Durham University

Durham E-Theses

L2 learners' knowledge of verb form-function relationships at different stages in the acquisition of English as a second language : a study of college learners' interlanguage in Zaire.

Nsebang-Kimanese Mayala

How to cite:

Mayala, Nsebang-Kimanese (1991) L2 learners' knowledge of verb form-function relationships at different stages in the acquisition of English as a second language : a study of college learners' interlanguage in Zaire. Doctoral thesis, Durham University.

Use policy

The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties in any format or medium, without prior permission or charge, for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- a full bibliographic reference is made to the original source
- a https://etheses.durham.ac.uk/id/eprint/1147/ is made to the metadata record in Durham E-Theses
- the full-text is not changed in any way

The full-text must not be sold in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

Please consult the full Durham E-Theses policy for further details.

Academic Support Office, The Palatine Centre, Durham University, Stockton Road, Durham, DH1 3LE
e-mail: e-theses.admin@durham.ac.uk Tel: +44 0191 334 6107
https://etheses.durham.ac.uk

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author.
No quotation from it should be published without
his prior written consent and information derived
from it should be acknowledged.

L2 LEARNERS' KNOWLEDGE OF VERB FORM-FUNCTION RELATIONSHIPS AT DIFFERENT STAGES IN THE ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE:

A Study of College Learners' Interlanguage IN ZAIRE

by

NSEBENG-KIMANESE MAYALA

Postgraduate Diploma (University of Essex)
MA (University of Durham)

A thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

SCHOOL OF ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

The University of Durham
June 1991

This Thesis is dedicated with love to

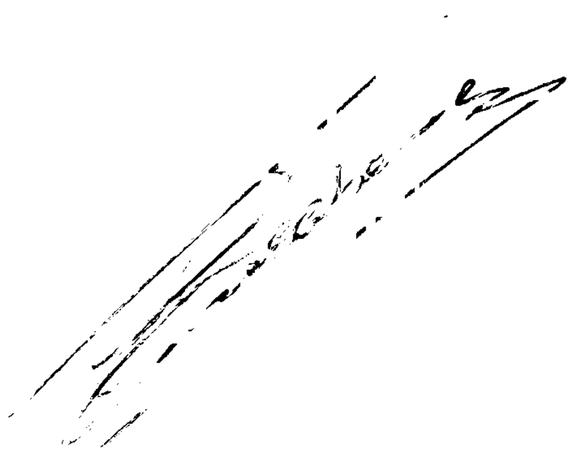
Linda Matomi Carole Mayala

Christian Katanga Mayala

Jean-Junior Kimanese Mayala

Helene Mamono Mayala

I confirm that no part of the material offered in this Thesis has previously been submitted by me for a degree in this or any other University.



Nsebeng-Kimanese MAYALA

June 27th 1991

Copyright © 1991 by Nsebeng-Kimanese MAYALA
The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without Nsebeng-Kimanese MAYALA 's prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

ABSTRACT

The present study is an investigation of advanced L2 learners' knowledge of verb forms in learning English in a formal training setting. Within this area, the study focuses on the use of verb forms and on form-function relationships in the use of verb forms in context. In addition, the study also investigates learners' ability to use metalingual knowledge to explain the circumstances of use of verb forms.

The data for the project were collected through elicitation tasks on different knowledge domains in the area of verb forms, i.e., tense marking, verb supply, verb correction and the association between verb forms and contexts of use. Four tasks were designed for the study, specifically Selective Deletion Gap-Filling (Test 1), Verb Correction (Test 2), Multiple-choice (Test 3) and Grammaticality Jugdement on Tense-time relationship (Test 4). The overall criterion variable for evaluation was the appropriate use or selection of verb forms.

The study involved 140 informants: 21 native speakers (NS) and 119 non-native speakers (NNS). The NS informants were all teachers from top primarily school classes and from Comprehensive schools in Durham (England). The NNS informants were selected randomly from *Institut Pédagogique National*, a Teachers' Training College in the capital city of Zaire. They were all adult advanced learners taking intensive English courses in the English Department. The informants had previously studied English for at least four years before joining the English Department. They came from different parts of the country and they represented different social classes and linguistic backgrounds.

Three statistical measures were referred to in the analysis of the data: the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Pearson's Correlation Coefficient and the Student's t-test. The ANOVA was used to provide scores that were used to explain the general development across three proficiency levels. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was used to compare the degree of relationship between the different variables in the study. The Student's t-test was computed to determine the progression between any two groups and to compare NNS informants' performance with that of NS informants.

The data were examined for a more global view of the informants' performance on

verb forms with reference to both developmental trends and variation in IL. The findings from the analysis of the data show that time of exposure and experience are important variables in accounting for the learners' IL development and task-related variation. The study shows that standard or default form-function uses of verb forms become established during the course of three-year study programme in Teachers' Training Colleges in Zaire, but that non-default use is not fully acquired.

With respect to methodology, a multi-level analysis of IL data was used to explain the relationship between form and function in L2 learners' evolving grammars.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this work could not have been possible without the help and support of many people to whom I am most grateful.

First of all, I am deeply and sincerely grateful to Mr Peter Grundy who was both a superviser and a guide throughout the period I spent in the English Department, at Durham Unviersity. His suggestions and advice on framing this work were extremely valuable and are very much appreciated. I would also like to express my deep gratitude to the British Council/Newcastle for making my stay in England possible. I sincerely appreciate the sacrifices made by the British Council to finance my studies. My special thanks to all the members of the British Council Office in Newcastle, and in particular to Ms Angie Stephenson, Mrs Jan Butterfield and Mrs Sylvia Dixon for their kindness and loving care.

My deepest gratitude and thanks are also addressed to all the lecturers in the English Department for their spontaneous help at various stages in the writing of this thesis, they are: Dr Maggy Tallerman, Mrs A. Squires, Ms Anna Donalson, Mr Arthur Brookes, Mr Lars Malmberg and Mr Mike Davenport. My sincere thanks to the secreatary Angela Foster for her readiness to help.

Many more lecturers from various Departments of Durham University also contributed to framing my work, among whom I would like to mention in particular Dr I. S. Evans from the Geography Department who spent a great deal of his valuable time explaining to me the different statistical techniques and their role in both data description and interpretation of the results. Similarly, I am very grateful to Dr M. Byram from the School of Education for his spontaneous suggestions on the methdological aspect of the sudy. My special thanks are also addressed to Dr Alan Davies (Edinburgh University), Dr. R. Carter (Nottingham Unversity), Mr. B. Heaton (Leeds University) and Mr J. Simpson (University College/London) for their advice and personal interest in some aspects of my study.

Many more people, in particular native speakers of English living in Durham took an active part either in completing the Tests or in evaluating some aspects of the tests. Those people include Mr and Mrs Elliot, Mr and Mrs Hyland, Mr and Mrs Shepherd, Mr and Mrs Underwood, Ms M. Eden the 1989-90 MA students in the English Department (Durham University), teachers from St Godric's Infant school,

Gilesgate Junior school and St Leornard's Comprehensive school. I am grateful to the Headmasters from these schools for allowing the experiment to be conducted in their schools.

From my own College (Kinshasa), I would like to thank the I.P.N. authorities, the Head of Department Dr Khandi, my colleagues Dr Dika, Mr. Kabwika, Mr Kassongo N., and all the students who took part to the experiment for their sincere collaboration.

I wish also to express my gratitude to all the members of staff at the Computer Centre for their time in helping us with various manipulations of computers. Among them, my special thanks to Dr. Bob Williams for his precious assistance in the organization of the data for computation and interpretation; Dr R.F. Smith for his comments and proof-reading parts of the thesis; Dr J.G. Roberts and Mr. Mike Ireland for their specific suggestions on computing and organising the data into tables.

During my stay at Durham University, I shared important moments with extremely friendly colleagues to whom I owe a deep and frank companionship. My life in company of Margaret Eden, May Fan, David Shepherd, Ali Shehadah, Georges Saour, Joseph Chryshochoos and Nikos Chryschohoos was just pleasant. My special thanks to Margaret for proof-reading parts of this thesis.

On behalf of my family, I would like to thank our special friends both from the University and outside the University. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Mrs Muriel Sawbridge, Mr and Mrs M. Richardson, Bob Underwood and Georgina, Mr and Mrs Hyland, and Stephen and Pamela for their friendship and moral support. Our thanks to Dr Nsakala Lengo, Dr T. Biselela and Gaby Kalala for sharing some important moments with us.

