GETTING YOUR MESSAGE ACROSS

EVALUATING CROSS-LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE ON COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN WRITTEN LEARNER ENGLISH

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Role of English in Sweden
The role of English as a means of daily communication across borders and within nations, as a global lingua franca, is becoming increasingly evident within the European Union and in many other parts of the world (Modiano 2009:7). Competent communication skills in English, i.e. the ability to use the language successfully to ‘get your message across’ (Savignon 1983:4), to make yourself understood in socially appropriate ways (Thornbury 1999: 18) and to achieve your communicative goals in an abundance of specific functional and sociocultural situations (Saville-Troike 2006:100), can open a major gateway to participation in a variety of activities in the global community. In Sweden, a substantial proportion of the population now use English daily; it is used in education, employment, in developing business and social relations, for travel and for participating in global popular culture, e.g. entertainment and the media (Hyltenstam 2004:52-53). In Sweden, some researchers now claim that English has approached second language status because of the ways it is used and required in daily communicative activities (Modiano 2009:10-11; Hyltenstam 2004:52-53). Although English is still far from becoming an official or even a majority second language in Sweden, it holds significant sociocultural status. Within some contexts English can even be considered to be more prestigious than Swedish, particularly in popular media and culture, i.e. music, movies and the use of online multimedia, but also in certain business, political and academic circles (Hyltenstam 2004: 52-53; Josephson 2004:15-20).

English in Sweden is mainly taught through the public educational system where the primary purpose for studying English, according to the national curriculum, is the development of communicative ability (kommunikativ förmåga) to prepare students for current and future participation in a global world (Skolverket Lgr11. 2011:30-41). Although Swedish high school students generally do not acquire native-like Standard English competence through the public educational system, learners are expected to be able to perform a variety of communicative functions in a range of different contexts. Many students are also highly motivated to learn English because of the access it gives them to popular youth culture; for instance, music and movies, communication via the use of the Internet and multimedia, as well as increased future work, travel and educational opportunities (Hyltenstam 2004:57-61).
1.2 English Language Teaching: The Communicative Approach

The communicative approach to language teaching has developed over recent decades into a dominating perspective on second and foreign language teaching, internationally as well as in Sweden (Celce-Murcia 2001:9; Savignon 2001:13-28; Tornberg 2000:279-293; Tornberg 1997:37-57; Thornbury 1999: 14-25; Skolverket Lgr11. 2011:30-41). Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has had a major impact on the way English is taught in the modern language classroom and has offered a substantial shift away from traditional form-focused (structural) approaches to language teaching into recent perspectives of what is involved in learning to use a second language in a communicative way (Savignon 2001:14-15). The main purpose of CLT is to develop interactive, strategic and linguistic abilities in a range of contexts and functional situations through the use of a second or foreign language as a communicative tool (Savignon 2001:13-28).

Over the past few decades, a wealth of international and Swedish publications has been written on the subjects of teaching and learning in CLT classrooms and the processes involved in the development of linguistic and communicative competence in a second language (see for instance Celce Murcia 2001; Cook 2002; Ellis 1997; Faerch & Kasper 1983; Kasper 1986; Lightbown & Spada 1999; Lim Falk 2008, Sylvén 2010; Saville-Troike 2006, Thornbury 1999, Tornberg 1997; Tornberg 2000). It would seem that most second language researchers within the fields of SLA, and particularly within the fields of CLT, would agree that developing language skills for communicative use is an essential goal of second and foreign language teaching and learning. Nevertheless, definitions of what competence in a non-native language comprises and how it is to be defined, taught and assessed can vary essentially depending on the definer’s perspective on how a second language is acquired and what it should be used for. This, of course, also has substantial consequences for how a language is taught and evaluated in each and every classroom.

There are several factors that influence progress in language development. For instance, a learner’s linguistic and sociocultural background has been found to be of significant importance for acquiring competence in a second language (Cook 2002: 1-27; Ellis 1997: 51-54; Myles 2002:1-26; Odlin 1989: 15-24; Odlin 2003:437-438; Saville-Troike 2006:177-178). Evaluating communicative competence and performance is, of course, an essential task for second language researchers and teachers alike; so how, then, can we actually measure learners’ communicative ability and assess the quality of their performance? A key question for evaluators, teachers and researchers to answer this is: how successful are the learners in achieving the specific purpose and aims of a particular task and in getting their message across? This also raises further questions: how do second language learners develop the ability to communicate in a second language? What are some of the different factors affecting communicative ability? For instance, how does a
learner’s native language background influence communicative performance in a second language? This last question leads to asking what role language transfer from a learners’ first language performs in the development of communicative competence.

1.3 Outline and Overview of the Aims and Purposes of the Thesis

When the aims and goals of the CLT curriculum are to develop students’ communicative ability (Skolverket Lgr11. 2011:30) it is reasonable to expect that teachers should also be assessing the ability to communicate when grading student performance. The process of defining and evaluating communicative competence and performance is, however, not necessarily a clear-cut task, as the theoretical background as well as the study will show. While a form-based approach to correcting students’ spelling and grammar errors usually is a reasonably straightforward and quantifiable exercise, assessing communicative ability from a multidimensional perspective involves a more complex qualitative process of investigating a multitude of interacting layers of components in learner’s production. This would require first of all that teachers have sufficient knowledge of how communicative competence is defined and best developed in a learning environment, according to current research as well as the school curriculum. Furthermore, it requires established views of what makes language production communicative, and particularly, what does not.

The initial aim of this thesis is, therefore, to define and explain communicative competence and performance within the context of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory and CLT. The main aim of the study, however, is to examine how cross-linguistic influence (language transfer) of the learners’ first language affects the acquisition of written communicative competence in the second language. Written language production will be used as evidence of how learners make use of their L1 competence and how it affects their communicative performance. Furthermore, the thesis aims to bring attention to some issues that teachers may need to focus on in relation to learners’ language background when assessing students’ development of communicative competence in written performance.

The thesis begins with an overview of the relevant theoretical and research literature in order to clarify issues such as 1) the definition of communicative competence in the context of second language teaching and learning; 2) universal and variable aspects of L2 language acquisition; 3) the impact of cross-linguistic influence from the learners’ native language background on L2 development and performance; and 4) establishing the context for the choice of the research focus and methodology used in this thesis.
Chapter 2 is an overview of the ways in which the distinctions between competence and performance in linguistic theory have been incorporated into the theoretical and educational understanding of second language teaching and learning. It also includes a theoretical discussion of second language development and learner variability. Furthermore, it introduces the primary focus of this thesis; the particular role of language transfer in the development of a second language. Chapter 3 provides a background of CLT and what is involved in the development and assessment of communicative competence and performance in the learning environment. A discussion of the language learning context for the study of English as a second language in Sweden is also included. Chapter 4 focuses on the error analysis as discussed in the second language acquisition literature and introduces a performance analysis influenced approach that will be taken in this thesis. Chapter 5 introduces the study of the written English essays of Swedish high school students taken from the Uppsala Learner English Corpus (ULEC). It also summarises the key questions of the investigation and presents the data selection and methodology used in the study. Chapter 6 presents the results of the ULEC data analysis. This study relates mainly to the language specific issues and transfer problems that Swedish high school learners of English may experience; however, the methodology and theoretical perspectives applied here are by no means exclusively applicable only to Swedish learners of English. The analytical approach can be adapted to any language in order to investigate learner errors, strategies and language specific variability that may be caused by cross-linguistic influence. Chapter 7 provides a concluding summary of the results of the study and the implications for teaching and learning in a communicative context.

2.0 COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND PERFORMANCE – AN OVERVIEW

2.1 Linguistic Background
There are different ways to explain and define communicative competence found in the literature on language learning. Some SLA researchers focus on the internal cognitive processes involved in language acquisition while others focus on how the language is used in social situations to perform specific functions. Others study the negotiation processes involved in classroom interaction etc. Differences in approaches to defining language teaching and learning have been linked throughout the past with the current linguistic theories of the time (Celce Murcia 2001:3-
The traditional field of structural linguistics emphasised the importance of linguistic structures and components, i.e., the systems of phonology, morphology, syntax and vocabulary. Traditional language teaching has also focused on the learning of these components. Competence was judged by how well the students knew the correct forms of the verb tenses, for instance. The fields of functional linguistics and sociolinguistics, on the other hand, have focused on how language is used for communication in human interaction and in social contexts.

The transformational-generative view of Chomsky (1973:29-35) first made the distinction between competence and performance; linguistic competence stresses the internal, mentalist and cognitive aspects of how language is learned. Chomsky argued that all language learners have a natural language device which facilitates grammatical acquisition in a first language without much external influence from adults or teachers. Competence, according to Chomskyan linguists, is essentially about ‘idealised grammatical knowledge’ (Lightbown & Spada 1999: 21, 51-52) and refers to native speakers’ intuitions about their native language structures. In this view, language performance is a concept separate from innate knowledge and production is considered to be unreliable and potentially full of non-representative errors (see Savignon 1983:11). Second language learning researchers, however, are less convinced of the Chomskyan internal explanation. The fact that language learners rarely reach native language competence in the second language and that there is such variability in the levels of competence achieved by second language learners challenges a Chomskyan view for second language development. (Abrahamsson 2009:171-252; Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005:6-7).

It is, however, the linguist and anthropologist Dell Hymes whose definition of communicative competence is most influential in current views on second language learning. He is often quoted as having coined the original term communicative competence as the concept emerged through his research field in Ethnography and Communication (see Savignon 1983:11-15). Anthropological research on language and communication looks at language competence from a social and interactive discourse perspective in order to establish how language, as a means for communication, takes place as a negotiation between people. Another important perspective comes from M.A.K. Halliday’s Systemic Linguistics, where language acquisition is seen as a system for expressing meaning in a particular authentic situation. According to Halliday’s view, “Learning language is learning how to mean” (quote from Saville-Troike 2006:53).
2.2 Definitions of Competence and Performance in SLA Studies

According to Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005:6), a main goal of SLA theory is to explain implicit knowledge. Within this framework, linguistic competence could be summarised as the “underlying systems of linguistic knowledge” or as “implicit knowledge” (Ellis and Barkhuizen 2005:5). Moreover, SLA research is also concerned with how language is understood and produced by learners; in fact, learner performance (e.g. listening or reading comprehension or written and spoken production) in a particular situation is seen as real evidence of a learner’s underlying linguistic competence at a particular point in time (Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005:21).

Savignon (1983:9) suggests that “Competence is defined as a presumed underlying ability, and performance as the overt manifestation of that ability. Competence is what one knows. Performance is what one does”. Furthermore, she notes that “Only performance is observable, however, and it is only through performance that competence can be developed, maintained, and evaluated” (Savignon 1983:9). She identifies the following defining characteristics of communicative competence (summarised from Savignon 1983:8-9):

1. A dynamic context specific process dependent on the negotiation of meaning between people.
2. Applicable to symbolic systems such as written and spoken language and in a variety of situations
3. Degrees of communicative competence depend on how well participants cooperate.
4. Success is dependent on prior knowledge and how well one understands and adjusts to the context, genre, purpose and other participants.

A central aspect of communicative competence is that what is said or written is comprehensible for other speakers of English. According to Savignon (1983:4), communicating is essentially about “getting our message across” in a comprehensible manner and as such:

...the success of a particular communication strategy depends on the willingness of others to understand and on the interpretation they give to our meaning...We learn, then, that meaning is never one-sided. Rather, it is negotiated between the persons involved (1983:4).

Linguists who take a sociolinguistic and functional approach to language learning and teaching are concerned with how language is acquired, expressed and developed as a response to human interactive and communicative needs. They tend not to make a clear separation between competence and performance (Saville-Troike 2006:53). Hymes, in fact, fully integrated performance within competence, in the sense that competence includes the ability to use the language (Savignon 1983:13). This is also the approach taken in this thesis.

Saville-Troike (2006:100) takes an all-encompassing sociocultural and pragmatic perspective incorporating a multilayered definition on communicative competence: “what a speaker needs to know to communicate appropriately within a particular language community”. Her definition
contains strategic and creative uses of linguistic knowledge (semantic, lexical, phonological, morphological and syntactical structures, patterns and rules) in meaningful, pragmatic and socioculturally appropriate manners for the purpose of achieving specific context dependent tasks and goals. Language competence is therefore essentially about the functions of language; what learners are able to do with their language knowledge rather than how they say something (i.e. focus on form):

Study of SLA begins with the assumption that the purpose of language is communication, and that development of linguistic knowledge (in L1 or L2) requires communicative use. Study of concern goes beyond the sentence to include discourse structure and how language is used in interaction and communication beyond language (Saville-Troike 2006:53).

Lightbown & Spada (1999: 172) take a similar view on communicative competence:

The ability to use language in a variety of settings, taking into account relationships between speakers and differences in situations. The term has sometimes been interpreted as the ability to convey messages in spite of lack of grammatical accuracy.

2.3 Explaining the Development of Competence and Performance
To understand the variability involved in developing communicative competence and performance, researchers in second language studies are interested in explaining both the systematic and universal aspects of second language development, i.e., the similar and predictable stages that ‘all’ L2 learners go through, as well as explaining why there is such variability in the outcomes of L2 competence and performance (Ellis 1997:20-30).

2.3.1 Universal Aspects of L2 Development
In SLA theory, the underlying language system is referred to as a learner’s interlanguage, i.e. the dynamic knowledge of the L2 as it develops towards more native-like target language competence (Ellis 1997:31-35). The interlanguage can, alternatively, be described as representing the competence a learner has acquired at a given time. According to the information processing theory, learners need plenty of opportunities to use their interlanguage knowledge; practice develops automaticity, restructures knowledge and encourages learner progress (Lightbown & Spada 1999: 41-42). Regular input, awareness of how the language is used and purposeful language production, i.e. talking, interacting and writing are considered essential components for language progress. The interlanguage has been found to have characteristics of both the first and second language, and this knowledge is continually revised as learners interact, receive more input, produce and practice their hypotheses about the target language (Ellis 1997: 31-35; Lightbown & Spada 1999:31-48).
Some aspects of second language development are believed to be independent of a learner’s language background and to have certain systematic language development characteristics of early L1 development in children (Abrahamsson 2009:53-81; Ellis 1997:20-21; Tornberg 1997:63-64). This would suggest the presence of an innate capacity and system for language acquisition also for second language learners. Furthermore, research has also shown that the specific language rules and structures of the L2 are acquired in certain predictable and systematic orders, in particular, the acquisition order of morphological and syntactic structures. However, the rate at which this takes place has been found to vary substantially between L2 learners. L2 competence, then, is acquired in systematic stages of development but with highly variable outcomes. (Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005:54-55; Saville-Troike 2006:19-20).

