor in the L2 acquisition and performance.

The 15-year olds, on the other hand, show some development of metalinguistic awareness in the L2. They were able to locate more than half of the errors, and they were able to provide a few good comments to the errors. This finding indicates a significant development of L2 proficiency from child to adolescent, which is likely to be affected by the learners acquiring even an increased metalinguistic awareness in the L2. However, the 15-year olds still faced problems in the test. They overlooked almost half of the errors, on the average, and only a few informants were able to explain the errors they had located. We may therefore conclude that their metalinguistic awareness is only developed to a point where it is still difficult for them to identify errors and explain grammatical structures, in their L2. These findings give support to one of the main hypotheses in this study, that a learner's metalinguistic awareness in the L2 has a significant impact on his or her L2 proficiency. It seems evident based on the results from this study that a learner with a higher metalinguistic awareness has a higher L2

proficiency overall, than a learner with a lower metalinguistic awareness. This interpretation is further supported by the fact that the informants who displayed the highest level of metalinguistic awareness, were also the group's highest scoring participants.

The second main hypothesis in this study was that Norwegian L2 learners of English make mistakes in their L2 because they are negatively transferring elements from their L1 onto the L2. As discussed in the chapter 5, however, this hypothesis has proven to be difficult to say anything conclusive about, based on the results of this study.

The results do indicate that the informants might be transferring elements from Norwegian onto English, as negative transfer might be a reason why they over-look so many errors. This reasoning supports Lado's (1957) theory that individuals tend to transfer forms and meanings and the distribution of forms and meanings from their native language, when attempting to understand a foreign language. Also, most theorists believe that transfer from the L1 is an important source of error and interference in the L2, because L1 habits are so deeply rooted in the learner's mind (Mitchell & Myles 1998). Because of this, we may assume that language transfer plays an important role in the L2 acquisition of all L2 learners. According to Treffers-Daller & Sakel (2012), this is the result of a speaker having to constantly juggle between the languages he/she knows. This juggling process is not flawless, however, and may sometimes result in a transfer of properties of one language onto a different language.

However, although we assume that language transfer plays a role in these informants' L2 acquisition and proficiency, it is difficult to say anything conclusive about this because the informants' metalinguistic awareness seems under-developed with regard to performing the test conducted in this study. If their metalinguistic awareness is too low for them to be able to perform error-finding in the L2, it is difficult to attribute their errors to negative language transfer. That the informants were over-looking errors might just as well be attributed to other factors (considering Chomsky 1965). Based on the testing conducted in this study, one should consider the possibility that error-finding may not be useable as a test for transfer, because it relies too heavily on the informants' metalinguistic awareness in the L2 being sufficiently developed.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: The information sheet

Del A: Personlig informasjon

Hvor gammel er du? _____

Kjønn: Gutt (☐)   Jente (   )

Del B: Språklig bakgrunn

Er norsk morsmålet ditt?

Ja (   ) Nei (   )

Hvis ja, har du andre morsmål i tillegg?

Ja (   ) Nei (   )

Hvis ja, hvilke(t) språk?   _____

Har du bodd i, eller hatt lengre opphold i et land hvor engelsk er hovedspråk?

Ja (   ) Nei (   )

Hvis ja, hvor lenge varte dette oppholdet? _____

Appendix 2 : The text used in the 10-year olds' test (with errors)

The Voyage of the Animal Orchestra by Carolyne Ardron

It's sad day. Our Ship, Symphony, hit a rock this morning and we is sinking. We must abandon ship and swim for our lives. How got we into this situation?

Day 1. We're alive! We swam all day and all night until we reached land. Who knows what's on this island? Before we finds out, we must sleep and rest.

Day 2. Today we walked around the island. We climbed a tree and all we saw was the deep blue sea and the hot sand! Now we must find food. I gather never food at home.

Day 3. Today we went swimming and fishing. There were sea-urchins in the sea! Now we must find fresh water. Who knows how we can carry it?

Day4. Today we climbed a volcano. At the top there was a pool of fresh rainwater. It was delicious! Now we must explore more of island.

Day 5. Today we walked across the island. There were banana trees and coconut trees! Now we must make a shelter. Who knows how we can make one?

Day6. Today we made a shelter out of bamboo and palm leaves. We have fish, fruit, milk, water and shelter. What need we else?

Day 7. Today the band practised on the beach. There was a ship on the horizon but it didn't see us. We see often ships, but they never see us.

Day 8. Today I got fever and had to be checked by doctor. Luckily it was nothing serious and I should be back on my feet again in a few days.

Day 364. This morning the band was playing on the beach (the music was a bit loud) when a ship

sailed by! I blew my seashell and the ship stopped!

It's a miracle! The ship heard the band and came to rescue us. We're finally leaving the deserted

island. We're going home. Hip hip hurray! Hip hip hurray!

Ardron, Carolyne. (2010). *The Voyage of the Animal Orchestra*. In The British Council. 2013 Web. Accessed September. 2013.