At last, but certainly not least, I am deeply grateful to my wife Jeannette and my children Linda, Christian, Jean-Junior and Helène for their continuous moral support and care, and for having accepted to share some of my difficult moments.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS v

LIST OF FIGURES x

LIST OF TABLES x

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS xv

1 INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL RESEARCH BACKGROUND

1.1 Rationale and purpose of the study

1.1.1 Rationale for the study

1.1.2 Purpose of the study

1.2 Research background

1.2.1 Linguistic background to the study

1.2.2 English in the education system in Zaire

1.2.3 Research methodology and Test design procedures

1.3 The structure of the thesis

2 A SURVEY OF THEORIES AND HYPOTHESES ON SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING 1

2.1 Introduction 1

2.2 The early theories of second language learning 1

2.2.1 The behaviourist learning theory 1

2.2.2 The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis 1

2.3 Interlanguage research 1

2.3.1 Language learner language 1

2.3.2 Interlanguage as a system 2

2.3.3 The treatment of errors in the IL studies 2

2.4 Recent models of second language learning 2

2.4.1 The Universal Hypothesis 3

2.4.2 The Variable Competence Model 3

2.4.3 The Form-function/function-form Model 3

2.5 Additional factors in second language learning 3

2.5.1 Language learners' strategies 3

2.5.2 Previous knowledge, experience and learning context 4

2.6 Summary and relevance to the present study 4

2.6.1 Summary 4
2.6.2 Relevance to the present study 4
3 **A BRIEF SURVEY OF GRAMMAR AND VERBS IN ENGLISH AND FRENCH** 4
3.1 Selected views on the grammar of English 4
3.1.1 Introduction 4
3.1.2 Varieties of English grammar 5
3.1.3 A description of grammar for L2 learners 5
3.1.4 From standard to communicative grammar 5
3.1.5 Verbs and verb types in English 5
3.1.6 Verb forms in English 6
3.1.7 Verb functions: time orientation and other meanings 6
3.1.8 Summary 7
3.2 A brief description of verb forms in French 7
3.2.1 The morphology of French verbs 7
3.2.2 Time orientation in the French verb system 8
3.3 Summary 8
4 **THE TREATMENT OF VERB FORMS IN IL STUDIES** 8
4.1 Introduction 8
4.2 A review of existing IL studies 8
4.2.1 B. Ntahwakuderwa (1987): English L2 learners in Zaire 8
4.2.2 C.J. Sato (1985): IL development 8
4.2.3 R. J. Lund (1986): Formal accuracy with finite verbs 9
4.2.4 Ali A. Hassan (1986) : Relative clauses and verb tenses 9
4.2.5 H. W. J. Hung (1986): IL and temporal expressions 9
4.3 The relevance of the IL studies to the present study 10
4.3.1 Verb forms and IL 10
4.3.2 Form-function/function-form: a multi-level approach 10
4.3.3 Need for further research 10
4.3.4 Summary 10
5 **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY** 10
5.1 Rationale for the study 10
5.1.1 Aims of the study 10
5.1.2 Data collection procedures 10

5.2 Preliminary data collection 10
5.2.1 Rationale for task design 10
5.2.2 The Informants' background 11
5.2.3 Methods and procedures for data collection 11
5.2.4 A Description of the tasks for the preliminary study 11
5.2.5 Preliminary study: results and discussion 11
5.2.6 Implications from the discussion 11
5.2.7 Form-function precedence in the acquisition of tenses 11
5.2.8 Function-form precedence in the acquisition of tenses 12
5.2.9 Concluding observations 12
5.3 Methodological directions for the main study 12
5.4 Variables and Hypotheses for the study 12
5.5 Task design for the main study 12
5.5.1 Aims of the tests 12
5.5.2 Procedures for test design 12
5.5.3 Rationale for the Tasks 12
5.6 The pilot test 13
5.6.1 The informants 13
5.6.2 Views and comments on the pilot test 13
5.7 The main study: Test administration 13
5.7.1 The population studied 13
5.7.2 Sampling techniques 13
5.7.3 Administering the tests 14
5.8 Summary 14
6 **DESCRIPTION AND PRESENTATION OF THE DATA** 14
6.1 Description of the Tasks 14
6.1.1 Rationale for the Description 14
6.1.2 Tasks description 14
6.1.3 Summary 15
6.2 Statistical description of the data 15
6.2.1 Introduction 15
6.2.2 Scoring procedures and data description 16
6.2.3 Statistical techniques for data description 18
6.2.4 Graphic representations of the data 18

7	**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**	19
7.1	Hypotheses for the study	19
7.1.1	Hypothesis 1: The informants' knowledge of formal tense formation	19
7.1.2	Hypothesis 2: The informants' knowledge of acceptable verb forms	20
7.1.3	Hypothesis 3: The informants' ability to recognise correctness/incorrectness	21
7.1.4	Hypothesis 4: The informants' ability to make appropriate corrections	21
7.1.5	Hypothesis 5: The informants' ability to match verb forms to contexts of use	22
7.1.6	Hypothesis 6: The informants' ability to make associations between tense and time	22
7.1.7	Hypothesis 7: The informants' metalingual knowledge of the circumstances of verb form uses	23
7.2	Additional Findings	23
7.3	Summary of the findings	24
7.3.1	Summary of the quantitative results	24
7.3.2	Summary of the findings	24
7.3.3	Learners' formal knowledge of verb forms	24
7.3.4	Learners' knowledge of verb forms	24
7.3.5	Learners' metalingual knowledge of circumstances of verb form use	24
8	**CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES**	25
8.1	Conclusions and summary of findings	25
8.2	Implications of the study	25
8.2.1	L2 learning	25
8.2.2	IL variation	25
8.2.3	IL theory	25
8.2.4	Rate of approximation to the TL norms	25
8.2.5	Language theories: default meaning in language description	25
8.2.6	Conducting research studies	25

8.3 Recommendations for further studies 25
8.3.1 On testing the model of language description 25
8.3.2 Obtaining native speaker judgement 25
8.3.3 Instruments of measurement 25
8.4 Concluding observations 25

Appendices: In order of chapter organization

1.1	Principle languages of Zaire	276
1.2	Languages of Zaire	277
1.3	Institut Pedagogique National (I.P.N.)	278
2	Learner strategies: some major classications	279
3.1	Preliminary study questionnaire	281
3.2	Responses to preliminary study questionnaire	282
3.3	Examples of IL verb forms	293
3.4	IL verb forms: summarised results	295
4	Tasks for the main study	297
4.1	Task one: Selective Deletion Gap Filling	299
4.1	Task two: Verb Correction	300
4.3	Task three: Multiple-choice	302
4.4	Task four: Grammaticality and tense-time relationship	305
5	The informants' backgrounds	307
6	Description of Co-text in Test 3	309
7	Codes for Computing the data	311
8	Percentages of responses	314
9	Model explanations for tense-time relationship	322
10	Results of NNSs' explanations of circumstances of verb use	324
11	Frequency of distributions of scores	329
12.1	Graphic representation of dispersion	333
12.5	Frequency scores (bar graphs)	335

LIST OF FIGURES

2.1	Diffusion model for negatives	23
3.1	Morphological representations of English verbs	61
4.1	Group means by Tasks	94
5.1	A three-stage model for form-function and function-form interaction in the acquisition of tense and time	117
6.1	Graphic reprentation of dispersion for Test 1	187
6.2	The frequency of scores for Test 1	189
6.3	Group means computed between Tests	191
7.1	Group mean scores on five domains in the use/knowledge of verb forms	242

LIST OF TABLES

2.1	Selected language models	29
5.1	Informants' background	110
5.2	Variation continuum for past tense forms in NNS compositions	123
5.3	Informants' background	137
5.4	Informants' background	139
6.1	Verb types and tense forms	151
6.2	Distribution of verb forms in Test 1	152
6.3	Distribution of items requiring changes in Test 2	154
6.4	Distribution of features in Test 3	157
6.5	Types of association between tense and time in Test 4	158
6.6	Description of linguistic features for the study	159
6.7	Distribution of linguistic contexts by tasks	159
6.8	Percentages of responses for Test 1	162
6.9	Percentages of responses for Test 2	165
6.10	Percentages of responses for Test 3	169
6.11	Percentages of responses for Test 4	172
6.12	Frequency distribution of scores for Test 1	174
6.13	Frequency distribution of scores for Test 2	175
6.14	Frequency distribution of scores for Test 3	177
6.15	Frequency distribution of scores for Test 4	180
6.16	Central tendency indicators for four Tests	182
6.17	Confidence limits, standard deviation and standard error for Test 1	182
6.18	Results of Student's t-test comparing four groups on four Tests	184
6.19	Pearson Correlation Coefficient computed between NNS informants	185
7.1	Results of Student's t-test comparing pairs of groups on non-past and past tense marking	196
7.2	Results of Student's t-test comparing pairs of groups on inflectional and lexical past tense marking	198
7.3	Results of Student's t-test comparing pairs of groups	

	on non-finite (tense marked) and invariable verb forms	200
7.4	Results of Student's t-test comparing pairs of groups for *be*	202
7.5	Results of Student's t-test comparing pairs of groups for *do*	203
7.6	Results of Student's t-test comparing pairs of groups for *have*	204
7.7	Informants' actual responses for *be* non-past	205
7.8	Informants' actual responses for *be* past	206
7.9	Informants' actual responses for *do* non-past	207
7.10	Informants' actual responses for *do* past	208
7.11	Informants' actual responses for *have* non-past	209
7.12	Informants' actual responses for *have* past	210
7.13	Percentages of responses to correct items in Test 2	215
7.14	Results of Student's t-test comparing pairs of groups on verb correction	220
7.15	Percentages of responses for correction of selected items where NS changes were in any case identical	222
7.16	Results of Student's t-test comparing pairs of groups on single and multiple answers	225
7.17	Results of Student's t-test comparing pairs of groups with reference to co-text in Test 1	227
7.18	Results of Student's t-test comparing pairs of groups with reference to co-text in Test 3	227
7.19	Results of Student's t-test comparing pairs of groups with reference to co-text in Test 4	228
7.20	Results of Student's t-test on prototypical and non-prototypical associations in Test 4	231
7.21	Evaluation of NNS informants' explanations of circumstances of verb form usage	233
7.22	The degree of accuracy of metalingual knowledge as revealed in the explanations of verb functions (expressed in %)	234
7.23	Percentages of choices for item 3, Test 3	236
7.24	Evaluation results of NNS informants' compositions	238