2.3.2 Variable Aspects of L2 Development
Success in developing communicative ability in a second language has been found to be highly idiosyncratic depending on a number of contributing factors, for instance, influences from the L2 learners’ linguistic, sociocultural or educational background as well as differences in individual motivation, attitude, capacity, age and cognitive maturity (see Abrahamsson 2009:197-252; Ellis 1997:73-78; Lightbown & Spada 1999: 49-68; Hyltenstam & Abrahamson 2003: 539-580; Saville-Troike 2006:177-178). Lightbown & Spada (1999: 49-68) identify the following factors contributing to “the good language learner”: aptitude, personality, motivation, attitudes, learner strategies and beliefs, intelligence and age.

Similarities between linguistic structures and cultural language conventions are further factors that can contribute to speeding up the learning process. A learner’s prior linguistic knowledge, such as competent writing skills already acquired in the L1, can contribute to success in the development of L2 written communicative competence, particularly if there are similarities in language conventions (Myles 2002:1-26). However, similarities between languages may at times inhibit progress, for instance by the incorrect transfer of vocabulary and structures from the L1 language to the L2 (Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005:65). Saville-Troike (2006:54) concludes that “second language acquisition is largely a matter of learning new linguistic forms to fulfil the same functions (as already acquired and used in L1) within a different social milieu”. As learners acquire new L2 language structures to replace their old structures, which may at times involve the use of L1 features, they are given new options to express the same function.

2.4 Cross-linguistic Influence on L2 Competence and Performance
Second language learners are able to draw knowledge from different sources, including their own native language, to use and develop their own mental version of the target language.
(Abrahamsson 2009:60; Ellis 1997:51-62). As second language learners have already, to various extents, acquired linguistic, personal, cultural and pragmatic knowledge in their native language, they consciously and unconsciously access their L1 knowledge as a resource in the second language learning process (Ellis 1997:5). Cook (2002:10) proposes the term multi-competence to represent second language use from the more positive perspective of having “the knowledge of more than one language in the same mind”. In his view, second language users should be regarded as first and foremost multilingual rather than be described with the more derogative and comparative term non-native speakers.

Language transfer, or cross-linguistic influence, refers to the process of transferring prior L1 knowledge into the L2, and is a significant component of second language production and development (Cook 2002:18-19; Odlin 1989:1-25 and Odlin 2003:436-486). L2 production can have specific linguistic and cultural influences from a learner’s first language in the form of transfer or borrowing. Transfer refers to the process of incorporating L1 features into the L2 interlanguage system while borrowing is a temporary, strategic use of an L1 term in an L2 context (Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005:65). Cross-linguistic influence is also found in all levels of language; for instance, it is found in phonology, orthography, morphology, syntax or discourse (Odlin 2003:437). Furthermore, L2 production can also be influenced by lexical, semantic and pragmatic L1 knowledge. Language transfer therefore has the potential either to interfere with or contribute to language learning, communication and comprehensibility to various degrees.

Positive transfers occur when L1 knowledge is applied correctly and acquiring new rules or structures are not required; i.e. when there are similar parameters between L1 and L2 structures or rules. Positive transfer can, therefore, be beneficial for the second language acquisition process. Negative transfer, sometimes also referred to as interference, on the other hand, occurs as the result of inappropriate L2 use (Odlin 2003:438), i.e. the production of errors or unusual constructions which may potentially interfere with communication in a particular situation. Incorrect transfers of L1 words, structures or rules are caused by perceptions of basic similarities between the L1 and L2 (Ellis 1997:51-54).

Saville-Troike (2006:17-21) suggests that transfer is less common in the initial learning stage of L2 acquisition; however, as learners develop into more intermediate levels, they start to make more frequent and creative use of their prior language knowledge. Transfer is therefore prevalent particularly in the intermediate stages of second language development but can also appear in near-native like advanced learner production, for instance, the presence of a ‘foreign accent’ or the use of divergent grammatical or lexical choices or sentence constructions in particular
situations. Foreign accents are one of the most noticeable forms of cross-linguistic influence and can also be the hardest type of L1 ‘evidence’ to get rid of (Saville-Troike 2006:19). However, a foreign accent or an L1 vocabulary choice can also be seen as vital components of a learner’s linguistic and cultural identity. As Cook (2002:5-7) highlights, native competence may not necessarily have to be a goal for competent language use. Cook argues against using comparative standards of the monolingual speakers of English as a measurement for competent use. He prefers to think of non-native speakers as competent multilingual L2 users rather than as ‘failed’ L2 learners.

2.4.1 Limits on Language Transfers
Some language features are less likely to be transferred than others and some features are also harder to learn, as research within the field of functional typology has uncovered (Saville-Troike 2006:55-56). Markedness is a concept within this field of study which relates to how frequent or complex a language feature is. According to the Markedness Differential Hypothesis (Abrahamsson 2009:140) a marked feature is more complex and mainly used in specific contexts; it is therefore harder to learn. Unmarked features, on the other hand, refer to more basic and frequently used features which are easier to learn. Unmarked features are more likely to transfer into the L2 because of their more basic qualities, while marked features are not transferred. Similarly, Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005:65) suggests that transfer occurs because a certain form or rule in the L1 is perceived as “prototypical” (‘basic’ or ‘natural’), particularly when there is linguistic closeness between the L1 and the target language. In other words, speakers of L2 related languages may occasionally perceive or predict that certain similarities between L1 and L2 forms are shared and that a rule, structure, word or expression, therefore, can be applied successfully in the L2. This cognitive ability is beneficial for second language learning in cases where similarities between languages result in positive transfer, but can result in negative transfer errors when predictions are incorrect.

2.4.2 Transfers between Swedish and English
Whether cross-linguistic influence results in disturbing errors or successful communication it is a significant contributor to explaining variability in language development and learner production. Swedish and English are closely related Germanic languages with many similarities, and English is therefore considered to be relatively easy for Swedish people to learn (Hyltenstam 2004:54). Odlin (2003:441) points to studies which have shown that positive transfer can be very influential in the transfer of the prepositional system from Swedish to English. However, while strong similarities can facilitate the learning process, they can also potentially increase instances of the negative transfer of prior knowledge (Odlin, 2003:443; Tornberg 1997:63-65). Transfer errors of
prepositions are in fact one of the most frequent transfer errors that Swedish learners make (Köhlmyr 2001:209). Abrahamsson (2009:242) argues that the close lexical relationship between English and Swedish also increases the likelihood of incorrect transfers of Swedish lexical items into English (Abrahamsson 2009:242). By the same token, he also suggests that lexical transfer between Swedish and Japanese would be very unlikely to occur because there are very few similarities between Swedish and Japanese words.

Some Swedish transfer errors are particularly noticeable and are in popular terms described as Swenglish (Skolverket 2003:58-60). Swenglish is often the subject of humour in the media or movies and usually refers to inappropriate and obvious translations of spelling, words, phrases or expressions that can result in funny, embarrassing, irritating or confusing situations (see Olofsson 1998). Incorrectly transferred Swedish vocabulary can lead to major communication breakdown because of the difficulties for non-Swedish speakers to understand the intended message (Skolverket 2003:58-60). False friends, for example, are lexical translations of words which look and sound similar in both languages but which can have substantially different meanings (Davidsen-Nielsen & Harder 1987: 27-29; Saville-Troike 2006:36). For instance, the word fabrik in Swedish does not mean fabric used for sewing material – it is the word for factory. False friends, in particular, can cause problems because words that appear similar phonologically and/or orthographically in both languages are easily transferred. Because of the proximity between the language forms, learners may make the assumption that the meaning of a word is also shared. There is also substantial evidence of phonological, spelling and grammatical transfers occurring inappropriately between Swedish and English (Davidsen-Nielsen & Harder 1987: 27-29; Köhlmyr 2001:209).

3.0 THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH TO SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

The learning environment is of course another significant contributor to the development of communicative competence. Learning outcomes are particularly dependent on the type of support and access to linguistic input and output that the learner is exposed to (Ellis 1997:37-50; 79-87; Gibbons 2002: 1-13; Lightbown & Spada 1999:117-159). This chapter looks at teaching approaches which support second language learners in the development of communicative competence, for instance, in written performance. Communicative Language Teaching aims to integrate traditional language skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking for pragmatic, interactive, academic and social purposes in different contexts. From a CLT perspective, communicative competence involves the development of learners’ ability to communicate with
others in comprehensible, meaningful and functional ways in a multitude of situations (Savignon 2001:15-18).

### 3.1 CLT – Theoretical Background

Communicative Language Teaching has become one of the most influential and comprehensive approaches to modern language teaching and has incorporated a range of views on second language teaching and learning. The focus is on how language is used for communicative purposes and has developed from functional perspectives of language as “primarily a system of communication rather than as a set of rules” (Saville-Troike 2006:52). Lighbown and Spada (1999:172) provide the following definition of CLT:

> CLT is based on the premise that successful language teaching involves not only a knowledge of the structures and forms of a language, but also the functions and purposes that a language serves in different communicative settings. This approach to teaching emphasizes the communicative meaning over the practice and manipulation of grammatical forms.

CLT initially evolved as a clear reaction against traditional grammar-translation methods as well as structural innatist and behaviourist approaches to language acquisition (Savignon 2001:3-9; Thornbury 1999:21-23). For instance, traditional teaching methodology has consisted mostly of systematic and decontextualised grammatical and imitative vocabulary drills. Second language research which saw learning as active, interactive and communicative contributed to the developments of CLT in the 1970s and has gradually provided a move away from perspectives of language acquisition as mostly passive, receptive or innate processes. The field of CLT draws from a vast range of disciplines in linguistics, anthropology, psychology and social science and also responds to the demands learner needs, of educational institutions and society as a whole (Nunan 2001:55-65; Savignon 2001:13-17). It particularly draws on sociolinguist and interactionist perspectives which see language learning as a consequence of social interaction between people.

### 3.2 Scaffolding in Second Language Teaching

According to Vygotsky, all learning takes place through interaction and collaboration with others within the zone of proximal development, that is, teachers need to take into account learners’ prior knowledge levels and build upon them towards higher levels (Tornberg 1997:13; Gibbons 2002:7-8; Myles 2002:14). Language learners should therefore be taught and supported at a challenging, slightly higher level than their present level of competence in order to maximise the potential for learning to take place. In the views of Gibbons (2002:1-13 and Gibbons 2008:155-173), it is essential that teachers provide second language learners with appropriate scaffolding to develop new skills; i.e. the right level of task-dependent and interactive support to ‘raise’ learners
towards higher levels. For instance, to succeed with a particular writing task, learners need to be aware of the subject-specific models, language structures and relevant vocabulary and concepts which relate to the subject, function, topic or genre that is being taught. That is, learners need to be given the right ‘language tools’ and sufficient feedback in a supportive environment to be able to talk and write about a specific task or topic, and to develop the ability to analyse, evaluate and acquire the linguistic and subject-related knowledge to perform the task independently later on (Gibbons 2002: 14-15 and Gibbons 2008: 169-171; Myles 2002: 10-14). It is through language as a tool that learners share, analyse, categorise and acquire knowledge about their world and through this process learners also continue to develop their language skills. Furthermore, even if students have ideas and knowledge about something, without being supported and taught appropriate language structures and vocabulary to express what they mean, students may not be able to communicate these ideas in comprehensible and appropriate manners in writing (Myles, 2002:11).

3.3 Teaching Vocabulary and Grammar
Saville-Troike (2006:135-138) emphasizes teaching vocabulary and developing a student’s lexical knowledge as the most important component in developing communicative competence in second language learning. She argues that learning high-frequency words, such as function words, and subject related vocabulary are vital components for academic success. According to Cook (2008:109) the lack of sufficient L2 vocabulary is a crucial factor in learners’ use of compensatory strategies to make up for words they do not know, e.g. word substitutions, circumlocution and translation of L1 words in order to get their meaning across. There is also some evidence of the importance of vocabulary as the most elementary language component for L2 learners to acquire. Pienemann’s Processability Theory (Pienemann 2005) offers an acquisition hierarchy theory to explain the order that cognitively mature L2 learners are able to acquire language. According to the proposal developed by Pienemann and Håkansson (Håkansson 2004:154-159; Pienemann 2005:1-19), second language learners acquire (the ability to process) language in the following order:

1) vocabulary, (words/lemma)  
2) lexical categories  
3) agreement within phrases  
4) word order and agreement between phrases (e.g. subject and verb agreement)  
5) agreement between clauses.

This would perhaps suggest that second language teaching should primarily focus on developing language competence in a particular order and on learning one level at a time until achieved. However, teaching language in such a way would not be functional for communicative purposes.
Furthermore, learners can benefit from more advanced instruction than at the particular level they are at; a scaffolding approach to language teaching can speed up the process to help students move on to the next level. There is also evidence to suggest that learners are able to practice and memorize “chunks of language” or lexical items as holistic formulae, and store these away for later use and processing of rules (Nunan 201:57; Thornbury 2002:109).

Important contributions to the field of CLT should also be credited to the work of cognitive linguist and second language researcher Stephen Krashen in the 1970s. Krashen was concerned with meaningful input of language through ‘natural’ interaction at the right level (‘current level plus one’) for language acquisition to take place (Krashen 1981: 126-127). However, Krashen’s theories have also been criticised on a number of perspectives; for instance, his view that explicit grammar instruction was unnecessary because grammatical rules could only be acquired by learners through natural (implicit) input (Krashen 1981:1-2). Nevertheless, his views, and the criticisms of it, have had a substantial impact on SLA research and further development of communicative teaching methods all over the world. While Krashen was mainly concerned with input, other SLA research also argues for the importance of learner output. As Larsen-Freeman (2001:257) notes, students also need opportunities to produce language because it is through production that learners are also able to test a hypothesis about the form, function and meaning of a particular structure. Furthermore, timely and appropriate feedback - confirmation or correction - of a hypothesis can lead to acceptance or modification of knowledge – i.e. feedback on output becomes useful input for acquisition (Ellis 2006:98-100).