Appendix 3 : The text used in the 10-year olds' test (without errors)

The Voyage of the Animal Orchestra by Carolyne Ardron

It's a sad day. Our Ship, Symphony, hit a rock this morning and we are sinking. We must abandon the ship and swim for our lives. How did we get into this situation?

Day 1. We're alive! We swam all day and all night until we reached land. Who knows what's on this island? Before we find out, we must sleep and rest.

Day 2. Today we walked around the island. We climbed a tree and all we saw was the deep blue sea and the hot sand! Now we must find food. I never gather food at home.

Day 3. Today we went swimming and fishing. There were sea-urchins in the sea! Now we must find fresh water. Who knows how we can carry it?

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Day 5. Today we walked across the island. There were banana trees and coconut trees! Now we must make a shelter. Who knows how we can make one?

Day6. Today we made a shelter out of bamboo and palm leaves. We have fish, fruit, milk, water and shelter. What else do we need?

Day 7. Today the band practised on the beach. There was a ship on the horizon but it didn't see us. We often see ships, but they never see us.

Day 8. Today I got a fever and had to be checked by a doctor. Luckily it was nothing serious and I should be back on my feet again in a few days.

Day 364. This morning the band was playing on the beach (the music was a bit loud) when a ship sailed by! I blew my seashell and the ship stopped!

It's a miracle! The ship heard the band and came to rescue us. We're finally leaving the deserted island. We're going home. Hip hip hurray! Hip hip hurray!

Appendix 4: The text used in the 15-year olds' test (with errors)

Glossary

gleam - shine

shuffle - here: walk slowly without lifting your feet completely

squint - look with eyes partly closed

my bra - here: my brother, my friend

mockingly - teasingly

venture - here: say something carefully

deftly - quickly and skillfully

in this vein - like this

loiter - here: drift across towards

hawker - person selling things on the street

vendor - person who sells something

loll - hang around in a relaxed way

nudge - push someone gently to get their attention

repent - feel or show you are sorry for something

The Purse is Mine by Thomas Rapakgadi

Thomas Rapakgadi was born in 1969 in Alldays, the Northern Province of South Africa.

Although he wanted to be doctor, he ended up working on farms and as security guard while

writing for Scope Magazine. "The Purse is Mine" was published in *In the Rapids*: New South

African Stories in 2001.

The metro train stops as the rays of the morning sun gleams across the township. Pulling his woollen cap over his dreadlocks, Akufani shuffled aside to let Vusi hop in.

"Well, I won't dump Thandi just because she's a gold-digger, girls just needs more stuff than we do" Akufani continued and pulled up his baggy turn-up trousers as he took a seat. "I'll keep stealing to satisfy her lust for money." "Bah!" grunted Vusi. For how long will we be able to make a living out of robbing people?" Akufani groaned. He squinted at Vusi, hating the question. "For as long as people have excess cash to be relieved of." He spoke softly, in case the conversation might be picked up by other passengers at the end of the coach. "Mind you, if you develop rubber knees, you won't have your girl for much longer. Believe me, these days girls wants to be impressed. Nowadays money can buy true love, my bra," he added mockingly. Vusi nodded quietly. Akufani talked never about anything but girls.

"Today is as good as any other to go hunting for a job," he ventured. "A real job." "I want to be bartender one day" continued Vusi, to which Akufani jokingly replied that he was going to be master thief. After a short laugh Akufani deftly turned the talk around to the importance of "fast bucks" to maintain materialistic girlfriends. The conversation continued in this vein until they hopped out at Park Station. They loitered towards a group of female hawkers and fruit vendors. Shoving his hands into his pockets, Akufani lolled around on the pretext of being a prospective buyer. He nudged Vusi and winked at him to start the job. He frowned deeply when Vusi did not respond. "Why responded he not?", Akufani thought to himself. Was Vusi beginning to repent? To betray him?

With a sudden movement Akufani thrust his hand out, grabbing a purse. "Robbery! He

snatched my wallet!" screamed one of the women. Soon, the women swarmed Akufani. His

eyes were wide. "I didn't mug anyone! I do never anything wrong. I just reached down to

select a few ripe pears," he babbled, breathing hard. "I am innocent, ladies!" His protuberant

eyes signaled the urgent need for help, but Vusi was nowhere in sight. The women's voices

joined angrily: "We're fending for our kids, and then such a bloody... don't let him get away!"

One of ladies attacked him, striking at his head with pointed shoe heels. "Kick him!" one of

them screamed. Fighting like a wounded animal, he tried to resist the women as they clutched

at his baggy trousers. In vain, he tried to muscle out. Some of the women held him in a firm

grip, while the others struck at him with umbrellas and other weapons of assault, grabbed

from their trading tables. Akufani thought never that this could happen to him. Then, at last,

he managed to pull away from the women and slip through the human circle, dropping his

woolen cap as he fled. He gathered more speed. His dreadlocks spread out wildly about his

head. The women took after him in hot pursuit. They hurled tomatoes and fruit at him, which

hit his grey blazer with a splat. "Catch that thief!" bawled the woman on whose crop of

oranges Akufani had trampled when he fled.