7.25 A summarised evaluation of NNS informants' compositions 239
7.26 Summary of Hypotheses and Results in the Study 248

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ART: Article

AUX: Auxiliary

CAH: Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis

EA: Error Analysis

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

F: Feminine

FUT: Future tense

G1: First year informants from the sampled student population

G2: Second year informants from the sampled student population

G3: Third year informants from the sampled student population

IL: Interlanguage (or second language learner's language)

IPN: Institut Pédagogique National

IMPERF: Imperfect tense

INF: Infinitive

L1: First language

L2: Second language

MDH: Markedness Differential Hypothesis

NL: Native Language

NNS: Non-native Speakers of English

NS: Native Speakers of English

NP: Noun Phrase

PAST: Past tense

PASTPART: Past participle

PN: Proper name

PREP: Preposition

PRES: Present tense

PRO: Pronoun

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

TL: Target Language

VP: Verb Phrase

UG: Universal Grammar

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL RESEARCH BACKGROUND

1.1 Rationale and purpose of the study

1.1.1 Rationale for the study

The English tense system is one of the most troublesome areas in learning English as a second language, not only for beginners, but also for advanced learners. According to Towell (1987:169)[1], "Tenses remain a thorn in the flesh of learners throughout their learning experience: a suggested reason for this might be their embeddedness in the semantic foundation of the language" (also Godfrey 1980, Broeder, Extra and Hout 1989, Mobaidin 1989, Sato 1985, 1990, Wolfram 1985, etc.) It is in the context of this view that the present study sets out to investigate advanced L2 learners' use and knowledge of verb forms across three different proficiency levels. The present study was motivated by three main reasons:
a. to identify and analyse some of the key structures which are problematic for learners of English as a foreign language in Zaire;
b. to provide teachers, learners and course designers with detailed empirical evidence of English advanced L2 learners' real problems;
c. to contribute to Interlanguage (IL) theory with data from a close study of learners' use of verb forms in English.

The study is therefore motivated by the assumption that learning and teaching English at University level in Zaire would be more effective and more rewarding if both learners and teachers knew exactly what *problems* learners were likely to encounter in attempting to produce TL forms. The present study addresses one of the many problems faced by learners and focuses on learners' ability to acquire verb forms in a formal training setting.

DUN

1.1.2 Purpose of the study

The overall aim of the present study is to investigate the extent to which learning English in formal context has an effect on advanced L2 learners' production of verb forms with a particular focus on:

- the extent to which learners' knowledge of verb forms shows progression towards TL norms;
- the extent to which learners have knowledge of specific verb forms and the extent to which such knowledge reflects the learners' level of instruction; and
- the extent to which contexts of use affect the learners' ability to associate verb forms with these contexts.

On the assumption that IL development reflects not only formal but also functional characteristics of language use and the relationship between these notions, the study considers these issues as closely related to the development of forms and functions in IL and demonstrates the need to take into account both form and meaning in the study of verb forms. When we refer to forms, we imply the systematic use of rules governing learners' immediate competence at given time which may offer evidence of the quantity and quality of the learners' knowledge. When we refer to meaning, we are concerned with the learners' ability to produce appropriate verb forms in the various task related contexts provided for the purpose of investigation.

1.2 Research background

1.2.1 Linguistic background to the study

With four principle and with approximately 186 languages[2] in total (see appendices 1.1 and 1.2), Zaire is such a multilingual and multicultural society that contacts and communication are possible only if people from different linguistic backgrounds share a *lingua franca.* This situation is particularly evident in mixed population urban areas where a common language is an essential tool for communication, unlike the rural areas where there are more homogeneous populations. The capital of the country, Kinshasa, is both a multicultural and a multilingual city where French is used as the *lingua franca* for legal and civil administration, and for

cultural and economic transactions. French is also the medium of instruction from the fourth year of primary education upwards.

This situation results, on the one hand, in the spread of French as the common language and, on the other hand, in reducing the chances of national languages obtaining the status of official languages. French is used in Zaire as the *lingua franca* by all the educated elite. It is the language of the written texts used in schools and in public education generally. Thus, education through French is not only recognised by everybody but also supported because it leads to social advancement. Because of its status as the official language, French is the medium likeliest to lend to an upward mobility, consequently downgrading the four main national languages (appendix 1.1) which offer little opportunity for upward mobility. The fact that the national languages are only endorsed in education at the primary level and according to given area means there is little hope that one of them will be accepted as an official language.

1.2.2 English in the education system in Zaire

Like most African countries, Zaire is still facing serious difficulties in its efforts to plan education and to provide its people with professionally trained manpower for national development. A number of studies (Biselela 1989, Bokamba 1982, Mbaya 1982, Ndoma 1984, 1990, Ngalasso 1989, Ntahwakuderwa 1987) have raised and discussed various aspects of education in Zaire and have characterised it as *lacking vision, inefficient and ill-adapted* (Bokamba 1982). Several reasons can be offered to explain the situation, namely the effects of the old colonial system, the attempts to Africanize the education system after independence, badly prepared plans for restructuring, the dissolution of established institutions, the working conditions of teachers and learners, etc. The list is by no means exhaustive. In the domain of language planning, for instance, Ndoma (1984) raises, among other issues, the difficulty of carrying out efficient language planning without sufficient financial resources. In his view,

> language planning should be one aspect of a country's overall development program. But budgetwise, language policy planning has so far always been a low-profile part of general development programs in Zaire. Because of the uncertainty in financial planning in education,

> the Education Department [Ministry of Education] often hesitates and takes half-measures (Ndoma 1984:176-7)[3].

These problems, although real and important, are not the concern of the present study. It is important to recognise, however, for the purpose of this study that English teaching, like the rest of the Education system, took a long time to reach the required standard. In the colonial period, education was intended to fulfil colonial needs and it was limited to the elementary level only for the vast majority. The colonial administration's policy restricted access to secondary and tertiary education. As Bokamba (1982) puts it

> The expansion into secular education, however, was externally controlled by colonial governments which were against the establishment of [a] mass-oriented secondary education system. Further, the creation of university education was viewed by these governments as highly incompatible with the objectives of colonization. A well-known slogan of the Belgian colonialists that exemplified this attitude in Zaire, for instance, stated that: *pas d'élites, pas d'ennuis* - English: No elites, no troubles - (Bokamba 1982:197)[4].

In the same way, the introduction of English in the Zairean education system was first found only in the colonizers' private schools, and was not part of the national curriculum until the early sixties. From the independence period, the educational planners soon recognised the need to improve the education system and adapt it to national demands. The curricula were revised and new subjects, including English, were introduced in the interest of both the community and national development. At the university level, for instance, it was agreed that

> for their graduates [Zaireans] to be recognized outside the country, especially in Belgium and other European countries, they must have the same curriculum or minimally diplomas that could be accepted as the equivalents of the former's colonizer's universities (Bokamba 1982:204)[5].

As one of the many subjects on the school curriculum, English was given no particular importance by either teachers or pupils. A revival of interest started to take place in the mid-1960s and was justified, on the one hand, by the establishment of diplomatic relations with Anglophone countries and, on the other hand, by the introduction of direct methods in teaching languages, and of language laborato-

ries and other learning equipment. School programmes were then adapted, and pupils who showed particular interest in the English language were given further opportunities to improve it. The creation of institutions providing university level education was accompanied by the creation of professional studies departments within those institutions. In particular, the creation of the first Teachers' Training College known as *Institut Pédagogique National* (I.P.N.: see appendix 1.3) with the first English department can be considered as an important step towards establishing the teaching of English as a real profession. This Institution and many others created later provide secondary schools with qualified teachers of English.

Each department of a Teachers' Training College or University (e.g., Biology, Chemistry, English, etc.) follows a given curriculum designed by the Ministry of Education. In the case of English departments, for instance, all major courses are taught in English. English is then the medium of instruction in all English departments in Teachers' Training Colleges and Universities. However, despite this overall organisation, there are still enormous problems, for instance, in the internal organisation of institutions, the provision of in-service training for teachers and even at the level of admission to Higher Education. Although there are no straightforward solutions to most of these problems, it is regrettable that many of the attempts made by researchers to offer partial solutions to some of the problems are generally ignored by the educational planners.

In the context of this project which focuses on learning English, it is necessary to point out that there are several factors that make learning English difficult in Zaire, two of which are particularly revelant in the context of this study. First, the environment: this is not only dominated by French as the official *lingua franca*, but also by hundreds of local languages (appendix 1.2). That is, linguistically, the Zairean environment does not provide a context in which English can be readily used or practised. According to Mbaya's (1982) study,

> Le facteur principal ici, disons-le, est le manque de pratique de la langue en dehors de l'école. 85% d'étudiants interrogés le confirment tandis que 15% autres avouent que c'est par manque d'interêt pour la langue. Pour beaucoup d'élèves [étudiants] en effet, l'Anglais est une branche comme l'algèbre, la chimie ou la géographie pour lesquelles il faut obtenir les points et passer de classe (Mbaya 1982:17)[6].

Mbaya's study confirms that 85% of High school students believe learning English is difficult because of the lack of practice opportunity outside school. Classroom teaching constitutes the most important and often the only input they get. Learners have only their schoolmates and teachers to practise English with and little chance of interaction with native speakers.