The communicative approach has at times been criticised for failing to pay explicit attention to language structures and grammatical rules; however, more recent studies have drawn attention back to form for communicative purposes. According to Ellis (2006: 87-90) and Larsen-Freeman (2001:251-282) a modern CLT framework needs to be defined as an integration of form (structure), function/use (pragmatics) and meaning (semantics). Ellis (2006:86;90) and Thornbury (1999: 23-24) also argue that explicit and consciousness-raising grammar teaching and feed-back at the right level and in the right situation are essential components for progress, particularly in the communicative development of more advanced learners. Savignon (2001:17-19) proposes four essential components for the development of learners’ communicative ability: sociocultural, strategic, discourse and grammatical competence. Moreover, she suggests that:

the development of communicative ability research findings overwhelmingly support the integration of form-focused exercises with meaning-focused experience. Grammar is important, and learners seem to focus best on grammar when it relates to their communicative needs and experiences (Savignon 2001:25).
3.4 An Integrated Approach to L2 Language Teaching and Learning
The discussion above has showed that in order to maximise the learning potential in the L2 communicative classroom, learners need access to a rich variety of input and output, activities and techniques which integrate all kinds of language skills and uses of the learner language. Definitions of communicative competence and CLT have evolved over the years towards an integrated approach where form, function and meaning are now described as necessary components of language development and successful communication (see Celce-Murcia 2001: 3-9; Ellis 2006: 85-102; Larsen-Freeman 2001: 251-266; Savignon 2001:13-14, Saville-Troike 2006:100). In a communicative approach teachers must also be able to identify and differences in learner styles and strategies to address the variability in learner outcomes. Oxford (2001:360-362) defines learner strategies as the different choices of techniques, behaviours or steps a learner uses in a particular context to achieve their task. Learners can employ a vast range of different (conscious or unconscious) practical and cognitive strategies, which, as discussed, includes the use of L1 and other prior knowledge to achieve communicative needs such as expressing ideas in speech and writing, completing tasks and interacting with others.

3.5 Communicative Ability in the Swedish Curriculum
Developing communicative competence has been one of the primary goals of the Swedish national language teaching curricula in Sweden over recent decades. However, the definition of the term has evolved over time also in Sweden (Tornberg 2000:18-43). The communicative goals of language teaching have been extended to include the interrelated skills of intercultural and democratic competence to prepare students for academic studies, work opportunities, sociocultural participation and understanding of other cultural systems in a global world. While the national language teaching curricula (Skolverket Lgr11 2011(b):32) proclaim that the main purpose and goal for teaching English is “to develop all-round communicative skills”, there is no prescribed method for how this is to be achieved. Teachers, therefore, are expected to have well-developed ideas and approaches to second language teaching and learning processes. The development of traditional language skills, such as reading, writing, listening and speaking, are still central in the current language learning curricula but students must also be able to demonstrate the ability (Swedish: förmåga) to use their language skills strategically in collaboration and interaction with others (Skolverket Lgr11. 2011(a):30-33; Skolverket 2011(b): 32; Skolverket GY11. 2011(c):54). Comprehension and interpretation are emphasised aspects of receptive skills as is the ability to adapt productive skills to express content, ideas, thoughts and opinions to suit the purpose, context and message receiver in a suitable manner. Furthermore, vocabulary, grammatical and discourse knowledge are seen as integral parts of linguistic and communicative
knowledge (Skolverket Lgr11. 2011(a):33). The English language teaching curricula also broadly outline the communicative content to be integrated into the development of communicative ability. The content that teachers select for their students should include, for instance, the incorporation of relevant, current or historic topics and themes of special interest, including genres of literature, music and movies. Moreover, it should also allow students to take part in, comment on and express thoughts, feelings and opinions about certain issues, such as aspects of politics, culture and society, traditions and daily living conditions. The goals of communicative ability in the curricula (Skolverket Lgr11. 2011(b):32; Skolverket GY11. 2011(c):55) are essentially compatible with the goals of developing communicative competence in SLA and CLT theory in the sense that communicative ability refers to function, form and meaning; i.e. what learners should be able to do with their knowledge and how well they are able to use it to communicate and get a message across in different contexts. The term ability, therefore, is used synonymously with the term competence in this paper. The definition of communicative ability essentially consists of five broad communicative learning goals which describe what all students should be able to do with their language. These goals are the same for all age groups and for both compulsory school students and senior high school students, and include the ability to: (English translation from Skolverket Lgr11. 2011(b):32)

- understand and interpret the content of spoken English and in different types of texts,
- express themselves and communicate in speech and writing,
- use language strategies to understand and make themselves understood,
- adapt language for different purposes, recipients and contexts, and
- reflect over living conditions, social and cultural phenomena in different contexts and parts of the world where English is used.

The criteria for assessing students’ knowledge and communicative ability in English essentially match the learning goals of the curriculum (Skolverket Lgr11. 2011(a):34-41). The grading system uses a progressive and qualitative ‘scale’ to measure degrees of how well the student is able to do something; i.e., the student’s ability to interpret and express deeper knowledge, understanding, interpretation, variability and adaptability to situation, genre and context. For instance, the requirements for the basic grade (E) for year nine students state that students “can express themselves simply, understandably and relatively coherently” in written production (Skolverket Lgr11. 2011(b):37). For the highest mark (A), the degree of ability for the same purpose is means that students can express themselves in “relatively varied ways, clearly and coherently” (Skolverket Lgr11. 2011(b):38)) The highly qualitative nature of the curricular statements on ability given above allow, to some extent, subjective interpretation of what syllabus content and
method should contain and, furthermore, how students’ communicative performance should be assessed.

4.0 ANALYSING AND EVALUATING COMMUNICATIVE PERFORMANCE

What an L2 learner has “come to know” (Saville-Troike 2006:174) is a central question when analysing, explaining and evaluating learner language. Learner production can be analysed as evidence of a learner’s communicative ability at a particular point in time and place, and should as such be measured in terms of how successfully this knowledge has been applied. As Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005:21) argue: “Ultimately, what learners know is best reflected in their comprehension of input and in the language they produce”. Moreover, they suggest that:

...the primary data for investigating L2 acquisition should be samples of learner language. While we acknowledge the theoretical distinction between ‘competence’ and ‘performance’ and that the goal of SLA is to describe and explain L2 competence (either narrowly or broadly defined), we maintain that competence can only be examined by investigating some kind of performance...

(Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005:21)

This evidence could, for example, consist of recorded spoken language (conversational) or written production; e.g. student essays or an L2 language corpus. Evaluating performance as evidence of the ability to get a message across in a functional, appropriate and meaningful manner can be a challenging but important task from a multi-layered linguistic and communicative perspective. Furthermore, there are several approaches to analysing and evaluating language performance (see Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005). In particular, the traditional structural approaches have focused mainly on what learners are getting wrong, while more recent communicative performance-based views are more concerned with what learners are getting right (Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005:51-54).

The general principles and recommendations of the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket 2001:6) suggest that the purpose of assessing a student’s ability should first and foremost be to look at what students actually know rather than what they are getting wrong. Moreover, assessing communicative ability should be based on how well the students use their language for communication in terms of comprehensibility and clarity, as well as in terms of context, structure and accuracy, linguistic complexity and variation. This includes the ability to use different strategies in order to express thoughts and opinions. Furthermore, problem areas should not be neglected; production must be analysed in terms of what issues or errors are
disturbing the communication in a particular situation and on what can be improved. In addition, an important part of the evaluation process is also to look at what kind of support and feedback the students need for further development.

4.1 Error Analysis – Describing and Explaining Errors in L2 Production

According to Ellis (1997:139) errors represent “deviations in usage which result from gaps in learners’ knowledge of the target language” and are an inherent feature of interlanguage development and learner production (Ellis and Barkhuizen 2005:51-71). Analysing learner errors can therefore provide important insight into learners’ communicative competence and can be used to assess how seriously deviations from the target language affect comprehension and meaning. Universal processing errors (intralingual errors) refer to developmental errors which are shared by all learners and are, for instance, the result of overgeneralisation, simplification or avoidance of certain rules and structures. Negative transfer errors (interlingual errors) are generally unique to learners from one particular language background, or are sometimes shared by learners who speak languages with similar linguistic properties (Ellis and Barkhuizen 2005:65; Odlin 1989:1-4). Transfer and universal development errors occasionally interact which can result in confusing constructions that are difficult to interpret and categorise, especially if the meaning of a sentence is unclear or incomprehensible. Ellis (1997:17) also makes a distinction between errors and mistakes. He defines mistakes as temporary ‘slips’ caused by a learner’s lapse in concentration while errors occur because the learner has not yet acquired enough knowledge to use a grammatical structure or lexical item correctly.

Error Analysis has been a much discussed analytical approach concerned with how second language production deviates from native language construction. Error analysis involves a “set of procedures for identifying, describing and explaining learner errors” and was originally a prescriptive method “directed at showing what linguistic forms not to use and which ones to use” (Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005:51). Critics have suggested that error analysis is an approach which emphasises developmental aspects of learner language as problematic rather than looking at a learner language as a developing and creatively used language in its own right (Bergman & Abrahamsson 2004:606-607; Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005:51-53). However, errors also provide important evidence of language development in progress and can illustrate how learners test their own hypothesis of target language structures (Saville-Troike 2006:38-39). Despite the negative connotation, error analysis can be a useful and fairly straightforward method for teachers to investigate the types of errors their students actually make and which ones they do not make. Teachers can then use the information for feedback, classroom discussion and to design and
choose relevant learning material which targets important development areas. Ellis (1997:15) also points out that if learners are aware of their own errors they can learn by self-correction.

### 4.2 Performance Analysis

From a communicative perspective, incorrect language use needs to be evaluated in terms of how it interferes with overall communication; comprehension, intelligibility and social acceptability (Saville-Troike 2006:40). Errors must be examined in relation to the context; the surrounding structures and content may provide the desired meaning, despite an ungrammatical or lexical choice. It may also be necessary to assess whether a divergent construction is socially inappropriate; i.e. does it have the potential to become a source of unintentional humour, cause embarrassment or is it just confusing or irritating in relation to the particular context?

Bergman & Abrahamsson (2004: 606-625) propose Performance Analysis (Swedish: Performansanalys) as a useful holistic qualitative approach to explain and assess learner language from an integrated view of communicative competence. A performance based evaluation instrument needs to look at what learners actually do with their language; what they do right and what they do wrong. The ability to express the content message of the communication is assessed in relation to linguistic ability, i.e. the vocabulary, grammatical and discourse structures that are used, or not used, to express thoughts, views and ideas in written or spoken communication. Furthermore, it also looks at the kinds of risks learners take and what strategies they use (Bergman & Abrahamsson 2004:622). Analysing a learner’s overall communicative performance involves taking into account the context and content of the text, topic and genre. For instance, the overall evaluation of a written essay might focus on how well the writer is able to express and organise their thoughts and ideas in a comprehensible and linguistically and socially appropriate manner. Although time consuming, the approach is useful both to evaluate second language development and to assess and grade students’ communicative ability according to the requirements of the Swedish national curriculum (Bergman & Abrahamsson (2004:621)).

### 5.0 GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS: THE ULEC STUDY

#### 5.1 Introduction

The primary source of data used in this paper is the Uppsala Learner English Corpus (ULEC). The ULEC database consists of short essays (approximately 200-250 words each) written by

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Swedish junior and senior high school students aged between 14 and 19 years old (Johansson & Geisler 2009:181). The genre of the essays included in this study are of descriptive character with titles such as My life in ten years, What I would do with ten million crowns, My dream vacation, My dream job etc. Students write about their dreams and plans for the future or about something they have experienced in the past.

The study examines the written English of Swedish high school students in order to evaluate how language transfer affects the students’ ability to communicate in writing. The findings will be examined in the context of current views on the evaluation of communicative competence and performance, as defined in the literature on communicative language teaching and Second Language Acquisition, e.g. Ellis & Barkhuizen 2006 and Saville-Troike 2006. More specifically, an error analysis will initially be used to investigate potential transfer errors in the data and, furthermore, a performance analysis influenced evaluation instrument will be used to assess how such errors affect learners’ ability to get their message across in a functional, meaningful and appropriate manner.

The ULEC database can be used to compare different types of learners (e.g. by age, gender or type of academic programme). It also provides researchers with valuable evidence of Swedish high school students’ ability to communicate in writing and can be used to assess learners’ communicative competence development over time. Teachers can also use this kind of research to focus on needs-based and contextualised writing, grammar and vocabulary development in their classrooms (see Johansson and Geisler 2009:181-185). According to Johansson and Geisler (2009:183-184), the most common errors in the ULEC data are found in the use of verb forms (subject-verb agreement or tense), as well as the use of prepositions, articles, genitive, plural forms and also spelling and punctuation errors. Students also occasionally “write as they speak” (2009:186).

5.2 Key Questions of the Study
The study of the ULEC data will mainly investigate to what extent different types of deviating language constructions and transfer errors interfere with intelligibility and social acceptability of the communication. It will also deal with some L1 strategies that learners use in order to get their message across. Furthermore, it will focus on implications for teachers in regards to how transfer errors affect learners’ communicative performance and where targeted teaching relating to transfer may be beneficial for further development. The evaluation of the data and the examples included below may also involve taking into account the overall content, linguistic complexity, strategies and levels of risk-taking. To summarise; the key questions to be investigated are:
1. What transfer errors can be found in the written English of Swedish high school students in a sample taken from the ULEC database and how can the errors be categorised and described?
2. What is the potential of the transfer errors to facilitate or interfere in the communicative purpose of the written English in terms of 'getting the message across’?
3. What should teachers be aware of when evaluating students’ communicative competence in written performance and how can the results from study be used to develop students’ communicative ability?