"Please, mothers, I come always here to purchase fruits, spare my life!" he wailed, bending

down to pull on a shoe which had slipped off, leaving his one heel completely bare. He saw

the women close behind him and quickly pulled off the shoe, clutching it as he continued to

run. With renewed speed he fled before the women's ugly wrath. By now they weren't

shouting anymore, but he could still hear their feet rattling on the pavement. Akufani gasped and coughed in exhaustion. How could he avoid them cornering him in the dead-end at B & C Restaurant? Then he heard a man's voice urging the bystanders on. "Come on, we is all tired of these criminals, let's get him!" Smelling death, Akufani sped off in the opposite direction, summoning up all his energy. Akufani was getting headache by the trouble he had gotten himself into.

He flicked around the corner at Grey and Loveday Streets, crossed busy Commissioner Street. He had managed to shake them off! He was out of their sight. At last. How got I away? Akufani thought to himself.

Still exhausted, Akufani panted as he slumped onto the curb. He took off the blazer, put on the shoe. "Phew! That was close! At least no serious injuries. And no policeman had joined in the chase," Akufani thought, very relieved, and wiped his face. But where was Vusi?

I need some refreshment, Akufani thought, jamming a long, slim cigar into his mouth. "It really doesn't seem to be my day today," he sighed.

Then Akufani spotted elderly man, hobbling along on his cane. Could this be another harvest for the beloved girlfriend back home? Akufani flicked the ash off his cigar. Instead of drawing at it again, he extinguished it and slipped it into his pocket. Once again, Akufani squinted at the man. He studied him carefully and noticed the bulging left pocket of his jacket. This time Akufani wanted to go about it perfectly. He wanted to avoid another brawl. He

glanced around as old man rattled past him, leaning on his battered stick. "I do often this, it's going to be easy", akufani thought. He tiptoed behind the man. Then he whisked a bulky purse from the old man's lower coat pocket. Almost immediately, Akufani felt a firm grab on the nape. Police! "Where came they from?" Akufani thought to himself. One of the two policemen seized him by the belt. "Move!" he shouted. "Let's get to the old man before he crosses street!" He shoved Akufani along, grabbing the purse from him first. Akufani spluttered, protested fiercely as they traced the old man. "Do you want to donate my purse to the old man? The purse is mine!" "Not so. We saw you stealing it from him." "Why got I so unlucky?" Akufani thought to himself.

They caught up with the old man in Jeppe Street. The man took his long brown wooden pipe from his hollow mouth. He craned his thin, scraggy neck, and peered closely at the purse. "I'm sorry, gentlemen. I've never seen this purse before," he said. He turned, pointed his staff at pavement and leaned on it as he went along his way. Akufani beamed a smile of triumph, "didn't I tell you that the purse was mine?"

"But, we're sure we saw you pinching something from the old man's pocket. It might be that his eyes are too old to identify colours, or his mind too senile to remember all his belongings," said one of the policemen. Police led him away, towards the caravan charge office parked nearby. "Why should I accompany you? You don't even have a complaint against me! You know nothing about me." "We knows that you are a thief", replied the policeman.

Akufani protested wildly. "You wanted to give away my purse to the old man. And now…

I'm sorry, gentlemen. I'm sorry." He kicked at pavement as the policemen seized his hands

and dragged him away. At the charge office, the police opened the bulging purse. Thirty

packets of cocaine splattered onto the counter. There was complete silence. Then the

policeman behind the counter squinted at Akufani with a wry, mocking smile. "So? Where got

you this from?"

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so unlucky?" Akufani thought to himself.

They caught up with the old man in Jeppe Street. The man took his long brown wooden pipe from his hollow mouth. He craned his thin, scraggy neck, and peered closely at the purse. "I'm sorry, gentlemen. I've never seen this purse before," he said. He turned, pointed his staff at pavement and leaned on it as he went along his way. Akufani beamed a smile of triumph, "didn't I tell you that the purse was mine?"

"But, we're sure we saw you pinching something from the old man's pocket. It might be that his eyes are too old to identify colours, or his mind too senile to remember all his belongings," said one of the policemen. Police led him away, towards the caravan charge office parked nearby. "Why should I accompany you? You don't even have a complaint against me! You know nothing about me." "We know that you are a thief", replied the policeman.

Akufani protested wildly. "You wanted to give away my purse to the old man. And now… I'm sorry, gentlemen. I'm sorry." He kicked at the pavement as the policemen seized his hands and dragged him away. At the charge office, the police opened the bulging purse. Thirty packets of cocaine splattered onto the counter. There was complete silence. Then the policeman behind the counter squinted at Akufani with a wry, mocking smile. "So? Where did you get this from?"