The second difficulty concerns the students' admission to Higher Education: there are up to now no clear criteria set by the educational planners in selecting secondary pupils for admission in Higher Education. As Ntahwakuderhwa (1987) points out, the only criterion is the secondary school diploma. As a result, the majority of pupils admitted to the College either have little interest in or no real mastery of English at a level that would allow them to think and express themselves effectively in the language. This situation has serious implications for most of the students admitted to the English department where they are expected to be trained as teachers of English for secondary schools, and this is hypothesised to be one of the main reasons for poor performance in most English departments. The results of the present study may provide further evidence of this.

1.2.3 Research methodology and Test design procedures

The present study is a primary and cross-sectional investigation of the formal and functional knowledge of verb forms by College L2 learners of English in Zaire. As a primary research study, the project used real (people) subjects to gather the data, and as a cross-sectional study, the data were collected at a given time for all the informants involved. The rationale underlying the research methodology was motivated (i) by the kinds of learner investigated, (ii) by the need to explain learners' problems, and (iii) by the need to gather reliable information. The learners used as informants in this study were all students from a Teachers' Training College (I.P.N.) and were selected randomly from three different levels of instruction, first year (G1), second year (G2) and third year (G3). They were all adult advanced learners from a homogeneous student population. In order to get an overall picture of the learners' problems, the study was carried out in three main stages: through a preliminary data collection exercise, through a pilot test and through the main tests. In the first stage, the researcher was concerned with collecting general information about the learners and their learning conditions. The aims of

the exercise were (a) to identify learners' language problems as manifested in a sample of written language, and (b) to determine the characteristic behaviours of the learners to be investigated. The preliminary study was especially important as it provided a first insight into the features that were truly problematic for the learners. A summary of the preliminary task is provided in appendix 3.

In the second stage, four tasks were designed using the information from the preliminary task. But, before they were used to collect data in Zaire, the four tasks were first piloted with a group of overseas MA students at Durham University. The third stage was the collection of data through elicitation procedures. As often described in the literature (Corder 1981, Tarone 1988), the technique allowed the learners to manifest in their performance the potential range and limits of their competence. Elicitation procedures are particularly useful for collecting data (from advanced L2 learners) because they cause the learners to display what they are capable of in a given area, and by doing so, show the extent to which IL can be described in terms of what has actually been learned. However, it is equally important that in the process of data collection, one takes into account the learners' learning conditions. In the case of L2 learners in a formal context, one needs to consider, in particular:

(i) that learning takes place within limits, i.e., language use is mainly limited to the classroom environment, and that spontaneous practice is likely to be scarce;
(ii) that learning is primarily conscious, i.e., very little learning takes place intuitively or automatically and that language production, to a large extent, is restricted to structures requiring reasoning and understanding; and
(iii) that the language classroom is a social setting in which the sum total of classroom language learning opportunities is locally determined. This context itself determines, in some sense, the language that is used there (Allwright 1987).

The tasks used for the main tests included Selective Deletion Gap Filling (Test 1), Verb Correction (Test 2), Multiple-choice (Test 3) and Grammaticality Judgement on Tense-time relationship (Test 4). As described in Chapters 5 and 6, each of the tasks was designed to investigate a different knowledge domain in the area of verb forms and was mainly based on learners' everyday language.

1.3 The structure of the thesis

The study is divided into eight chapters within each of which further sub-divisions are made.

Chapter 1 outlines the research background and describes the rationale and purpose of the study.

Chapter 2 surveys some of the main theories and hypotheses that have characterised the development of SLA theory in general, and IL theory in particular. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section outlines the pre-Chomskian period of language learning and discusses the role of Behaviourism as one of the early learning processes. The second section discusses the IL Hypothesis as the alternative theory to the C.A.H. The third section outlines three of the main theories that have often been related to IL development, i.e., the Universal Hypothesis (with particular emphasis on Markedness Theory), the Variable Competence Model and the Form and function approach. The fourth section describes briefly the roles of learner strategies, of previous knowledge and the learning context in second language learning.

Chapter 3 reports a range of descriptive positions relative to the grammar of verbs, both in English and French. The distinction between standard and non-standard is discussed, from both the prescriptive and the descriptive standpoints. Learning correct English and the need to tolerate acceptable variation are also discussed.

Chapter 4 summarises a number of selected experimental studies on various aspects of verb forms, including the form and function approach to verb use, and specifies their relevance to the present study. Ntahwakuderwa's study offers a similar background to this study in that it was carried out in the same environment and used informants from the same institution. Sato's study is included for its comprehensive description of the form-function and function-form approaches. Hassan's reference to tense marking in compositions with university students was another useful reference for this study. Hung's discussion of the relationship between tense-aspect and temporality shed some light on our understanding of how learners combine forms and functions.

Chapter 5 outlines the research methodology and is divided into seven sections.

The first presents the rationale for the study, i.e., the reasons behind the choice of the topic and the aims of the study. The second describes the preliminary task that served as a *quasi-pilot study* for this study and gives a brief account of the data and the results obtained. The third outlines the methodological directions for the main study derived from the results of the preliminary task and emphasises the need for controlled tasks. The fourth presents the different hypotheses analysed in the study. The fifth describes the procedures used for the design of the main tests. The sixth summarises the administration and outcomes of the pilot test. The seventh defines the populations studied and reports on the administration of the main Tests.

Chapter 6 offers the quantitative analyses of the data in two sections. The first section presents a detailed description of the items used in the different Tests. The second describes the use and application of statistical techniques selected for analysing the data and explains the scoring procedures used in computing the data.

Chapter 7 analyses the data and compares the findings with those of previous studies. The chapter is divised into four sections. The first section presents the different hypotheses to be tested. The second section discusses the different Hypotheses with the help of data from the different Tests. The third section reports on additional findings from the written compositions and language transfer. The fourth and final section summarises the findings and draws a number conclusions relating to the informants' overall behaviour.

Chapter 8 is divided into four sections. Section one draws a general conclusion from the study as a whole. Section two presents the implications derived from the various findings and indicates their importance for IL theory and second language learning in general. Section three outlines some recommendations for further studies. And finally, section four conludes with some observations on the study.

Chapter One references.

1. R. Towell 1989 Approaches to Analysis of Oral Development fo the Advanced Learner, in: Coleman, J.A. and Towell, R. (eds), *The Advanced Language Learner* , London, p. 169.

2. Atlas Linguistique de l'Afrique Centrale, p.109.

3. U. Ndoma 1984 National Language Policy in Education in Zaire, *Language Problems and Language Planning,* Vol. 8/2, pp. 176-7.

4. E.G. Bokamba 1982 Education and development in Zaire, in: Ntalaja, N. (ed), *The Crisis in Zaire: Myths and Realities*, New Jersey, p.197.

5. E.G. Bokamba 1982 op.cit., p.204.

6. M. Mbaya 1982 *L'Anglais dans l'Enseignement Zairois 1956 1982,* Bukavu: CERUKI, p.17

Chapter II

A SURVEY OF THEORIES AND HYPOTHESES ON SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

> *I see acquisition research as something like a jigsaw puzzle occupying a particular position, giving us important information in its own right, but best understood in its relationship with other pieces. In other words, there is not always a right and a wrong approach; rather various approaches are complementary* (Gass 1989:500)[1].

2.1 Introduction

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is a complex area whose development has been characterised by constant revisions of attitude towards language in general and language learning in particular. Those changes of attitude can be seen in various studies, some of which are surveyed in the present chapter. Alongside this historical account of language learning theories, the survey also attempts to show how the concept of transfer emerged and how it can be related to the whole of the learner's process of language learning.

The survey will therefore concentrate only on theories and hypotheses that have long been the main preoccupation of Applied Linguistics, i.e., those with direct implications for language learning. However, a survey of second language learning theories cannot always clearly determine which theory a given study refers to in the literature. It is not unusual, in fact, to come across studies which mirror an admixture of approaches/theories such as, for example, between the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) and the 1970s Interlanguage (IL) hypothesis. For these reasons, a survey of second language learning[2] will need, on one the hand, to impose restrictions of what is selected for survey and, on the other hand, to show the way the survey relates to the present study.

For the purpose of this study, the survey of second language learning has been divided tentatively into the three major periods that have characterised the devel-

opment of second language learning theory, namely:
(i) the Early theories on language learning period characterised by the behaviourist and contrastive approaches to language learning;
(ii) the IL Hypothesis period dominated by the influence of similarities/differences between first and second language acquisition processes; and
(iii) the Recent Models of second language learning period concerned with the notion of universality and individual learner differences in language learning.
In addition to these three periods, the survey outlines also some of the main factors that have influenced second language learning.

The first section of the chapter offers a brief survey of the early models of second language learning theory, i.e., the behaviourist learning theory and the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis. The behaviourist learning theory is discussed first, not only because it was the first model to be referred to in language teaching but also, because it characterised learning in the pre-Chomskyan period. The first section also discusses the emergence of the CAH and considers it as having brought changes both in method of analysis as well as in emphasis to the notion of errors. It may be argued that the various attempts to explain errors by comparing and contrasting languages, provided the subsequent studies in SLA with additional information about underlying behaviour in language learning. If this is so, the CAH may be said to have initiated the link between first language and second language acquisition. This relationship initiated the debates on similarities and differences between first and second language acquisition which are discussed under language transfer in section two of this chapter.

The second section discusses the emergence of the concept IL which resulted from researchers' efforts to explain the process of *learning a second language*. This period is dominated by an effort to characterise learner language as distinct from first and target language.