5.3 Methodology

5.3.1 Data Selection
The sample included in this study consists of approximately 150 essays from the ULEC database. The examples in this study are included to illustrate how transfer errors affect learners’ communicative ability and performance. The analytical discussion also includes examples and some conclusions from a previous transfer error analysis study (Gabrielson 2010). The aim of the previous study was to investigate and categorise the extent of transfer errors in the ULEC database as well as to look at how the meaning was affected by these errors. To include a broad range of examples and contexts where transfer may occur, essays were randomly selected in order to get a sample which included both boys and girls, a range of ages, different educational programs and essay topics. The sample in this study includes the work of boys and girls between the ages of 13-18 enrolled in both academic and vocational programs. Most students of this age group can be considered to be intermediate learners where transfer may be expected to occur more frequently than for older and more advanced learners. Students of this age are also expected to practise and be able to write shorter essays and texts in English as part of the school curriculum. The sample can be divided into the following groups:

**JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL** (Total No of students: 17)
- Girls 13-14 yrs: 10 students
- Boys 13-14 yrs: 7 students

**SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL** (Total No. of students: 137)

**Academic Program** (Total No of students: 72)
- Girls 15-16 yrs: 19 students
- Boys: 15-16 yrs: 35 students
- Girls: 17-18 yrs: 9 students
- Boys: 17-18 yrs: 18 students

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Vocational Programme: (Total no of students: 65)

- Girls: 15-16 yrs: 15 students
- Boys: 15-16 yrs: 28 students
- Girls: 17-18 yrs: 2 students
- Boys 17-18 yrs: 21 Students

5.3.2 Ethical Concerns
The material used in this paper comes from the ULEC database, a learner corpus in which ethical concerns already have been incorporated into the process of collecting and handling of the data. The corpus data is anonymous and each text is coded and marked only with date, type of programme, school year, genre/register as well as the age and gender of the student (Johansson and Geisler 2009). No names of people or names of schools and places which could potentially identify students or teachers are included in the data or in this study.

5.3.3 Methodology: The Analytic Process and Error Evaluation
The initial step of the analytical method used in this study is based on error analysis (Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005:51-71; Ellis 1997:15-19), with the aim to identify, describe and explain potential transfer errors in the ULEC data sample. Error analysis can be used to identify similarities and differences between learner and native language constructions; it can also be used to categorise and explain sources of error. Potential transfer errors are the target of this study and therefore universal (intralingual) development errors, i.e. which are shared by learners of English with different language backgrounds (Ellis and Barkhuizen 2005:65) will not be included. For example, unless transfer can be regarded as the obvious cause, most spelling and punctuation errors will be excluded, as will most common intralingual grammatical errors such as choice of verb tense, subject-verb agreement, or the genitive construction. The reason is that errors relating to verb tense and verb agreement can be difficult to categorise as the result of transfer. An incorrect verb tense construction like *he climb up instead of he climbed up would generally be considered a universal error based on simplification or overgeneralisation of L2 rules, where transfer is not involved.

Further details on how the errors analysis is performed and how the errors are categorised are also discussed in the data analysis section. Secondly, an additional cross-linguistic method to test possible L1 influence in an L2 text will be used as suggested by Altenberg (2002:43). A suspected transfer error, i.e. a word, clause or a unit of meaning that looks like a literal translation can be
‘translated back’ into Swedish to confirm that it matches a Swedish construction. The process of investigating cross-linguistic influence, therefore, requires thorough knowledge of both the L1 and the L2, and furthermore, a certain degree of ‘language intuition’ in both languages.

A second step is to examine how these transfers errors interfere with comprehensibility and furthermore how the overall communicative performance is affected. In other words, can the message in the text be understood by readers (native or other speakers of English) or is there potential for misunderstanding? To evaluate how serious deviant constructions and errors are in terms of overall comprehensibility and appropriateness, an integrated perspective on language competence is taken as defined in the literature, e.g. Ellis 2006; Saville-Troike 2006 and Savignon 2001. An adapted performance analysis-based evaluation instrument (see Bergman & Abrahamsson 2004:607-624) is included to bridge the gap between a more narrow error-category focused perspective and a broader communicative performance perspective to take into account the overall structure, context and content of what is being communicated. The qualitative evaluation instrument takes into account the following aspects:

1. Processing – can the deviant structure/error be understood in relation to the immediate context (i.e. clause, sentence or paragraph?)
2. To what extent is it interfering with the meaning of the overall purpose, structure, context and content of the essay?
3. To what extent is it appropriately adjusted (linguistically and socially) to the situation, topic, genre?
4. How clearly is the content (e.g. thoughts, ideas, values, conclusions) expressed when there are transfer errors?
5. What levels of risk-taking and what types of strategies are involved?

5.4 Reflections and Limitations of the Study
There are several limitations to investigating transfer errors and the effects of cross-linguistic influence on second language acquisition and production. It can at times be difficult to determine if an error is an interlingual or an intralingual error. Some errors are also difficult to distinguish because the unit of meaning consists of more than one type of error and, as already mentioned, determining the difference between errors and mistakes can be difficult (Ellis 1997:17). Köhlmryr (2001:189) points out that previous studies on transfer errors in the written production of L2 learners from various linguistic backgrounds have had varied results. The percentage of transfer errors out of all errors in these studies have ranged between 3%-70%. In a study of approximately 400 compositions Köhlmryr (2001:209) found that 40% of all errors came from negative transfer of structures from learners’ L1, i.e. Swedish. The variable results indicate that there can be major differences in the outcome of transfer error rates depending on the learner’s language background, age and individual proficiency level, as well as the fact that
researchers are not in agreement as to exactly what type of errors should be assigned to and
categorised as transfer errors. Furthermore, there can be issues relating to how transfer is defined,
e.g. avoidance and underrepresentation are occasionally considered to be transfer (Odlin 1989:36-37).
This study reflects the view that evaluating and assessing communicative competence and
performance is mostly an interpretative, negotiable and qualitative process. Furthermore, because
of the complexity involved in assessing transfer errors and communication from a multilayered
perspective, it is possible that a quantitative study may not provide reliable results.

There are also some limitations to the data as it is not known whether a particular student’s
knowledge of other languages influences the production. If possible, the ideal approach would
be to investigate how these errors compare with other learners of English to find out if they
make similar grammatical constructions or if a particular error appears to be unique to Swedish
learners. However, given the often unique or individual and creative nature of, for instance,
many multi-word lexical transfer errors, it may sometimes be difficult to find comparable data. It
may also therefore be useful to investigate what other types of errors the learner makes in the text
to see if there are any similar or specific patterns of systematic developmental errors.

Despite the complexity and problematic issues that may be involved in analysing transfer errors,
my hypothesis is that Swedish high school students exhibit in their written English essays a
number of different types of transfer errors and deviant language use which is evidenced by non-
native English constructions that can be shown to originate in Swedish. The attempt here is
therefore to identify, classify and evaluate obvious or potential cross-linguistic strategies and
errors found in the sample in terms of how they contribute to or inhibit written communication.
Native speakers were consulted to investigate the intelligibility of the examples to confirm
whether the message was clear, confusing or misunderstood by the reader.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION
The sample of data reported on here is a qualitative study designed first of all to examine how
Swedish high school students make use of their knowledge of Swedish when they write in
English. The overall purpose is to examine the extent to which these errors or language
strategies promote or inhibit written communication performance and whether or not they
represent a step in the learning process. As discussed in the theoretical background, errors are
context dependent from a communicative perspective; that is, they do not appear in isolation and
must be examined in terms of how they appear from an overall communicative perspective. The
transfer errors in this study are, therefore, classified into different types of overlapping categories and described from both structural perspectives as well as meaning-based perspectives in order to examine how they impact on the communicative purpose.

As already mentioned, many of the examples included in this study came from a previous ULEC study of transfer error categories (Gabrielson 2010). The examples are included here because they are also of particular interest for the purposes of this study which involves investigating cross-linguistic influence from Swedish to English from a communicative perspective. The analysis will also make references to Köhlmyr’s (2001) study of Swedish transfer errors in order to make some of the data comparable. However, Köhlmyr’s study involves a detailed quantitative analysis of all categories of errors (universal and transfer) found in 400 compositions written by 16-year-old students of English. There can be difficulties with comparing the data associated with age or individual proficiency as well as differences in defining and categorising transfer errors. Therefore, establishing reliable and comparable statistics to represent ‘a true’ picture of the frequency of transfer errors can be problematic. Nevertheless, describing the variety of language transfers that are found in written communicative performance is a beginning step towards understanding their use in learner English and can provide insight into students’ particular learning needs. Transfer errors can reveal where a learner is at in a ‘zone of proximal development’ and where teacher intervention – e.g. scaffolding, error correction or feedback – should be focussed. The summary and conclusions will therefore also include a discussion of the implications for teachers.

**6.1 Categorising and Describing Transfer Errors in the Data**

There are several different ways to categorise and describe errors relating to transfer. The identified transfer errors in this study were classified according to grammatical categories (e.g. prepositions and prepositional phrases, nouns and noun phrases etc.) and also defined in terms of grammatical or lexical transfer. The errors will also be examined in terms of single word (e.g. a noun or a verb) or multi-word errors (e.g. literal translation of phrases, idiomatic expressions or collocations). Error analysis is mainly a structural approach to analysing language and can be used for identifying the layers of the language in which transfer errors are frequent (Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005:54-71). Categorising transfer errors according to word class and related subcategories is a useful way to describe and evaluate different kinds of errors, and furthermore, to investigate their distribution and frequency. However, since the aim of this investigation is not a quantitative account of errors, the main focus will be on a qualitative explanation for transfer errors and how they impact on the communicative purpose.
In Köhlmyr’s study (2001:209-228) transfer errors are classified into word class categories (e.g. nouns, verbs, prepositions etc.). In addition, she describes the errors in terms of the ‘operational categories’, i.e. replacement (substitution), addition or omission (Köhlmyr 2001:205-207). Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005: 60-61) similarly suggest categorising errors according to a linguistic taxonomy of grammatical categories (e.g. verb, verb tense, nouns, articles etc.) as well as by a surface structure taxonomy which allows the errors to be explained according to how they differ from reconstructed target forms in terms of omission, addition, misinformation, misordering and blends. The following examples below from the ULEC sample illustrate how errors can be described in terms of surface structure taxonomy or operational categories:

**Substitution/ Replacement errors**

Substitution can describe examples of obvious errors in the data which involve replacing an L2 word or phrase with a native (not translated) L1 word (example (1)) or a translated L1 word such as a false friend (examples (2)-(4).

1. *When I look at “det okända” I think it’s funny...* (the unknown) *(Female, aged 15, academic programme)*
2. *He is good at many diferents moments* *(steps/stages/parts of the job)* *(Male, aged 16, vocational programme)*
3. *When our boat trip was finally over, we hired cyklops and searched after fisches...* *(goggles)* *(Sw. cyklop/cyklopögon)* *(Male, aged 16, vocational programme)*
4. *(then I go to lunch)...and it was hummer and beer today* *(lobster)* *(Sw. hummer)* *(Male, aged 16, vocational programme)*

These types of errors found in the ULEC sample can result in confusing interpretations which can seriously affect communication. In example (1) for instance, a non-Swedish speaker would not be able to understand the Swedish word “det okända” (English: the unknown). However, it is possible that the writer assumes that the reader is a Swedish speaker and therefore would be able understand the shared meaning of the concept. She therefore makes use of a temporary strategy; borrowing from the L1 (Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005:65), perhaps because she does not know what the equivalent English word is. The examples (1) - (4) of borrowing and the false friends are likely to be incomprehensible to non-Swedish speakers and can therefore be considered to be serious transfer errors as the intended messages do not come across.
Omission Errors

Omission errors occur when a word or a morpheme required to make the construction grammatical in the L2 is left out as in, for instance, omitting the –ed added to verbs in past tense regular verbs (e.g. as in *yesterday I walk to school) in English. This type of error is often described as a universal error caused by simplification (Ellis 1997:19). However, omission or avoidance (Ellis 1997:51) can also be described as caused by transfer if based on the assumption that there are structural similarities between the L1 and L2; e.g., leaving out an article or a preposition that is required in the L2 because it is not used in the L1. Leaving out the definite article ‘the’ in example (5) (marked as Ø) does not interfere with the meaning in this case; although, leaving out the article ‘a’ (example (6)) that is required to go with little to mean a little (a bit of some) could potentially change the meaning of we did a little bit of snorkelling if it is misinterpreted as we did little snorkelling (i.e. almost none) because of the jellyfish. Example (6) also contains a Swedish word as a borrowing substitution, maneter, which is the Swedish word for jellyfish.

(5) *When I came to Ø usa
(Sw: När jag kom till USA)
(Male, aged 16, vocational programme)

(6) *...we snorkelled Ø little but it was maneter in there
(Sw: Vi snorklade (Ø) lite men det var maneter där)
(Female, aged 14, year 7)

In example (7) the word thing appears to be left out from the English phrase the first thing I see. This type of transfer error is referred to by Köhlyr (2001:209) as an omission of a “prop word”:

(7) The first Ø I see is....
(The first thing I see is)
(Sw. Det första (Ø) jag ser är)
(Male, aged 16 vocational programme)

Addition Errors

Transfer errors can also result in the addition of a word or morpheme, for example, a preposition or an article that is required in the L1 but not in the L2, as exemplified in (8) and (9). While the addition of at in (8) does not really change the meaning, the space could be interpreted as taking a step into a particular contained space or surface of a room rather than referring to space in the universe, which is the intended meaning in the context of the structure.

(8) *...and started at my dream job at west coast customs
(started (Ø) my dream job)
(Sw. och började på mitt drömförsta på West Coast Customs)
(Male, aged 16, vocational programme)
Misordering Errors

Misordering relates to incorrect word and morpheme order (Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005:61) and can be described as transfer if caused by direct translation of the L1 word order. Non-English syntactic structures caused by word for word translation of a phrase or a whole sentence can result in disturbing constructions and can have a major impact on meaning and on the flow of the language. This in turn makes comprehension labour intensive on the part of the reader and even incomprehensible at times. Odlin (1989:95) points out that “basic word order is one kind of syntactic pattern susceptible to native language influence”. English and Swedish share some basic syntactic similarities; e.g. SVO as in be eats vegetables (Sw. han äter grönsaker). Transfer of such similarities in basic word order can, therefore, result in positive transfer; however, when the syntax is not directly transferable, a word for word translation can result in negative transfer, as demonstrated by examples (10) – (11). For instance, initial adverbials in Swedish constructions mean that the VS rule applies, i.e. the subject moves right behind a finite verb, while the SV rule must apply in English:

(10) * Sometimes, eat me and my family alone. (ADV +V+S+ADV)
    (Sw. Ibland åt jag och min familj ensamma) (ADV +V+S+ADV)

(11) (Then we went to a beach). *There could we snorkling (ADV +AUX +S +V)
    (Sw. Där kunde vi snorkla) (ADV +AUX +S +V)
    (or There we could do some snorkelling or We could snorkel there)
    (Both examples: female, aged 13, year 7)

Misinformation errors

Misinformation errors involve the incorrect use of a grammatical form (Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005:61), for instance, errors relating to simplification or overgeneralisation of rules relating to tense (*he jump up instead of he jumped up) or subject-verb agreement (*they was jumping). These types of errors are common universal development errors but could potentially be described as transfer if similarities with L1 constructions can be explained as having caused the L2 error. According to Ellis (1997:137), avoidance of a form can also be regarded as a transfer if learners avoid or underuse a certain L2 feature because it does not exist in the L1. Misinformation errors such as simplification or overgeneralisation of grammatical rules were common errors in the ULEC sample but were often difficult to classify as transfer errors. Examples that demonstrate
these problems will be further discussed under the section 6.2 ‘Grammatical and Non-Grammatical Transfer Errors’.