The third section is concerned in particular with the description of three of the many models which derive from the IL hypothesis. These are: (a) The Universal Hypothesis (including the Markedness Theory and the Universal Grammar); (b) the Variable Competence model and, (c) the Form and Function model. Their contribution to the development of the IL research and their relevance to this project are discussed. The fourth section presents a brief description of learner

strategies with a focus on learners' differences as manifested in their previous knowledge. The learning context in which the study was carried out also justified the inclusion of learner factors in the present study.

This survey relates to the present study in several ways, including four, namely:
(a) Historically, the survey shows how SLA and IL theories developed and outlines not only their evolution but also where each theory in turn failed to account satisfactorily for observed phenomena;
(b) Theoretically, IL is the system behind second language learning. IL is used to refer to the grammars constructed by second language learners in their process of acquisition. The survey shows that the development of an acceptable IL theory has continuously required changes and adaptions. This is seen in the various attempts to characterise the learner's language as *systematic* and *independent.* This also applies to the notion of *error* and, in particular, to the way *language transfer* has been described;
(c) Methodologically, the survey describes the shift of approach in second language learning from product-oriented studies such as those described in the Behaviourist and CAH periods, to the process-oriented studies of the post Contrastive period, and
(d) Pedagogically, the survey demonstrates that there has been a shift of emphasis from language to learning and the learner in more recent studies. Such a shift in emphasis is of particular interest to this project because of the researcher's concern with the type of learners and their setting. This is discussed in detail in the last section of this chapter. The chapter concludes with a summary of the views discussed and lists the main issues relevant to the present study.

2.2 The early theories of second language learning

2.2.1 The behaviourist learning theory

Most views on second language acquisition, at least until the late 1950s, were derived from a more general theory of learning, and very few studies were carried out on the actual way language was produced, and even fewer attempts were made to examine the process of second language acquisition empirically (Ellis 1985). The period was characterised by what was known as *behaviourist theory*, developed by Watson (1924) and applied by Skinner (1957). The latter claimed

that the technique of reinforcement used for conditioning animal behaviour could equally be applied to linguistic behaviour. Skinner's view is that language is no more than a set of habits that people learn by imitation.

The objective pursued by the behaviourist psychologists was to explain behaviour (first animal then human) by observing the responses that took place when particular stimuli were present. Different stimuli produced different responses from a learner. The association of a particular response with a particular stimulus constituted a habit, and it was this type of regular behaviour that psychologists such as Watson (1924) and Skinner (1957) set out to investigate. They wanted to know *how* habits were established. Within the behaviourist theory, errors were the result of non-learning rather than of wrong learning. But, in either case, there was virtually total agreement that errors had to be avoided. Thus Brooks (1960), for example, argues that errors were like sins and had to be avoided at any cost and their influence overcome as they were the result of negative transfer of first language habits. A number of objections were raised against such a pessimist view of errors resulting in serious concern about the views advocated by the behaviourist theorists. The early objections are important because they signal a change in our understanding of language learning behaviour.

2.2.2 The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis

A brief historical survey

The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) is one of the models of second language acquisition within the long tradition in comparing languages. Its main focus was on teaching languages and its approach was more concerned with the description of linguistic phenomena rather than their explanation. For these reasons the model has often been considered from two perspectives:
Psychologically, the model was an attempt to validate the theory of learning presented in the form of stimulus-response in the behaviourist model.
Linguistically, the CAH was based on a taxonomic structuralist analysis of observable surface structure phenomena. It was believed that an accurate comparison of the surface patterns or structures of two languages would reveal areas of differences on which both linguists and teachers would concentrate. This view seems in fact to validate a certain methodology which concentrates on the differences and

distance between languages. Although the connection between CAH and teaching methodology is not explicit in the literature, it is implied that comparing different languages enables the teacher to grade difficulties for teaching purposes. Learning would consist then of restructuring or replacing the graded structures step by step. The process is referred to later by Corder(1978) as a restructuring continuum in which the learner replaces L1 features one by one by L2 features.

However, not everything that happens in actual teaching situations can be explained by looking at languages in terms of differences. As a result of this situation, two versions of the CAH emerged: Firstly, the strong version which claimed that all errors in second language (L2) learning can be attributed to patterns of the native language (NL). Thus, where the patterns of the two languages are similar, the burden of learning is reduced. But where there are differences, learning is likely to be more difficult as one would expect interference or negative transfer to occur. As described by Flynn (1987:21)[3]

> acquisition consists of the learning of a fixed set of language patterns (linguistic habits) over time. L2 acquisition consists of the transfer of L1 habits to the L2. Where the L1 and L2 match, positive transfer takes place. Where the L1 and the L2 do not match, there is negative transfer.

Secondly, the weak version, which is a descriptive rather than a predictive account of second language learning, is concerned with explaining the reasons errors have occurred. This is the structuralist view of linguistics that found application in the audio-lingual or direct method of teaching languages. It was believed that transfer was the only source of difficulties in foreign language learning and that foreign language learning took place when the differences between L1 and L2 could be overcome.

Lado (1957) is often referred to as having provided second language researchers with the principles underlying learners' behaviour as the basis of contrastive analysis, a basis that relates learners' difficulties to differences between the L1 and the L2. In Lado's view, students learning a foreign language will find some features easy and others more difficult. When the features of L1 and L2 are similar, language learning is simple, but when they are different the students will face difficulties. According to Lado, errors of transfer were responsible for learning

difficulties. Thus, in order to predict and describe with clarity the patterns that will cause difficulties in learning and those that will not cause difficulties, it was necessary to compare the language and the culture to be learned with the language and the culture of the student. According to Lado (1957:2)[4],

> individuals tend to transfer the form and meaning and the distribution of forms and meanings of their NL and culture to the foreign language and culture, both productively when attempting to speak the language and act in the culture, and receptively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and culture as practised by the natives.

This view remained dominant in SLA studies for some time. However, in the late sixties, researchers in linguistics started expressing strong concern about the view. Dulay and Burt (1974), for example, argue that it is the structure of the TL and not the NL that guides SLA. For Selinker (1969) and Gass (1984), the ambiguity in the analysis of data constitutes the main reason which prevents researchers from identifying the sources of given errors with clarity. They argue in favour of stating clearly the criteria to be referred to when dealing with influences on second language learning. The task of the researcher in this case consists of identifying for description those linguistic elements which present certain regularities in the learner's performance, be they from L1, L2 or simply specific to the learner.

An evaluation of the CAH

Flynn (1987) shares the view that most linguists working in the CAH, at least in the early stages, failed to predict transfer in a reliable way. A simple description of surface structures did not and could not say much about L2 acquisition. One could not tell when transfer was a problem or when it was a facilitating factor for language learning. The CAH is also criticised for characterising language acquisition in terms of the rote learning of structures one by one and, therefore, for disregarding the infinite productivity and systematicity of natural languages. At the level of theory, grammatical features are described rather than explained, and all the comparisons are based on surface structure constituency and the distribution of features. This led some researchers such Flynn (1987) to argue that the CAH did not show clearly that the L1 experience does in some way affect L2 acquisition.

Another criticism levelled against the CAH model was its failure to describe learners' errrors accurately. Many studies more or less consisted of identifying and classifying errors on the basis of differences between an L1 and L2. Accordingly, error analysis dealt mainly with those parts of learners' performance that diverged from whatever norm this performance was compared with. Errors were then said to be the result of the persistence of existing first language habits in the new language. One can make a certain number of observations on the CAH, two of which are particularly relevant in this case. First, it is believed that the term, *comparative*, was neither handled nor understood in the same way by different researchers. Some researchers focused predominantly on differences while for the others the main concern was the similarities between languages. One must not look only for differences in a comparative analysis, but also for similarities. Second, when learners realise that the new language differs from their native language, they may not know when it is safe to operate in terms of their native language and they may create their own structures on the basis of previous contact with the target language (Kimani 1987). On the basis of such evidence, it is clear that another approach with better explanatory power is needed in SLA research.

2.3 Interlanguage research

Mclaughlin (1987) explains the notion of *Interlanguage* (IL) in two different ways: (i) as the learner's system at a single point in time and (ii) as the range of interlocking systems that characterise the development of learner language over time. The first characterisation focuses on the *transitional competence* of the language learner's system which is sometimes argued to be based on universal principles and, thus similar to L1 and L2. However, this is by no means always or even typical. Interlanguage is generally considered to be distinct from both the L1 and the L2. The second characterisation is that IL is seen as a set of related systems, i.e., IL is not made of one but of several systems which are dependent on each other. Both characterisations are further discussed in this section. The section considers three aspects of IL: (a) a historical description of some of the definitions of the concept IL and their implications in the development of second language learning theories; (b) the notion of IL as a system and, (c) the phenomenon of transfer as one of the main features in IL development.

2.3.1 Language learner language

Unlike first language acquisition, which was mainly dominated by Chomsky's views, the early days of second language learning research have been characterised by variety in models, in views and even in definitions of basic terminologies. The following brief survey of the origin and evolution of the concept IL shows how and why.

Corder: from transitional dialect to learner language

One of the early views that has contributed to characterising the learner's system as a *dialect* is found in Corder's (1971) study of *Idiosyncratic Dialects and Error Analysis.* In this study Corder considers the learner's language as an idiosyncratic dialect which he opposes to a social dialect. A social dialect shares some rules of the grammar with the target language but also reflects solidarity with a social group. Idiosyncratic dialects are characterised by rules which are peculiar to them and which are not members of the set of rules of any social dialect. Furthermore, idiosyncratic dialects are unstable and are not *langues* in that their conventions are not shared by any other social group. Finally, many of their sentences present problems of interpretation to native speakers of the target dialect.

Two clearly related consequences derive from the above characteristics: Firstly, Corder's use of *instability* justifies his choice of the term *transitional competence*, i.e., the learners do not know all the rules of the target language at the various stages through which they progress. They use rules which are said to be grammatical only in terms of their use of the language. Secondly, the term *transitional* refers to the learners' sentences which refer only partially to a knowledge of the social conventions. The learners therefore use sentences which are idiosyncratic, i.e., sentences which cannot be corrected by the learners simply because they follow the only rules known to them, those which are part of their transitional dialect.

Corder (1978) argues that to consider Interlanguage (term borrowed from Selinker 1972) as made of errors is equal to viewing child language as deviant. Interlanguage, just like child language, is a dynamic system, i.e., "a continuum of more or less smooth change, and we can locate learners, like infants, along the continuum of change and development" (Corder 1978:74)[5]. Interlanguage may be a continuum in two senses: It may be a *restructuring continuum* whereby the learner gradually

replaces features of the mother tongue, one by one, with features of the TL. In the early stages this process is referred to as transfer. Alternatively, the IL continuum may be *recreational or developmental*, whereby the learner is continuously increasing his or her knowledge of the TL. Just as in child language, IL follows a continuum of an increasing complexity.

Corder (1978) relates two hypotheses to these two types of continuum: Firstly, he suggests that there may be a degree of uniformity about second language learning such that all learners of a particular TL follow roughly the same sequence of development, whatever their mother tongue . This strong hypothesis supports the recreation position. Secondly, he suggests that if all learners having a particular mother tongue follow the same sequence in the acquisition of some language, then this supports the restructuring continuum or the weak hypothesis. These two hypotheses imply, according to Corder, that we are all equipped with the ability to restructure, or to recreate, or even to use some blend of the two, depending upon the level or quality of exposure. Language learners seem to be equipped with two mechanisms, recreation and restructuring, so that it is possible to select from these possibilities.

William Nemser's (1971) Approximative Systems

Another researcher who took an early interest in second language learning is W. Nemser. His central idea is that the learner's language is a set of *approximative systems* which may be defined as "deviant linguistic systems actually employed by the learners attempting to utilise the TL. Such approximative systems vary in character in accordance with proficiency level" (Nemser 1971:55)[6]. Nemser uses *systems* in the plural to refer to the different systems used by foreign language learners, such as the speech of immigrants, the utility systems such as those used by taxi-drivers, hotel-clerks, etc., and learner pidgin. An important characteristic of these systems is that speakers using a particular system communicate more easily with each other than with TL speakers because they develop a set of regularities within their linguistic network which may affect subsequent learning. In this sense, the term *approximative systems* seems to refer both to a linguistic system that is different from that of the TL, and to learning as a movement through a series of stages.

Selinker's Interlanguage (IL)

Selinker is often referred to as being the first to characterise the learner's language as a language in its own right. In *The Psychologically relevant data of Second Language Learning,* Selinker (1969) argues that second language learners use a separate linguistic system. He claims that when observing their utterances one is compelled to accept that most learners' utterances "are not identical to the hypothesized corresponding set of utterances which would have been produced by a native speaker of the TL had he attempted to express the same meaning as the learner" (Selinker 1969:36)[7]. Just like Corder and Nemser, Selinker came to the conclusion that the learner's utterances are not identical to the native's. The learner uses a separate linguistic system that Selinker called *Interlanguage.* There are sets of psychologically relevant data, or behavioural events, that have to be taken into account in the study of a second language, in general, and those form a separate system like the IL. The study of the learner's performance data should start then with the identification of IL features. The latter include not only those features found in the two languages in contact but also linguistic counterparts of the psychological structures which are latent in the brain of the learner.

In Selinker's view, the L2 learner has access to *the latent psychological structure* which has to be distinguished from Lenneberg's (1967) notion of *latent language structure* for L1 acquisition. In Selinker's terms, the latent psychological structure is a SLA device. The behavioural effect of this latent psychological structure is described as the regular reappearance in second language performance of linguistic phenomena which were thought to be eradicated in the performance of the learner (Selinker 1969). This view means that most psycholinguistic structures of the IL are never really eradicated, and regularly reappear in IL production. Those structures are said to be stored in the brain by a system of *fossilization.* Both positive and negative influences guide the learner in choosing and controlling what to say by using one of the following processes:

1- Language transfer which consists of an L2 production of items, rules or subsystems as the result of the influence of L1;
2- Transfer of training may be found in the learner's performance when items, rules or subsystems reflect training procedures;
3- Strategies of second language learning can manifest themselves in the learner's

attempts to understand the material to be learned;
4- Strategies of second language communication can be used by the learner when attempting to use the TL in order to communicate, and
5- Overgeneralization of TL linguistic materials can take place in an attempt to use IL rules or items.

These hypothesised processes have motivated a great deal of research and, in the context of this study, are considered as important in explaining second language processes. More important these processes provide a useful background for the development of the subsequent theories of second language learning discussed later in this study.

2.3.2 Interlanguage as a system

One of the main problems faced by researchers in second language learning is to relate the role of linguistic universals to the process of acquiring a second language. If one takes the view that ILs are natural languages, as argued in the subsection above, then

> we would expect that whatever universal constraints hold for natural languages would hold true for the interlanguages of second language learners. That is, the interlanguage should not contain structures that violate language universals, nor should the development of the interlanguage violate predictions of the Accessibility Hierarchy or other predictions based on degree of markedness (Mclaughlin 1987:87)[8].

At the same time, however, it is argued that IL is distinct from first and second language (Corder 1969, 1972, 1978; Adjemian 1976; Bley-Vroman 1983, etc.). The third view, held by Tarone (1982, 1985, 1988), Ellis (1985), and others considers IL as a set of (or a continuum of) systems that may be ranged along a continuous dimension, i.e., from a spontaneous to a formal style. These views seem to express three related claims: The first is that IL is constrained by the same rules as those for L1 acquisition. If this is so, IL is a rule-governed behaviour just like any other language. The second claim is that IL is a distinct system, i.e., a system different from that of L1 or L2. And the third claim indicates that IL is made of several systems which reflect the state of the learner's knowledge at a given point in time. These three positions are discussed further in this section.

IL and Universal principles

Adjemian (1976) argues that like any language system, IL grammars are seen to obey universal linguistic constraints and to evidence internal consistency. That is to say, if one accepts the view that IL utterances are rule-governed, then one will need explicit knowledge of those rules, because they are part of the mechanisms and strategies of the IL production process. While accepting that the internal organization of the IL should be analysed linguistically as rule-governed behaviour, Adjemian (1976) also believes that the analysis of the systematicity of the IL should begin with the regularities observed in a large body of data in order to determine the properties of the learner's grammars. That is, one should not set reference rules in advance, but rather deduce them from observation. Adjemian further points out that IL is *permeable*, that is, its structures

> may be invaded by the first language: when placed in a situation that cannot be avoided, the second language learner may use rules or items from the first language. Similarly, the learner may stretch, distort, or overgeneralize a rule from the target language in an effort to produce the intended meaning. Both processes Adjemian saw to reflect the basis permeability of the IL (quoted in McLaughlin 1987:63)[9].

However, the question remains that of knowing how can one accurately describe IL phenomena which, by nature, are based on variable rules.

IL as a system of variable rules

It is now well established in the literature (Gatbonton 1978, Ellis 1985, Tarone, 1982, 1985, 1988, etc.) that the L2 learner makes use of a range of styles according to situational or linguistic context but in a way that is systematic. Tarone (1982) derives two senses from the term *systematicity* in IL: Firstly, systematicity has to be understood as rule-governed, i.e., the speech performance of second language learners is describable in terms of an ordered set of underlying rules or a grammar. Secondly, systematicity means a system in which the arrangement of features requires the different systems to be related to form a unity. If this view is accepted, then the only style that has universal principles of language acquisition is the vernacular style. This is the style which is less influenced by other knowledge sources such as the NL or the TL. The vernacular style is said to be stable, internally

consistent, unplanned and unmonitored. The performance is said, however, to be variable between the superordinate (formal) style and the vernacular (informal) style, both being systematic as variables.

Gatbonton (1978), using a Diffusion Model, describes two phases in the mastery of a given rule. Firstly, the acquisition phase during which the learner learns a given form. Secondly, but still in the first phase, the learner introduces a second form which is used alongside the first one in all environments. Thirdly, the replacement phase in which, as a first step, the learner starts by restricting one of the forms to a specific environment, while continuing to use both forms in all other environments. Finally, the learner restricts or confines each form to its respective environment. The process (illustrated by Ellis 1985) shows the way the learner acquires negation in English.

1. No + V
2. Don't + V

Ellis (1985) then argues that at time 1 the learner uses rule 1, irrespective of whether the utterance is indicative or imperative. At time 2 the learner uses rules 1 and 2 in both indicative and imperative utterances. At time 3, rules 1 and 2 are used, but only rule 2 is used in imperative utterances. At time 4 rule 1 is used only in indicative utterances and rule 2 only in imperative utterances. Figure 2.1 illustrates the process.