### 6.2 Grammatical and Non-Grammatical Transfer Errors

Transfer errors can be described as caused by either lexical translations of L1 vocabulary (*non-grammatical transfer*) or by transfer of L1 grammatical structures and rules (*grammatical transfer*). Köhlmyr (2001:209) found that 71% of all transfer errors could be categorised as grammatical transfer in her study and 29% as non-grammatical transfer.

**Non-grammatical errors**

Literal translation caused by phonological, orthographic or perceived semantic similarities between the languages can be described as non-grammatical (lexical) transfer (Köhlmyr 2001:209). Lexical transfers include substitution words such as false friends which can be nouns, verbs and adjectives as well as prepositions and word for word literal translation of units of meaning such as phrases and expressions. A substantial amount of the examples included in this study are lexical transfer errors, partly because they were often relatively easy to identify as typical transfer errors because of their similarities with Swedish words. From a native speaker’s point of view, however, the errors also stood out as incomprehensible or confusing and as having a more substantial impact on meaning than many grammatical errors.

As discussed earlier, false friends are lexical items that are easily transferred into the L2 because they look and sound similar (Davidsen-Nielsen & Harder 1987: 27-29). Although the transferred word looks and sounds similar to an L1 word, the meaning of the L2 word is usually completely different and can therefore result in serious interference with communication. False friends can result in fairly serious communicative problems, such as communication breakdown or misunderstandings, because they can be completely out of context when translated into English. The previous substitution word examples (2)-(4) above and also (12) and (13) below show how literal translation of perceived lexical (orthographic and phonological) similarities can result in ‘Swenglish’ constructions:

(12) *It was the chef on the workplace*  
(Sw. *det var chefen på arbetsplatsen*)  
(Male, aged 16 vocational programme)

(13) *I’m going to drive the business by my own.*  
(Sw. *Jag tänker driva firman själv*).  
(Male, aged 16 vocational programme)
In example (12), the writer assumes that *the chef also means the boss/the manager in English based on the meaning in Swedish (chefen). However, for native English speakers the chef usually refers to someone who is a professional head cook at a restaurant. Even if it is interpreted as the chief, it would be considered a mistaken alternative for the word boss. Such an incorrect word choice results in unclear messages and native speakers of English could find it difficult to understand without knowing more about the context in which it occurred. Example (13) similarly shows how the Swedish verb *driva as in *driva en firma (run a company) is incorrectly translated in this context. However, the word ‘drive’ could also be considered ‘business jargon’ in English if it is used in the context of describing how the manager of the company wants to take the business to another level of success: e.g. I am going to drive this business to another level.

**Grammatical transfer errors**

Grammatical transfer errors are caused by learners’ perceptions of similarity between L1 and L2 rules and grammatical structures, and, according to Köhlmyr (2001:209), relate to “article usage, plural formation, word order, verb complementation, tense, “prop” word usage, pronouns, adverbs and negation”. Some of these transfer error categories are included in this study. It can, however, sometimes be difficult to categorise certain grammatical errors as either grammatical or non-grammatical transfer because non-grammatical transfer can actually result in grammatical errors. Köhlmyr (2001:203) illustrates this by the example *”the place there I live” (Sw. platsen där jag bor): phonological similarities between there and Swedish där can result in a transfer error described as non-grammatical transfer. However, if there is described as a transfer of the demonstrative adverb there (där), used in Swedish constructions, instead of the relative adverb ‘where’, then grammatical transfer would be the explanation. In other words, transfer of an L1 form can produce a structure described as a grammatical transfer error, but there may at times also be a semantic, phonological or orthographic aspect of similarity of the form (i.e. literal translation) that can be explained as having caused a transfer error.

Furthermore, it can often be an impossible task to determine the reasons for some written grammatical errors even if you had the opportunity to ask the writer; i.e. was the error produced because it was perceived to be grammatically correct in the L2 based on perceptions of L1 and L2 grammatical similarities or because of a perceived lexical similarity of an L1 item? Another option to investigate is that the learner might be at a particular developmental stage where that particular type of error is a common universal development error for all learners regardless of language background. To investigate the reason it would be necessary to analyse further comparative corpus data; i.e. to find out if learners of any language background produce such errors or if they are more frequent for learners of a certain language background. Köhlmyr (2001: 207), however,
suggests that “transfer takes precedence over, e.g. overgeneralisation, i.e., where there is contrast between Swedish and English, there is transfer”.

Examples (14) - (15) illustrate grammatical errors from the ULEC data that could potentially be viewed as caused by non-grammatical (literal) translation because of L1 and L2 similarities. By contrast, these errors might also be viewed as common universal errors as a result of overgeneralisation of grammatical rules:

(14) *We was more often on another beach closer to Visby (were) *(Sw. vi var oftast på en annan strand närmare Visby) (Male, aged 16 vocational programme)

(15) Trust me I has get oil on my clothes many time (have had) *(Sw. ... jag har fått olja på mina kläder många gånger) (Male, aged 16, vocational programme)

The examples (14) - (15) could be described as a phonological and orthographic transfer error based on similarities between was and var, or has and har, but they could also be considered as a result of overgeneralisation; i.e. the learner considers was as an ‘overall’ representative of the past tense for be. Another difficulty with defining it as transfer is that the correct past tense form were is also phonologically close to var, even if it may be more distant orthographically. These types of grammatical errors, however, generally do not affect the meaning to any greater extents.

The examples (16) – (18) below show some tense errors relating to events taking place in the future (in ten years time) which could be considered as transfer of Swedish tense structures. In Swedish, the use of present tense verbs is common to express future events if the context makes this clear (Davidsen-Nielsen & Harder: 25). Such grammatical errors can be a bit harder to process for the reader if the context does not clarify the meaning. However, such errors in the ULEC data were generally not found to result in any major communicative issues in terms of ‘getting your meaning across’.

(16) *(In ten years time)...I don’t think I have children yet but I want to have it someday *(I don’t think I would have children yet but I want to have some (children) one day) *(Sw. Jag tror inte jag har barn än men jag vill ha det någon gång) (Male, aged 17, academic programme)

(17) *(In ten years time)... I can also live in Stockholm *(I could also be living in Stockholm) *(Sw.... kan jag också bo i Stockholm) (Male, aged 17, academic programme)

(18) *(in ten years time)... we live in a big house near a lake. *(we will live in a big house near a lake)
As discussed earlier, translated word order (misordering) can also result in grammatical transfer errors as in (19):

(19) *when i was little live i in Uppsala with my parents
(när jag var liten bodde jag i Uppsala med mina föräldrar)
(Male, aged 17, academic programme)

6.3 Multi-word Transfer Errors and Idiomatic Expressions

Grammatical transfer errors and literal translations in the data often result in multi-word errors, i.e. they affect units of meaning that consist of combinations of more than one word. For example, when there are words in phrases and expressions where some or all words are incorrectly translated and the result is often a construction that is difficult to understand. For instance, translating idiomatic expressions from L1 into L2 often do not make much sense to native L2 speakers unless there is also corresponding word order, similar vocabulary use and meaning in the L2. Idiomatic expressions are phrases with a fixed unit of two or more words that form a unique metaphorical meaning (Longman 1979). The non-literal meaning of the idiom is usually substantially different to the literal meaning of the individual words that make up the unit. Learners, therefore, benefit from learning idioms and phrases as whole units of meaning rather than as separate words (Thornbury 1999: 19-20 and 2002:106-128).

According to some previous research on transfer (see Lightbown & Spada 1999:73) learners tend to be careful about word for word translations of idioms and metaphorical expressions as they usually are aware of their unique meaning in their own language. However, there are several examples from the ULEC data that indicate that some learners appear to be quite keen on trying out phrases and expressions even though they risk making errors. Examples (20) – (26) show how transfer errors can result in deviant multi-word units which impact on the meaning to various extents. In (20) the writer intends to describe getting ready for dinner but the construction is confusing, potentially humorous, and does not get the intended meaning across appropriately. Similarly, in (21) running around in the air appears to be a translation of far omkring i luften and does not make sense in English. In (22) the essay describes someone who has had an accident and took some time to get back on his feet, i.e. to recover. The example can be described as transfer because the writer uses the word legs (instead of feet), which is the equivalent of this similar Swedish expression (tillbaka på benen).
(20) *... (and took a shower) and fixed our self to the dinner.
(fixed ourselves up for dinner)
(Sw. fixade till oss till middagen)
(Female, aged 16, vocational programme)

(21) *it will be quite the same with pollutions and stuff running around in the air
(stuff in the air)
(Sw. grejor som far omkring i luften)
(Female, aged 16, academic programme)

(22) *...it took three months for him to get back on hes legs
(get back on his feet)
(Sw. ‘vara tillbaka på benen’)
(Male, aged 18, vocational programme)

The examples (23) - (24) show some awkward transfer of Swedish word order (misordering) but with correct vocabulary, which nevertheless affects the meaning of the underlined phrases. Direct translations of word order in the data show that incorrect word order constructions can be difficult to understand in many cases.

(23) *my father tells me that hole our family (...will go together on a holiday)
(correction: my father tells me that our whole family)
(Sw. min pappa säger att hela vår familj)
(Female, aged 16, vocational programme)

(24) *And 636.000 I would by me a car for.
(...and for 636.000 I would buy myself a car.)
(Sw: och 636.000 skulle jag köpa mig en bil för.
(Male, aged 16, academic programme)

In example (25) the literal (phonological) translation of packa upp into pack up changes the meaning to the opposite in English. The writer is actually describing the process of unpacking his bag of things to get comfortable.

(25) *...and pack upp my thing so its more camfibreble.
(...and unpack my things to get more comfortable)
( Sw...packa upp mina saker)
(Male, aged 16, vocational programme)

Example (26) can potentially have an embarrassing meaning because nature should be used with caution in this particular context:

(26) *...take the bike and go for a bath in the nature
(go for a swim in the countryside)
(Sw. ta ett dopp/bad i naturen)
(Female, aged 16, vocational programme)

The example in (26) can potentially result in a serious and inappropriate miscommunication if it is misinterpreted by a reader. What the writer intended as a nice bike ride and a swim in the
countryside, *a bath in the nature* can in this situation be misinterpreted as *a bath in the nude*. In the book *Get your English right*, Clark (2004:151), for instance, provides learners of English with a warning regarding the use of nature in this context: ”never use nature when you really mean countryside or scenery”.

Overall, many examples in the ULEC data show that incorrectly transferred lexical or grammatical variations in phrases and expressions can result in serious errors and constructions that can be misunderstood by the reader unless the overall context can somewhat clarify what was meant by the writer. In that case, a process of negotiating the meaning can take place between the writer and the reader. The reader cannot look at the transfer error in isolation to understand the message conveyed by the writer; the errors in the examples need to be examined from the overall context to be understood. However, literal translation of expressions and phrases from Swedish sometimes result in potentially incomprehensible units of multi-word transfer errors in English as exemplified by some of the ULEC examples in this study. There are occasions where the context does not help, particularly when there are many different kinds of confusing errors piled up together.

Nevertheless, some idiomatic expressions are translatable between English and Swedish and used in similar ways and situations which means that transfers can occasionally result in reasonably close and comprehensible constructions. Some expressions can actually be literally translated between English and Swedish without changing the meaning; as in *come face to face with someone* (Sw. *komma ansikte mot ansikte med någon*), *live and let die* (*leva låta dö*) etc. Here the word order and the translated vocabulary result in the same meaning. As discussed earlier, there is evidence to suggest that the many language similarities between English and Swedish increase the likelihood of transfer (Abrahamsson 2009: 242). It is therefore also possible that Swedish learners are more likely to transfer idiomatic and metaphorical word units than more distant language learners would, as is also suggested by Lightbown & Spada (1999: 86).

### 6.4 Transfer Errors by Grammatical Categories

Ellis & Barkhuizen (2005:61) point out the advantage in using well-established grammatical categories in error analysis in order to apply the analysis of the errors for teaching purposes. Table 1 shows the distribution of transfer errors according to grammatical categories in Köhlmyr’s data from a writing sample of 16-year old Swedish high school students. The majority of transfer errors in her study relate to nouns+articles (29%) and prepositions (27%) (Köhlmyr 2001:209). Köhlmyr also included multi-word errors such as concords and errors of word order in her results.
Table 1. Percentage of transfer errors by word class in Köhlmyr’s (2001) study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word class</th>
<th>% transfer error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nouns and articles</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepositions</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concord</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word order</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronouns</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Preposition errors relating to transfer were by far the most common single word errors in the ULEC data if categorised by word class. Nouns and articles, however, were kept in separate word class categories in the present study. Furthermore, the investigation of multi-word transfers in the ULEC data, for instance word order errors, expressions and different types of phrases, showed that phrases including prepositions are of particular interest, both in terms of meaning and in terms of transfer error frequency. Therefore, the analytical discussion below will look at errors both in terms of word class as well as at phrase level to investigate how transfer errors affect the overall structure.

6.4.1 Prepositions and Prepositional Phrases
The correct use of prepositions is a common problem area for learners of English, including advanced learners (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman 1990:401). The process of learning prepositions is complex because it involves learning prepositions as vocabulary and to also develop the knowledge of how prepositions are used in specific contexts or in fixed phrases. Expressions and idiomatic phrases with prepositions generally have a fixed combination of words, including the preposition, to convey a particular meaning which needs to be learnt as lexical chunks to make sense. For example, the prepositions in ‘pain in the neck’ (someone who is annoying), ‘get back on your feet’ (after you have been ill), or ‘get back in time’ (to avoid being late) but ‘be on time’ (be punctual), or ‘get over it’ (to move on), or ‘get out of it’ (stop being involved), would need to be learned as ‘word chunks’ in the same way vocabulary is taught because of the distinctive units of meaning. Other prepositional uses are more flexible depending on the specific location of an item or on the activity described; for instance, in bed, on the bed, climbing over, climbing under etc.
Most prepositional transfer errors from Swedish to English relate to literal (non-grammatical) translation caused by incorrect perceptions of semantic, phonological and/or orthographical equivalence between the languages (Köhlmyr 2001:209-210). Examples from the ULEC data (see Table 2) illustrate patterns of how the Swedish prepositions i/in, av, från and till in most cases are translated into phonologically, orthographically or semantically perceived corresponding English prepositions in, of, from and to. This can sometimes result in positive transfer and sometimes negative transfer depending on actual corresponding similarities.

Table 2. Transfer patterns from Swedish to L2 English Prepositions in the ULEC data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Swedish Preposition</th>
<th>Transfer of ‘prototypical equivalence’ into English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Från</td>
<td>From</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>till, tills</td>
<td>to, until</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in, i, in i</td>
<td>in, into</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Av</td>
<td>Of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upp</td>
<td>Up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mot, emot</td>
<td>Against</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Med</td>
<td>With</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>På</td>
<td>On</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prepositional transfer errors relating to addition or omission can be described as grammatical (structural) transfer (Köhlmyr 2001:211). For instance, a preposition is added because it is used in Swedish, as in *It happened for a long time ago (‘it happened (Ø) a long time ago’, Sw. ‘det hände för länge sedan’). The result is a grammatical transfer error; however, it could also be considered as literal translation of phonological similarities (e.g. för≠for). Only a few examples of transfer errors of omission and addition of prepositions were found in the ULEC sample. In the ULEC examples (27) – (28) an added (translated) preposition is included where English would not use one:

(27) *(When I)...and started at my dream job at the west coast customes *(started (Ø) my dream job) *(Sw:...och började på mitt drömjobb) *(Male, aged 16 vocational programme)

(28) *the restaurant lead called me for Mr. martini. *(The restaurant manager called me (Ø) Mr Martini. *(Sw: Restaurangchefen kallade mig för Mr Martini. *(Male, aged 16, vocational programme)
Transfer Errors Relating to *on*

Most of the prepositional errors in the ULEC sample occur because *på* is frequently and incorrectly translated as *on*. Although *på* is not phonologically similar to *on*, it appears to be systematically used by the learners in the data to represent Swedish *på*, as illustrated in the following ULEC examples (29) – (32).

(29) *One day when I was on Fyrishov.*  
   (at Fyrishov - an indoor aquatic centre)  
   Sw. *En dag när jag var på Fyrishov.*  
   (Male, aged 17, vocational programme)

(30) *... if they got sight on anybody.*  
   (caught sight of somebody)  
   Sw. *... om de fick syn på någon*  
   (Male, aged 16, vocational programme)

(31) *It was the first day on my dreamwork.*  
   (at my dream job)  
   Sw. *Det var min första dag på mitt drömjobb.*  
   (Male, aged 16, vocational programme)

(32) *I work from 7 on the morning to 16 on the afternoon.*  
   (in the morning) Sw. *Jag jobbar från 7 på morgonen till 16 på eftermiddagen.*  
   (Male, aged 16, vocational programme)

In examples (29) – (32) the preposition *on* is used in all cases to represent *på* in situations where Standard English would use *at*, *of* and *in* to express this correctly. It is possible that there is a semantic process involved in the transfer of prepositions here, as evidenced by the relationship between *på* and *on*, e.g. there appears to be a certain perceived prototypical “*on-ness*” relating to the use of *on* in particular situations. Examples (33) – (35), show patterns which demonstrate how Swedish learners appear to consider *on* as semantically equal to the preposition *på*. Furthermore, the examples (22) – (24) in the context of *stay at a hotel* (Sw. *bo på hotell*), *på* seems to be perceived by Swedish learners as belonging to a ‘pre-packaged’ concept which is literally and semantically transferred to the L2 as in *live on a hotel*, rather than *stay at a hotel*. An additional written translation test in a classroom situation in a year nine class also confirmed that a majority of the students made this incorrect translation.

(33) *...because we living on a all inclusive hotel.*  
   (stayed at a hotel)  
   (Sw. …för att vi bodde på ett ‘all inclusive’ hotell).  
   (Male, aged 16, vocational programme)

(34) *My grandfather lived on an other hotel*  
   (stayed at another hotel)  
   (Sw...’Min morfar (/farfar) bodde på ett annat hotell’)  
   (Female, aged 13)

(35) *he worked on the hotel*  
   (worked at)  
   (Sw. ... han jobbade på hotellet)  
   (Female, aged 13)
In example (35), *be worked on the hotel* would be correct if describing someone actually doing some building or repair work 'on the hotel'; however, the context here disambiguates it.

**Transfer Errors Relating to in**

In the ULEC sample, the preposition *in* is in the second largest group of prepositional errors and the examples found in the data mostly relate to time adverbials (examples (36)-(39).

(36) *We were there in 15 days*  
Sw. vi var där i 15 dagar  
(Female, aged 16, vocational programme)  
(for)

(37) *… we slept there in maybe three nights I think*  
(Sw. vi sov där i kanske tre nätter tror jag).  
(Male, aged 16, academic programme)  
(for)

(38) After I have work at Ericsson in 5 month…  
(Sw. efter att jag hade jobbat på Ericsson i 5 månader…)  
(Male, aged 17, academic programme)  
(for)

(39) We have been together in about 4 years  
(Sw. Vi har varit ihop i nästan fyra år)  
(Male, aged 17, academic programme)  
(for)

**Phrasal Verbs and Prepositional Phrases**

According to Köhlmyr (2001:210-211) prepositional transfer errors are most frequent in verb + preposition structures, e.g. phrasal verbs, and secondly in prepositional phrases as adverbials of time, space and manner. Examples (40) – (44) from the ULEC sample show a similar distribution. The examples show that Swedish, like English, has verb + prepositional constructions that must be memorised as lexical chunks (Thornbury 2002:106)

(40) *...take a look on different volcanos*  
(Sw. ‘ta en titt på olika vulkaner’)  
(Female aged 16, vocational programme)  
(look at)

(41) *...i will only drive around with my cars*  
(Sw. ’jag ska bara köra omkring med mina bilar’)  
(Male, aged 17, academic programme)  
(drive around in)

(42) *...arrange with their economy*  
(correction: *take care of their finances*).  
(Sw. *ordna med deras ekonomi*)  
(Male, aged 17, academic programme)  
(arrange Ø something)

(43) *...and looking on the cars they have ther,*  
(Sw. ...och titta på bilarna de har där.  
(Male, aged 16, vocational programme)  
(look at)
Positive and Negative Transfer of Prepositions

In addition to learning the complexity involved in the different situational and vocabulary usages of prepositions, learners also appear to prefer to make use of a phonological or semantic ‘prototypical’ equivalent of their own L1 prepositions, unless they already have internalised the correct use of an English preposition in a particular context into their knowledge system. It is possible that when learners are uncertain which English preposition to choose to say something they may attempt to make use of a prototypical Swedish equivalent. Prepositions may in this sense be considered to be ‘false friends’ in cases where Swedish and English constructions that appear to be phonologically or semantically similar result in a transfer error because of the often arbitrary nature of prepositions in both languages. The incorrect uses often result in constructions which can potentially be misunderstood or make the message harder to process depending on the context in which it occurred.

There are also some similarities between English and Swedish prepositional uses this can result in positive transfer which may also be considered to be supporting evidence confirming learners’ preferences in the use of ‘prototypes’ (see Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005: 65; Odlin 2003:438-441). These cases might even be considered ‘true friends’ for the language learner because they may be beneficial for the learning process. For instance, in examples (45) - (46) there are several different types of errors (e.g. article addition, incorrect word order, spelling, no capital letters, etc.); however, the use of ‘prototypical’ prepositions end up as correct or positive transfers in most cases here, with the exception of *in your skies where the preposition is not transferrable (example (46)).

(45) *...In the big apple lives my god and old friend spiderman who lives on the top of the empire state building. (Sw: …I The Big Apple bor min gamla goda vän Spindelmannen som bor på toppen av the Empire State Building’). (Male, aged 17, academic programme)

(46) *...From the condo is it like 3 metres from the greatest top so it is just to jump *in your skies and ski down the magic alps. (Sw…. Från stugan är det ‘typ’ (ungefär) tre meter från största (alp-)toppen, så det är bara att hoppa i skidor och åka nerför de magiska Alperna (Male, aged 17, academic programme)
6.4.2 Nouns and Noun Phrases
Transfer of nouns that hold valuable message information required to understand what is discussed (e.g. a subject or an object) can seriously affect the meaning of the message, as demonstrated by examples from the ULEC sample. Borrowing transfers, or transfer of L1 nouns as false friends are typical lexical replacement errors that impact severely on the communicative purpose, for instance as the previous examples of *chef (12), moments (2), cyklops (3) and hummer (4) in the data demonstrates. The literal translation of compound nouns can also result in confusion or incomprehensible constructions. Other noun phrase grammatical transfer errors in the ULEC data relate to pluralisation, articles and determiners.

Transfer errors associated with nouns and false friends can result in miscommunication because learners assume that an English word, or a ‘Swenglish word’, shares the meaning with a Swedish word. In example (47), the L2 learner produces a transfer error by using *the stank (Sw. stanken), not an English noun, where the smell was intended. However, although *stank is incorrect it is close to the English word stink and the meaning can most likely be understood by English speakers because of the context and because smell and stink are synonyms in this context.

(47) *The elephants were big as three horses together and the stank was terrible. (Sw: ...stanken var hemsk) (Female, aged 15, vocational programme)

**Compound Nouns**
Examples (48) – (52) relate to compound nouns. In Swedish two nouns that form a construction with a multi-word meaning (e.g one modifying noun and a head noun) are usually written as one joint word, e.g. hjärtkirurg, (heart surgeon) or occasionally with a hyphen to link the words, whereas in English these are more often written as two separate words. Swedish learners therefore occasionally form joint compound constructions in written English as a type of structural transfer error. However, there can at times also be a semantic transfer component involved when a learner makes a word for word translation of compounds as false friends. There is only a spelling error involved in example (48) (*heartsurgiant), but the literal translations of examples (49) – (52) can result in some difficulties with comprehensibility:

(48) *now I am a heartsurgiant! (Sw. hjärtkirurg) (heart surgeon) (Female, aged 17, academic programme)

(49) *headcity (Sw. huvudstad) (capital city) (Male, aged 16, vocational programme)
Number Distinction and Pluralisation
Transfer of plural formation rules occurs in several cases in the ULEC data when there are differences relating to countable and non-countable nouns. However, the examples in (53) – (55) do not really change the meaning in these contexts. The underlined nouns are countable in Swedish but not in English:

(53) *I started to move round furnatures. (Sw. möbler) (Eng. furniture)
    (Male, aged 16, vocational programme)

(54) *...a huge bunch of homeworks (Sw. läxor) (Eng. homework)
    (Male, aged 17, academic programme)

(55) *... hope that we get ride of all those pollutions and climate problems
    (Sw. förorenningar) (Eng. that pollution)
    (Female, aged 17, academic programme)

A typical example (56) of a transfer of number also relates to money (see also Davidsen – Nielsen & Harder 1987:16) and illustrates how Swedish learners perceive of money (pengar) as a plural noun even though a plural morpheme –s is not added to money:

(56) *What would I do with 10 million kr....well that is a hard question, but i think i know what i would do with them. First of all i would save them untill I’m older not spend the money on the spot like most people would.
    (male, aged 16, academic programme)

Articles
Transfer errors relating to articles in the ULEC data occur when an article is added (examples (57) – (59)), or is omitted (examples (60) – (61)) based on Swedish constructions. The errors in (57) – (59) seem to be caused by grammatical transfer of Swedish morphology (noun+definite morpheme marker –en) into English uses of definiteness (the).

(57) *...what about the global heat? (…what about global warming?)
    (Sw: den globala uppvärmingen)
    (Male, aged 16, academic programme)

(58) *...if you can take a trip to the space in the future (a trip to space)
    (Sw: en resa till rymden)
    (Male, aged 16, academic programme)
(59) *Mankind has found a better way of taking care of the earth
(take care of earth)
(Sw: ta hand om jorden)
(Female, aged 17, academic programme)

Some errors can potentially change the meaning if not related to a context; for instance, (58) *take a trip to the space could be misinterpreted as taking a trip to a particular contained area rather than space in the universe'. Similarly, (59) *the earth refers to planet earth, rather than dirt on the ground.

In (60)-(61), the articles appear to be omitted because they do not exist in the Swedish construction and result in deviant constructions that can potentially affect the meaning, particularly in combination with the other errors.

(60) *...the funniest with fixing cars is all Ødurt
(the best thing about fixing cars is all the dirt)
(Sw: det roligaste med att fixa bilar är all smuts)
(Male, aged 16, vocational programme)

(61) *...it was Øaluminium floor
(it had an aluminium floor)
(Sw: det var aluminiumgolv)
(Male, aged 17, vocational programme)

6.4.3 Verbs and Verb Phrases
As discussed earlier, errors relating to verb tense and verb agreement can be difficult to categorise as transfer because verb morphology errors are common universal errors of the interlanguage development process, but generally do not interfere with meaning to any great extent. On the other hand, verb errors that relate to vocabulary, such as literal translations, lexical substitutions and false friends (e.g. *drive a business) and verb errors in multi-word transfers, such as phrasal verbs and expressions, are highly interesting for the purposes of this paper because they can have a major impact on meaning. Some verb errors have already been discussed and there are many examples in the ULEC data where the meaning is affected (e.g. examples (62) – (67). The examples (62)-(64) can perhaps also be regarded as an overgeneralisation or overextended use of took to represent the English verbs have, put on, remove, in these cases. However, it appears that the choice is based on translation from Swedish; translating the verbs in English ‘back’ into the Swedish verb ta show a corresponding Swedish translation in all three situations:

(62) We took a cup of coffee
(had a cup of coffee)
(Sw: vi tog en kopp kaffe)
(Male, aged 17, vocational programme)
*...i take on my snowboard on my feets*  
(Sw: ta på)  
(Male, aged 18, vocational programme)

*...he said to me at take away the paint*  
(Sw: att ta bort)  
(Male, aged 16, vocational programme)

In (62) the meaning of *we take a cup of coffee* could potentially be misunderstood as *took the coffee with us* when it actually refers to *drinking a cup of coffee*. Other lexical verb transfer errors in the data relate to some instances where English may use the verb *have* (65)-(66) instead. In (65) *we sat and wrote tests* could mean that the student designed the test rather than *had a test*. Other possible corrections are *We sat the test* (Br. Eng) or *We took a test* (Am. Eng):

*...we sat and wrote tests*  
(Sw: skrev prov)  
(Female, aged 17, academic programme)

*...so i wont really get children*  
(Sw: så jag kommer riktigt inte skaffa barn)  
(Male, aged 17, academic programme)

Example (67) is an example of either borrowing or possible transfer of Swedish spelling based on phonological similarities between the verbs *drack* and *drank*.