Figure 2.1 — Diffusion model for negatives

	Environment	
Acquisition phase	Indicative	Imperative
Time 1	(1)	(1)
Time 2	(1), (2)	(1), (2)
Replacement phase		
Time 3	(1), (2)	(2)

Time 4 (1) (2)

Reproduced from Ellis, (1985:96)[10].

The difficulty with such a model is that one should first be able to identify the different variants of the same rule in different contexts (e.g., time 2 in the acquisition phase) before making any attempt to offer an explanation. Identifying rules may be even more difficult in a non-systematic use of rules. Alternatively, Decamp (1971) and Dittmar (1980) propose the Implicational Scaling technique to account for such variation at any point in time with data collected cross-sectionally. With data collected by means of varied types of elicitation, it is possible to identify and classify the different varieties before inserting them in what the researchers call *a staircase*. In the staircase the different forms are classified from simple to complex suggesting, at the same time, that simpler forms are acquired prior to complex ones. In short, the studies referred to above share the view that variation or variability does not mean absence of rules. The problems remain those of determining the nature and kinds of rules that characterise such IL performance.

IL as a system of its own

Selinker (1969:71)[11] argues that "if many studies have failed to explain the IL hypothesis it is simply because the status of the IL as an unambiguous system is not clear". His view is that IL should be explained in terms of regular and structured patterns even though IL is made of a continuum of styles, with the possibility of style shifting for the learner. Bley-Vroman (1983) recognises that the study of the IL system has always been one of dilemmas faced in the analysis of ILs and agrees with Selinker's original view that the learner's system is worthy of study in its own right, and not merely as a degenerate version of the target system. This view has always been one of the main dilemmas in the analysis of the Interlanguage. Bley-Vroman also agrees that variability (or variation) must be measured against internally constructed systematic rules, and not against the TL. This is what he calls the comparative fallacy, i.e., the mistake of studying the systematic character of one language by comparing it to another language. He argues for language systems in which *tout se tient* (quoting F. de Saussure), every language has its own internal logic and specific properties. Any comparison would therefore influence the interpretation and classification of data. In Bley-Vroman's views systematicity in IL means that "the learner is operating creatively and systematically, actively developing and employing a set of cognitively constructured principles, a grammar underlying his or her performance" (Bley-Vroman 1983:2)[12].

A possible appropriate procedure to analyse IL data would be, for Jordens (1980), to formulate hypotheses about the underlying rules and, subsequently, to test the predictions that can be derived from those hypotheses. The reason for this premise, i.e., finding out first which rules underlie the IL behaviour, is that those rules determine the mechanisms of IL production. One has to refer only to those rules that characterise regularities in the learner's performance and to the norms

of the TL because the rules underlying IL behaviour are not necessarily based on, or identical to, the TL ones. One of the major problems is that it is not always easy to show patterns of consistency in the actual data of IL performance.

In a description of verb placement in German, Rogers (1981) finds that individual learners' performance is characterised by an inconsistency in the application of rules, though the various deviations from the target structures show consistency among learners, not only at the same level but also between levels. Rogers' study highlights the sort of difficulties associated with the characterisation of learner language. It is possible for a learner to expand his/her system in a way that determines a particular IL development which may be different from the TL system. If the learner is systematic in his or her attempt to get a meaning across, his or her system may be said to be complete.

2.3.3 The treatment of errors in the IL studies

It was argued in the sections above that the CAH was inadequate because, among other reasons, it could not predict all the errors found in the learner data or even learning difficulties in general. In particular the CAH failed to predict learning difficulties related to the concept of transfer. It follows from this view that one of the major criticisms levelled against the CAH is its failure to predict the directionality of errors of transfer. According to Eckman (1977), when two languages are in contrast they are not equal – one is more marked than the other. The fact that transfer does not operate bidirectionally is evidence for a universal grammar based on a theory of markedness. The argument is that the CAH could not predict this directionality. The theory of markedness is discussed later in this chapter. In this subsection the focus is on *transfer* and how it may be related to the Universal Hypothesis.

Recent views on language transfer

Gass (1984:121)[13] argues that "a theory of language transfer requires that we have some ability to predict where the phenomenon in question will and will not occur". On the one hand, it is generally accepted (Kellermann 1979, 1983) that similarity and dissimilarity in linguistic elements play a major role in the learner's decision-making on what should be transferred. On the other hand, there is a need to recognise that the phenomenon *transfer* can no longer be thought of as a mechanical transference of first language structures, but rather as "one of a number of cognitive mechanisms which underlie second language acquisition" (Gass 1984:117)[14]. Recent research has identified transfer as operating in a range of domains, namely:

(i) Transfer can occur where there is a delay in the structuring of an IL rule (Zobl 1980a, 1980b, 1982);
(ii) Where there are similarities/differences between L1 and L2 structures, a learner may transfer the typological organisation of the structures of the L1 (Wode 1977);

(iii) Where structures are dissimilar in L1 and L2, the learner may avoid to use the expected L1 structures (Schachter 1974, Kleinmann 1977, Hakuta 1976);
(iv) In the process of acquiring the target forms, a learner may overuse a given TL form (Schachter and Rutherford 1979);
(v) Learner's previous knowledge may constrain the building of hypotheses about the L2 (Schachter 1983);
(vi) Additional attention paid to the target language may result in more rapid learning; (Gass 1984) and
(vii) There may be differential effects of socially prestigious phonological forms on learning (Beede 1980).
This short list suggests that there are still other types of transfer to be discovered which will be possible only with more empirical research into the underlying behaviour of the language learner.

Predicting language transfer.

Faerch and Kasper (1987) argue that the study of transfer in production data requires more than recording and transcribing data. One also needs to consider sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic constraints such as interlocutor, the topic, discourse type and medium as well as cognitive and affective factors. Consequently, one may predict language transfer in several ways, three of which are outlined in this section:

(i) Kellerman (1979, 1983) describes two major factors that, he argues, interact to determine transferable elements: (a), the learner's perception of L1-L2 distance and (b), the degree of markedness of an L1 structure. In case (a) the learner will transfer forms he or she perceives as similar in both languages. Learning will then consist of restructuring those forms for use in the L2. In case (b) items which are irregular, infrequent, or semantically opaque are said to be highly marked and are therefore less transferable than frequent and regular forms (Gass 1984, Kellerman 1983).
(ii) Rutherford (1983) takes the view that learners consider discourse-level information, e.g., topic-prominence, as less marked than the apparently comparable syntax-level equivalents such as subject-verb order. It is assumed that the former is more available for transfer than the latter. However, it must be pointed out that "ordering of elements within a sentence is something which at least tutored learners are conscious of. Textbooks generally deal with sentences and arrangements of elements within the sentence and only infrequently deal with such concepts as emphasis and topic" (Gass 1984:123)[15].
(iii) The directionality of difficulty discussed in this chapter (section 4.1). This shows that language transfer is not necessarily bidirectional. According to Gass (1984:125)[16], "if elements are transferred in one direction and not in another, this is clearly evidence that language transfer is not purely a matter of linguistic reflexes".
To sum up these views, one may argue that language transfer is not always readily

predictable and depends on several factors such as the status of structures (+/- marked), the learner's underlying behaviour and the role of universality. The next aspect of language transfer is therefore concerned with the relationship between language transfer and language universals.

Language transfer and language universals

In Kellerman's (1979, 1983) and Gass's (1984) view, there are two major factors that interact in determining features that may be transferred: the learner's perception of the L1-L2 distance and the degree of markedness of an L1 structure. Put more explicitly, there are, on the one hand, elements of one's language which are language specific and, on the other hand, there are elements which are viewed as neutral in a language. Those elements which are specific are marked and therefore less transferable, but those that are neutral are believed to be common to at least the native and the TL and, therefore, easily transferable. The neutral elements are universally easier *vis-à-vis* the other elements and they are most likely to be transferred. For instance, Kellerman (1983) found that those meanings which were closer to the core or were basic in meaning were more likely to be transferred than those which were furthest from the core.

If language elements which are less marked in a language are more likely to be transferred and meanings which are closer to the core are also more likely to be transferred than peripheral meanings, then this constitutes strong evidence that language transfer operates on the basis of some universal principles. Hence, it is argued that

> language universals serve as an overall guiding principle in second language acquisition, interacting with the native language and the target language systems, at times resulting in violation of a proposed universal, at times being consistent with a given universal (Gass 1984:129)[17].

Summarising this section, one may say that most studies on IL, despite differences in emphasis, share the view that the IL has to be viewed differently from the L1 and L2. The claim is that "the learner's knowledge is to be seen as a unified whole ... critically different from that of the first language learner" (Spolsky 89:31)[18]. The early IL studies, however, may be criticised for being restricted mainly to comparing morpho-syntactic features of L1 and L2 and for failing to deal with the semantic development of the IL. Similarly, the failure to recognise the relevance of the learner's own standards of correctness and internalised linguistic knowledge has led to continous reliance on the L2 norms. Accordingly, Adjémian (1976) points out the failure to recognize clearly the specific features that distinguish interlanguages from other natural languages on the basis of these problems. It is clear therefore that new methods of dealing with IL phenomena are required. Among the numerous models available in the SLA literature, three have been selected and will be used as theoretical background for this study.