*...and drack some drinks*  
(Sw: ...och drack några drinkar)  
(Female, aged 16, vocational programme)

### 6.4.4 Adjectives and Adverbs in Phrases

There are several lexical replacements of adjectives and adverbs in the data which could affect meaning in ways similar to those found with the lexical replacement of nouns and verbs. There are also some errors in the data that relate to structural uses. Example (68) could be described as omission of *many*, as in *so many nice people*, because it is not necessary in Swedish in this case. *So* could also be described as a literal translation because *so* is phonologically similar to *så* in Swedish. This transfer results in an incorrect construction but does not interfere with meaning to any great extent.

*…there was so (O) nice people there*  
(‘there were such nice people there’/ ‘so many nice people were there’)  
(Sw: det var så snälla människor där)  
(Male, aged 16, vocational programme)
The noun fun and the adjective funny are frequently overused and mixed up in a large number of instances throughout the ULEC data; e.g. fun is used instead of funny, and vice versa, and are used inappropriately and with the incorrect meaning in many cases. This often results in unusual constructions which impact on meaning to various extents. Furthermore, so, really and very are often used incorrectly and out of place as qualifiers of fun and funny (examples (69) – (70):

(69) *We can have so funny
(‘have so much fun’ / ‘have such fun’)
(Sw: ha så kul)
(Male, aged 17, academic programme)

(70) *that was very fun
(‘That was so much fun’ or ‘that was very funny’)
(Sw: det var jättekul)
(Male, aged 16, vocational programme)

These transfer of fun and funny in the data appear to relate to the Swedish expressions det var jättekul (*it was very fun), or vi hade jätteroligt (*we had very fun), and are common expressions which are (over)used quite frequently by young Swedish learners. Swedish learners also often describe something as very very funny (jättekul) and *it was so fun both when they mean it was really funny (humorous) or we had a wonderful time (i.e. something enjoyable). Similarly, the ‘the funniest’ (det roligaste) is also used on a number of occasions (e.g. examples (71) - (72)) in the data to represent ‘the best thing about’ or ‘one of the best’:

(71) *...the funniest with cars is painting
(the best thing about cars is painting)
(Sw: det roligaste med bilar är att måla)
(Male, aged 16, vocational programme)

(72) *One of the funniest vacations i ever done
(one of the best vacations I have ever had)
(en av de roligaste, de bästa)
(Female, aged 16, vocational programme)

6.4.5 Expressing Time
Expressions of time can potentially cause misunderstandings because Swedish and English have some different ways of expressing time and date. Swedish often makes more use of the 24 hour clock, while in English the use of am or pm to make distinctions is more common; for instance; 9am or 9pm to distinguish between 9 and 21 o’clock (examples (73)-(74)). Particular caution need also be taken with dates to avoid serious misunderstandings when planning international meetings or travelling as year, month and dates are written in different orders depending on if
you are American, British or Swedish. Swedish students also often forget to use capital letters for
the names of the days and months, because this is not required in Swedish (example (75)).

(73) *...the weddingparty started at twentyone o’clock (nine pm)
(Sw: klockan tjugoett)
(Male, aged 16, vocational programme)

(74) *I work from 7 on the morning to 16 on the afternoon (four)
(Male, aged 16, vocational programme)

(75) *It was a march morning (March)
(Male, aged 17, vocational programme)

6.5 Analysing Transfer in Terms of Meaning

The word class category section presented above has included an analysis and discussion of some
of the most common and noticeable types of transfer errors that were found in the data in terms
of how they affect the meaning of what is communicated. There are, of course, a number of
other grammatical categories and types of transfer errors that could be discussed, such as transfer
relating to spelling, but only the most interesting and obvious examples in terms of the purposes
for this paper have been included. There have also been several cases where categories overlap
because of their dependency on other words to form meaningful units, for instance, in describing
multi-word errors such as word order errors, phrases and idiomatic expressions. The last part of
the data analysis will focus less on grammatical categories and instead take a more meaning-based
approach in order to discuss more semantic aspects of transfer errors.

As discussed above, examples of non-grammatical transfer from the L1 often involve translating
‘language chunks’ as units of meaning; i.e. idiomatic expressions, phrases and compounds.
Learners occasionally make transfer errors because they perceive semantic equivalence as the
example in (76) illustrates:

(76) *...she had been burned of a jellyfish. (stung by a jellyfish).
(Sw:...hon hade blivit bränd av en manet).
(Female, aged 15 vocational programme)

Example (76) can be described as transfer due to a perceived semantic equivalence between
burned by a jellyfish and bränd av en manet because for a native Swedish speaker, the sensation of
having the tentacles of a poisonous jellyfish touching your body, involves being burnt \(\text{bli bränd av en manet}\). In English this would not really make sense. If used out of context, a native English
speaker may even interpret being burnt by a jellyfish as something comic, as in being ripped off by the
jellyfish, i.e. the jellyfish stole something from you, so you got burnt. In English, you can get burnt by
something hot, e.g. a hot iron or the sun, which also works in Swedish \(\text{bränt sig på ett strykjärn,}\)
bränd av solen). In English, the sensation caused when the tentacles of a poisonous jellyfish touches your body is described as stung by a jellyfish (Sw. stucken av). By contrast, being stung by a jellyfish would not make sense in Swedish. In Swedish, you can be stung by needles, bees or mosquitoes, but not by jellyfish. The act of being stung by a jellyfish might equally be considered comic in Swedish, as it would almost imply that the jellyfish deliberately swam up to you and stung you with a sharp object.

In addition, the preposition of used in example (76) could also be described as being phonologically similar to the Swedish av, resulting in transfer into of instead of the correct English preposition by. Similarly, it could perhaps also be argued that the phonological similarities between bränd and burned could result in transfer, simply because they sound and look similar. The example shows that it is likely that transfer occurred because there were perceived phonological and orthographic similarities between the words burned and bränt and of and av, but particularly because of perceptions of semantic similarities between the concept bränd av en manet and *burnt of a jellyfish. The error might also be partly explained as based on the learner’s experience of the English word burned from other contexts, e.g. burned by the sun. In that case, overgeneralisation or an overextension of the uses and situations where burned is used could be seen as the explanation. The ‘jellyfish’ example points out how complex explanations of transfer can be and that a single transfer could have several potential explanations. Furthermore, such an example also shows the important cultural mismatch between Swedish and English in the conception of the process. Another example of this is illustrated by example (77); the meaning of this sentence (77) may not be easily worked out for a native speaker of English who does not also speak Swedish, at least not without a surrounding context to clarify what is going on:

(77) *'So as a manover we fixed a car to the scene but were not plaing to give it to them'.
(Sw: 'Så som en manöver fixade vi en bil till (brotns-)platsen men planerade (?) (tänkte) inte att ge den till dem'.)
(Male, aged 16, vocational programme)

There are so many errors in (77) that it is incomprehensible; isolating the individual errors would almost be impossible unless you can figure out what the writer intended to describe. Looking at the text as a whole, we find out that the writer is describing that a bank robbery has taken place so the robbers need a car to escape. The story is told by someone who is working for the FBI. The FBI will send a car but will only bring it to deceive the robbers. When translating the sentence word by word into Swedish it starts to make a bit more sense. The Swedish word manöver is translated as *manover (manoeuvre) which can be interpreted as ‘a deceiving trick’, however, the term usually relates to army troop movements and tactics (Longman 1981). While manöver
makes sense in Swedish in this context it would be considered an unusual choice for this particular situation (a police strategy to deceive the robbers). The verbal phrase ‘fixed a car’ (Sw. ‘fixade en bil’) is not correct at all in this context. It means ‘arranged for a car (to be at the scene)’, and not ‘repair a car’ which is a possible interpretation if in isolation. On the other hand, the phrase *to the scene is probably intended to be ’at the scene of the crime’ (Sw. ‘till brottsplatsen’), which is an English expression that cannot be literally translated into Swedish (*vi fixade en bil till scenen) without changing the meaning to literally mean ‘the stage’. The lexical translations of *manover and *fixed a car’ and the combination of multiple errors results in difficulties in processing the information. Translating it ‘back’ into Swedish makes it reasonably comprehensible if you also take the rest of the context into consideration. Although the context may clear up some of the confusion, a native English speaker would still have problems. A more straightforward way to get the meaning of (77) across could be ‘our plan was to put a car at the scene (of the crime) but not to let the robbers take it’.

Some additional examples of incorrect word order, phrases and expressions in the sample data that have resulted in transfer errors are (78) – (81):

(78) *Now ther’s look good i feel my like home
   (‘now that looks good, I feel at home’)  
   (Sw. expression: ’Jag känner mig som hemma’)
   (Male, aged 16, vocational programme)

(79) *suddenly I see that its lying a new case on my desk
   (...there is a new case (lying) on my desk)  
   (Sw. word order:  ’Plötsligt ser jag att det ligger ett nytt fall på mitt skrivbord.’)
   (Female, aged 17, academic programme)

(80) *I would start a own company that i could lied some money in.
   (I would start my own company that I would invest some money in)  
   (Sw. Jag skulle starta ett eget företag som jag kunde lägga pengar i/på).
   (Male, aged 18, academic programme)

(81) *In my garage would my car stand
   (My car would be parked in the garage)
   (Sw: I mitt garage skulle min bil stå)
   (Male, aged 16, academic programme)

Looking at individual word errors and breaking them up into different categories can be problematic in terms of looking at language from a meaning-based communicative point of view. The analysis showed that if you break up a text consisting of related meaningful messages contained in paragraphs, sentences or clauses into small components in order to classify data, the context in which an error occurred is lost. This in turn has implications for analysing and
understanding the meaning of what is being said. In order to investigate transfer errors that potentially lead to miscommunication, this study has investigated transfer errors both in terms of ‘units of meaning’ and as individual words as ‘parts of a whole’ to see how they relate to the context. Therefore, it has been of interest to examine both multi-word transfers and single word transfers and also investigate some larger sections of a text in terms of how the communicative message is coming across.

6.6 The Writing Process and the Use of L1 Language Strategies

There are a range of essay topics included in the sample and it would seem plausible that different types of texts and contexts will display different types of transfer errors and will also differ in the extent of the transfer errors. For instance, if the topic describes some Swedish cultural events or customs, it is reasonable to assume that learners might make use of a Swedish word (borrowing) or ‘Swenglish’ translations to describe Swedish culture and activities, because they cannot find a suitable word in English to get their message across. This can result in lexical ‘errors’ such as replacements, which could perhaps also be described as a creative strategy referred to as word coining (Cook 2008:108), i.e. the invention of a paraphrase word as a substitute L2 word. Learners may at times also consciously choose to use a Swedish word to express a concept/meaning that is either unknown to them in English or because they prefer to use an established Swedish concept or idea as a strategy (see Ellis 1997:60) to ‘get their exact meaning across’; as the following ULEC example (82) shows:

(82) *...since we are the only country being able to do "falukorv" which is the sausage that’s used.

(Male student, aged 16, academic programme)

To be comprehensible to a non-Swedish speaker, however, this strategy would also require that the writer explains in a bit more detail what this word means in English and the cultural significance it has for Swedes. It appears that the writer here is making the assumption that the reader of his text understands Swedish and has the cultural knowledge required to understand the importance of this special Swedish sausage called Falukorv.

Learners occasionally also make use of an L1 form, word or phrase, which might not make sense in the L2, as a temporary communication strategy because they need to ‘fill in the gap’ (Odlin 1989:37). When a learner does not have enough knowledge in the L2 to produce what they want to say, the L1 can provide a creative source to ‘borrow’ from (Ellis 1997:60), as example (83) illustrates.

(83) *My dream job is to be a transport nisse, and I want to drive a big car toer...

(Sw: Mitt drömjobb är att bli en ‘transport-nisse’ och jag vill köra en stor...
It is hard to know exactly what the writer had in mind here, since ‘transport-nisse’ probably is a concept that is known mainly in the world of this particular young man, a vocational programme student, and his friends; however, judging from the context in which it occurred (an essay titled ‘My Dream Job’), it seems to refer to someone who enjoys driving transport vehicles both as a profession and lifestyle. The word is likely to be a conscious choice made by the writer because he did not know an English word to match the Swedish expression with the exact meaning of what he was trying to convey. The word choice should perhaps, therefore, not be considered an ‘error’, even though it is not English. However, an explanation of his word choice and concept would have been useful in the essay to provide readers with information on what he was trying to express as it would be incomprehensible to a native English speaker (and perhaps for many Swedish speakers also).

As we have seen, transfer errors are not easily predictable. Individual variation between learners also appears to be a result of personal proficiency and expressive style. More cautious learners might avoid a more creative experimental style of writing in order to avoid the risk of ‘making errors’ because they lack the confidence to use a particular word or structure. Other learners seem more willing to experiment with lexical variation and may thereby increase the likelihood of errors. This can result in a mix of errors of English words and expressions and literal translations of Swedish words, compounds, phrases and idiomatic expressions, as in example (84) written by a male student, aged 16, vocational programme:

(84) ...Then i drived upp at the high way gived some gas and heard the sound of the V8 engine. It feled like my body wanted tho slip through the seat and the velosity meter flew away. In about 200MPH i drived home and maked a hand brake drift in to my parking

Even though there are many different types of errors here, including what would be described as universal development errors relating to incorrectly used past tense forms (some regular verb morphology instead of past tense irregular verb forms), most of it can be understood because of the context. The driver is thoroughly enjoying taking his car for a ‘high speed drive on the highway’. However, isolating the expression *the velocity meter flew away (the speedometer reached the max) might not make sense to a native English or non-Swedish speaker because it could be interpreted to mean that it came flying out of the car. The expression may be a literal translation of hastighetsmätaren flög iväg which could be related to the Swedish expression tiden flög iväg as in time flies. But it could also have another unknown origin. Another unclear example is *Then I drived upp at the high way, which could either mean Then I entered/drove up onto the highway but could
potentially also mean *Then I drove on the highway* depending on what was intended, i.e. *Sen körde jag upp på motorvägen* or *Sen körde jag uppe på motorvägen*. The meaning is slightly unclear perhaps because of the mixture of transfer and non-transfer errors; the word order is ‘English’ but not correctly expressed. There are prepositional errors that are a bit unclear because of the unknown intention, and so on. On the other hand, *gived some gas* may be an attempt to use the English expression *stepped on the gas*. Also *in to my parking* (Sw: *in på min parkering*) seems like a Swedish translation, whereas native English would probably use *parking lot* or *drive way*. The example illustrates the complexity of analysing some unclear blends of transfer and non-transfer errors, or difficulties interpreting unclear or confusing meanings in the data. However, it also a brilliant example of someone who is enthusiastic about getting their message across in a creative and individual style while taking the risk of making errors.
7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Summary of the ULEC Data Analysis

The study of the ULEC data sample confirmed that language transfer can explain a significant amount of different types of errors and unusual constructions which influenced the written communicative performance of Swedish learners of English. Transfer errors had the potential either to interfere or facilitate communication to various extents; some negative transfer errors had serious consequences for communication; however, transfer from the L1 can also be seen as a necessary communication strategy to convey a particular meaning. In fact, transfer errors can be comprehensible and communicative even though they are linguistically incorrect as long as the message gets across.

For the purposes of this study, the ULEC data provides a very important source for investigating learner development, language transfer and communication strategies which make use of L1 knowledge. Although transfer errors may not be as frequent as universal errors, the investigation was insightful for how a learner’s first language can work as a cognitive and strategic source of linguistic knowledge and experience to draw from when there are knowledge gaps in the L2. Making use of transfers was also found to be quite idiosyncratic in the data; some writers made quite a number of transfer errors in their essays while most writers in the sample made only a few. This is in agreement with Odlin (1989:129-136) who also suggests that transfer errors often are highly individual and variable.

The majority of the examples from the ULEC sample included in the analytical discussion came from essays written by senior high school students in the 15-16 and 17-18 year old categories. It was not the intention of this study to investigate the distribution of transfer errors between age and gender groups, however, some interesting observations could be drawn from the investigations of the sample. In particular, some of the most interesting examples of transfer errors in terms of how communication is affected came from several essays written by boys between the ages of 16-17 years enrolled in the vocational programmes. These boys stood out as making the most noticeable transfer errors out of all the transfer errors analysed. This included, for instance, false friends and vocabulary substitutions as well as borrowing transfers or word coinage as communicative strategies for getting a specific cultural or idiosyncratic meaning across. Whether this is evidence of more risk-taking behaviour, more creative or strategic use of L1
knowledge or L2 knowledge gaps can only be a matter for speculation and would require further investigation. Further investigations into gender and age difference may provide material for another study. As the current sample included more boys than girls, as well as many more students from the senior groups than the junior groups, it is not possible to comment further on the distribution here.

Transfer errors in the ULEC sample were found in all types of language structures and uses of the interlanguage to different extents; for instance, there were transfer errors in the phonology, morphology, syntax, vocabulary (e.g. single words) and in multiword lexical chunks, i.e. compounds, phrases and expressions. Furthermore, transfer occurred to different extents across all word classes and uses of the language but were most frequent and noticeable in the categories prepositions, nouns and verbs as vocabulary replacements/substitutions and false friends. Multi-word transfer errors which were fully or partially caused by word for word translations of vocabulary were also common, in particular, direct translation of compounds, collocations, phrases and expression. These errors often resulted in both syntactic misordering errors and in chunks of lexical errors.

The qualitative nature of the discussion in this paper, however, has not focused on frequency as much as on errors that resulted in a mismatch between the intended messages and what was actually written. The examples demonstrated the various ways in which transfer errors can influence the message and therefore communication. The conclusions drawn from the data analysis were that the most serious transfer errors involved vocabulary and grammatical constructions which resulted in significant miscommunication; i.e. the message does not come across because it is incomprehensible, hard to process or unintentionally ambiguous, confusing and socially inappropriate according to target language conventions.

The main examples of transfer of L1 grammatical structures or rules included articles, pluralisation and some instances of verb tense and word order errors. Transfer errors relating to pluralisation, articles and verb tense in the data were often less severe than non-grammatical errors in terms of comprehensibility. Syntactic misordering errors caused by literally translated L1 word order often resulted in confusing and even some incomprehensible constructions. However, transfer errors with the potential to result in the most serious errors involved lexical (non-grammatical) transfer, i.e. incorrectly used vocabulary and literal translations of phrases and idiomatic expressions. This was particularly noticeable when transfer of L1 vocabulary containing valuable information regarding the message became incomprehensible to the reader. False friends and ‘Swenglish’ translations of nouns and verbs stood out as causing
communication breakdown even when some of the context provided some indications of what is going on. Furthermore direct translation of phrases, compounds and idiomatic expressions often disturbed the communication simply because they did not translate well, the meaning was lost, changed or potentially ‘loaded’ with misunderstandings. There were also a substantial number of examples with prepositional errors in the data, in particular as part of verbal or adverbial phrases and these were also found to be confusing or to alter the meaning to various extents. Multiple transfer errors mixed with other errors also made the constructions difficult to process for the reader in many cases.

7.2 Transfer Errors and Implication for Teachers: Teaching strategies

The ability to communicate in writing is of the highest importance to achieving educational success for second language students of English and critical to participating in sociocultural activities in an increasingly global society. As discussed in the background, learning how to write communicatively in a second language can be a challenging and time-consuming task requiring a certain level of linguistic and sociocultural knowledge of language conventions to be successful. In order to improve students’ communicative ability, teachers must be able to identify, explain and evaluate the different types of errors and deviant constructions their students make as well as the structures they may avoid or overuse. However, it is important for teachers to analyse language from the perspective that errors are also a measure of how well students are learning rather than evidence of not being quite proficient in English.

The data analysis showed that many transfer errors do not necessarily lead to communication breakdown and should, in these cases, be seen as innovative and creative strategies to overcome knowledge gaps. On the other hand, evaluating errors can sometimes involve a bit of guess-work as students’ transfer errors can be quite idiosyncratic and at times hard to understand. The advantages are that in a classroom situation, the teacher can ask the student what they intended to say and also provide some instant feedback. Providing students with knowledge of transfer errors and how Swedish and English structures, concepts, phrases and expressions can differ and interfere with meaning can contribute to improved communicative competence and should be an important part of the learning that takes place in the classroom.

Teachers need to be aware of the types of errors their students make so they can determine where they are at in their language development and what they need to learn to reach higher levels. One approach to assessing learners’ ability to communicate is to make an error evaluation of students’ written production. The analysis can be used to identify these errors, to provide targeted feedback and to create stimulating material which highlights the problem areas and their
corrections. Even though learning is never guaranteed, targeted teaching and plenty of opportunities to practise with support at the right level may contribute to learner development and the acquisition of new structural levels (Ellis 2006:85-94; Thornbury 1999:14-20). A scaffolding approach to dealing with transfer errors can be beneficial for the learning process. As discussed in the theoretical background, the general idea of scaffolding is that teaching support is given within a learner’s zone of proximal development, or slightly above a learner’s current development level. For instance, students need to be provided with appropriate models, concepts and vocabulary help them move on towards further development levels (Gibbons 2002:2-10). The teacher needs to make students aware of the types of transfer errors they make, help them to re-phrase and provide them with alternative grammatical structures, vocabulary and lexical chunks to use. As students become more advanced and independent the scaffolding can be gradually removed.

The ULEC study showed that special attention could be brought to patterns of common grammatical transfer errors relating to word order, articles or pluralisation. It is also important to pay attention to the common transfer errors that students make with their vocabulary and expressions to bring up at appropriate times for feedback and discussion. The study particularly showed that students would particularly benefit from learning language as meaningful and useful lexical chunks rather than memorising single words (a glossary) without a context. For instance, plenty of exposure to useful expressions and to verbal and prepositional phrases is important. Students also need to be made aware of how phrases and idiomatic expressions form units of meaning; if incorrectly used or partly changed, the meaning is changed, lost or can be a source for confusion. A lexical approach (Thornbury 2002:112-128) to learning language chunks (e.g. multi-word units) such as compounds, collocations, phrases and idiomatic expressions is an important approach to developing a fluent, meaningful and communicative language. In an integrated approach to language teaching, learners need to develop lexical skills along with grammatical skills to be able to express themselves comprehensively and appropriately. Thornbury (2002:107) suggests two main approaches to learning lexical chunks; either by a rule-based approach (by isolating patterns or regularities) or by plenty of exposure to a variety of correct examples. In order to develop awareness of lexical chunks, he also suggests that consciousness-raising of patterns and exercise which analyse the meaning of words, perhaps a vocabulary brainstorm, are ways to speed up the learning process (2002:109). Other suggestions of material which contain authentic examples include the use of different kinds of literary texts, pop songs, movie titles, but also the use of word cards and word lists to analyse (2002:115-122).
Teaching about transfer errors such as ‘Swenglish’ and false friends can result in entertaining and interesting lessons which can be purposefully used to raise awareness about similarities and differences between Swedish and English. It can also draw attention to how differences caused by transfer can seriously alter the meaning of what is said. Lessons which incorporate false friends could turn into memorable discussions. Students can make use of lists of false friends and their translations to develop vocabulary knowledge and increase awareness of how false friends and lexical replacements can have completely different meanings which may not make any sense at all to a native speaker; this would result in serious miscommunication. In fact, transfer errors can provide amusing and interesting opportunities for discussion in the classroom; for instance why do *we fixed our self to the dinner (example (20)) or *we hired cyklops (example (3)) not make any sense in English and why could ‘a bath in the nature’ (example (26)) be a source of embarrassment? Students may also be able to think of some examples of their own and perhaps share some experiences which have resulted in misunderstandings, perhaps when travelling to another country on a holiday.

Exercises which shed light on how semantic aspects of words, expressions and concepts can differ in two different languages and how inappropriate uses can seriously affect meaning are important language skills for vocabulary development. Contrasting exercises can raise awareness about the ways in which different languages are structured (see Tornberg 1997:28-29). The use of texts full of idioms, expressions and proverbs can provide useful topics of interest and insight for discussion. Translating exercises between the L1 and the L2 languages of selected texts, songs, and poetry can illustrate how some phrases and sentence constructions cannot usually be easily translated into meaningful language by word by translations. Semantic transfer of ideas and concepts such described by the ‘stinging or burning jelly fish’ in example (76) are other important aspects to focus on regarding transfers which can result in substantial interference with meaning.

The data also showed that prepositional transfer errors are a particularly common problem area requiring special and regular attention for Swedish students. Negative transfer errors, as well as possible evidence of positive transfer of prepositions, were common in the data. The theoretical discussion also suggested that prepositions can be difficult even for more advanced speakers of English. Frequent exposure to exercises which highlight how prepositions, and particularly prepositional phrases are used and how the meaning is changed in different contexts can therefore be of benefit for students. A useful starting point can be for teachers to investigate the types of prepositional transfer errors their students make in their writing and plan some lessons around these results. An error analysis can find out in which situations students make transfer
errors with the prepositions on and in, and where they are most frequent. Students also need to be made aware of formulaic lexical chunks like ‘stay at a hotel’ and that in English people do not *live on a hotel* (example (33)). Furthermore, students also need plenty of exposure to how prepositions are used in verb phrases and adverbial phrases of time place and manner and idiomatic expressions.

In the writing process, teachers must encourage students to take risks in order to develop a rich and communicative language. Teachers need to take care not to discourage their students from making brave attempts at expressing themselves even if this sometimes comes across as ‘Swenglish’. Students also need plenty of opportunity to practice expressing themselves freely by writing essays on different topics and using different genres to practice the use of different vocabulary and expressions. ‘The Highway’ essay (example (84)) is a great example of the focus in this paper; the student is willing to risk errors because he has something he really wants to say. The example is full of creative and expressive interlanguage uses; he has written a vivid essay which demonstrates the ability to get meaning and enthusiasm across even though it contains both English and Swedish expressions that result in transfer and other errors. Such examples could be highlighted and encouraged because they contain meaningful and communicative language but may also need to be corrected in careful way.

As discussed in the theoretical background, errors found in written student production can provide valuable insight into a learner’s competence level; an essay full of errors is also a sign of language learning in progress and evidence of where the learner is at in the language acquisition process. However, assessing students’ work needs to look beyond errors and involve assessing content, communicative strategies, levels of risk-taking as well as linguistic complexity and stylistic choices relating to topic, register and genre. In evaluating communicative ability both the overall communication and individual errors must be assessed according certain criteria. However, this is also the difficulty for language teachers; there is a time to focus on the errors and there is a time to focus on the overall achievement, i.e., that students are expressing themselves in an L2 using all the language resources available - including the L1. In concentrating on errors, teachers need to make sure that they do not fail to see the forest for the trees; that is that the student has communicated a message despite the errors.

In a communicative approach to second language teaching, the evaluation of student language production (written or spoken) must be based on how well a student can use his or her language to comprehensively express what they want to say and on their ability to appropriately achieve that particular task. As teachers, it is also important to keep in mind what the evaluation will be
used for. Is the purpose to investigate what linguistic competence levels the students are currently at so that useful feedback, instruction and support can be provided for further development? Can the students use their language to successfully achieve particular communicative goals and purposes? Are they able to interpret and understand information in written and spoken communication and can they appropriately express ideas, thoughts and feelings in written and spoken language? This sort of information is useful for planning lessons which cater for students’ needs and further development. The assessment task may also be purely about grading the student and to make an assessment of the current level of acquired communicative ability a student has achieved for a particular purpose.

Developing the competence to express a message communicatively in writing takes time and requires exposure and practice of things that matter and with appropriate support. Transfer can be seen as a significant component in the development of communicative competence and in negotiating meaning between people as evidenced by learner production. Cross-linguistic influence from a learners’ L1 does not automatically lead to communication difficulties even when a particular form or word is used incorrectly in a particular situation. Creatively used prior language knowledge can also be communicative – if the message comes across. The act of negotiating meaning can have positive effects on language learning and can, if successful; enrich communicative situations between people from different language backgrounds. Misunderstandings can also be a source of language development as people need to use different strategies to work through the correct meaning together. Exchanging ideas, even though they are expressed and conceptualised in different manners, can contribute to intercultural competence if the meaning is understood.
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