2.4 Recent models of second language learning

The term *theory* is generally used to refer to the way one interprets, provides explanation or establishes generalisations for some range of observed phenomena. According to Mclaughlin (1987:3)[19]

> the generalisations that constitute the basis of a theory derive initially from regularities or constancies in our experience of natural phenomena. ... The value of a theory derives not only from the explanations it is constructed to provide, but also from its unanticipated consequences. ... A theory provides guesses as to how the uncontrolled and unknown factors in the area under study are related to known facts and laws. Theory guides the search for data and further generalisations.

In this project, the term *model* refers to the theoretical construct or hypothesis necessary not only for the description of linguistic phenomena, but also for explaining and predicting the learning of particular linguistic structures. The model will have to account for more than one individual, for more than one aspect of learning, and for learning to more than one criterion level. This means that a model should not be restricted, but should have a wide range of applications. In practice, it is unlikely that a single model can fulfil all these conditions. Thus, a more practical approach is to use a combination of aspects from different models that are in the mainstream of the study. It is with this view in mind that the models described in this section are used as a theoretical framework for this project. The selected models have then to be seen not only from their originators' standpoints, but also in terms of the demands imposed by the data and their possible implications. The other reason behind the choice is that not all theoretical models (table 2.1) can be included in the mainstream of a given investigation.

Table 2.1 — Selected language learning models

Model/Theory	Basic view/idea	Pioneer/Promulgator
Acculturation	The process of becoming adapted to a new culture.	J. Schumann (1980)
Nativization	Learner's degree of assimilation of the second language.	R. Andersen (1980)
Accommodation	Learner's perceived social distance of the relationship between the learner's social group and the target community.	H. Giles and J. Byrne (1982)
Discourse	The way the process of constructing discourse (ie face-to-face interactions involving L2 learners) contributes to the process of building an Interlanguage.	E. Hatch (1978), (1980)
Monitor	Factors that influence SLA including acquisition-learning distinction, the monitor, learner's variability, etc.	S. Krashen (1981)
Variable Competence	The way a language is learned is a reflection of the way it is used. Learner's language is characterised by variability.	Bialystok (1982) Ellis (1984) Tarone (1982,85)
Form-to-Function Function-to-Form	The use of a form/function is related in someway to a function or form in a given context.	Kumpf (1983) Anderson (1984) Sato (1985, 1990)
Universal Hypothesis (Markedness theory)	There are linguistic universals that determine the course of SLA.	Chomsky (1965,66) Rutherford (1982) Dulay & Burt (1977)
Neurofunctional	The neurolinguistic information processing systems are responsible for the use and development of language.	Lamendella (1977)

One of the problems with such varied and non-overlapping models is that it is difficult to make a principled decision between one and the other. This may explain why the effort of many researchers has been concentrated on developing alternative models rather than evaluating and consolidating the existing proposals. The three models (the Universal Hypothesis, the Variable Competence model and Form and Function) are considered to be relevant for the purpose of this study, partly because they contributed extensively to the development of the IL and partly because they constitute the basis for data description and explanation in many SLA studies. The Universal Hypothesis is referred to in order to explain some of the informants' common learning behaviour and, in particular, the way they deal with phenomena such as tense marking and language transfer in the production of English verb forms. The inevitable presence of learner variation will be explained within the Variable Competence model. While the Form/Function model will provide the framework necessary to investigate the informants' perception of the relationship between verb forms and functions such as temporality.

2.4.1 The Universal Hypothesis

Many studies have been undertaken in SLA to demonstrate that common underlying principles exist in both L1 and L2 acquisition processes. This project is not concerned with such broad issues, though it will be necessary to explain the informants' knowledge of verb forms in a systematic way. It is in this context that the models described in this section will serve as a theoretical basis for the analysis of data in this project.

Universal Grammar

> Universal Grammar is the system of principles, conditions, and rules that are the elements or properties of all human languages (Chomsky 1975:29)[20].

Two of the many goals pursued by researchers in SLA are to show (i) that language acquisition processes are similar for all human beings and (ii) that there is some sort of relationship between first language acquisition and second language learning. The first goal is well illustrated in Chomsky's view of first language acquisition. One of the central features of the Chomskyan theory is that children seem to know things about language that have not been gained from their outside experience and as a result Chomsky postulated that there were language properties common to all human beings which he termed *Universal Grammar*. In Chomsky's view, then, children do not necessarily need to hear a structure in order to create it since language is potentially present in the mind. The child does not know in advance the particular parameter settings of the language to which he or she is to be exposed. The child's knowledge of language is then more consistent than the language he or she is exposed to. The language is, in fact, inconsistent and full of redundancy (e.g., English clusters, plural forms, and past tense morphology). So, in an effort to make the language more simple, or elegant, the child will hypothesize the generality of

morphological and syntactic structures such as the unmarked plural or past tense morphemes in English.

A child's behaviour, according to Chomsky, provides evidence that we are born with a specific ability, an intrinsic predisposition for language processing. In other words, a child does not come to the world with a blank slate but, rather with a knowledge of the structural principles and *building-blocks* common to all human languages. The speech he or she hears serves merely to trigger the acquisition process which will result in the child fixing parameters so as to have a core grammar that is understood by the other members of the speech community in which he or she is placed. Language learning would be impossible unless that were the case. These views imply that creativity and consistency in the order of acquisition of certain structures should show remarkable universal characteristics. There is, in effect, evidence of similarity in the speech output of children, such as overgeneralization, not only within a particular language but also across languages (Richards 1971, Hartley 1982).

A classical example of these views of language is seen in Jakobson's (1968) theory of phonological development in children. His investigation is one of the first studies of the acquisition of phonology where he claims that child phonology develops with the acquisition of a set of distinctive oppositions which are selected from phonological oppositions found in the world's languages. His claim is that there is a small set of universal phonological contrasts which correspond to the first contrasts learned by the child. In their subsequent studies, Jakobson and Halle (1956) offer important additional evidence for their claim. For example, they found that segmental oppositions are acquired in a certain sequence. The first opposition that a child acquires is that of a consonant and a vowel. Within this first set of contrasts the first specific sounds acquired by the child are the voiceless bilabial /p/ and the open vowel /a/. The next step is the appearance of opposition between nasal and oral stops; then labials and dentals. Vowels, also, seem to develop, just like consonants, through the same stages for all children, no matter what language they are acquiring.

For some researchers such as Atkinson (1982), Jakobson's study remains attractive because of its comprehensiveness, its simplicity and its attempt to come to terms explicitly with developmental issues. Jakobson's view has inspired a large number of studies and has provided the starting point for many less sympathetic treatments. Equally importantly, the study contains three interesting arguments for a theory of language learning, namely:
(i) All languages make a distinction between consonants and vowels, nasal and oral consonants, and labial and dental consonants.
(ii) Jakobson's claim that stops are acquired before fricatives confirms another claim that "if a language has fricatives then it has stops" (Atkinson 1982:33)[21]; and
(iii) Sounds which are relatively rare in the world's languages are acquired late

and, consequently, have limited distributions. Those sounds, such as nasal vowels in French and Polish are also lost early in case of language dissolution or by speakers who get no practice in speaking their native languages.

The second goal of SLA is to show that there is a relationship between SLA and language universals. Flynn and O'Neil (1988), Gass (1988), and Gass and Schachter (1989) share the view that

> the relationship between SLA and linguistic theory is and should not be construed as a one-way relationship. As linguists we take concepts, terms, and theories to help inform us about the nature of L2 grammar and the nature of L2 learning. ... In the ideal situation, this relationship is, or should be, bidirectional. The theory will guide and constrain the hypotheses that the researcher is willing to entertain and test in considering both the course of language development as well as the ultimate knowledge to be attained. Conversely, particular language acquisition studies will provide empirical evidence for or against specific theoretical models (Gass 1989:523)[22].

There are two perspectives from which the relationship between theories of language and theories of SLA can be considered. The first is that of the theoretical linguists and the second implies that second language data can and should be used as evidence to help distinguish between linguistic theories. That is, a theory of language would be falsified if it failed to account for second language learner data. Many studies have been carried out in this context; Ritchie (1978), Kellerman (1979, 1983) and others have shown that second language data may help in determining theoretical issues. In particular, Kellerman (1979) argues that knowledge of primary language organizational structure can be determined from the study of second language learner strategies. By considering which aspects of one's native language are transferred in which language learning situation and which are not, one can gain insight into the ways human language is organized. The major question remains, however, that of knowing how can one account for such universal processes in second language learning.

Implications for second language learning.

Several factors are generally suggested in order to determine the learning pattern in L2 learners:
(i) Universal factors (such as previous knowledge of language)
(ii) Specific facts about the learners' NL (like the presence or absence of tone or clusters).
(iii) Specific facts about the TL.
Universal factors are believed to determine the general outline of learning, while language-specific considerations come into play only where universal factors underdetermine the result (Gass 1979).

Dulay and Burt (1972, 1978) reject the importance of the influence of L1 in the process of L2 acquisition, arguing that fragments of learners' production do not give sufficient proof of the occurrence of transfer from L1. The same view is also held by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) who argue for the existence of a common set of principles in L1 and L2. According to these studies, (mainly based on the acquisition of morphemes), the order of acquisition in both L1 and L2 is similar and so are the patterns of errors made by L1 and L2 learners. Not all researchers share the view that the L1 and L2 acquisition processes are similar. Corder (1967), for instance, argues that the learning of an L1 is inevitable, whereas there is no such inevitability about learning a second language. Similarly, Schachter (1988) argues that the UG should be viewed as a theory designed basically to account for general facts in child first language acquisition, playing only a minor role in SLA. For Schachter (1988:220)[23]

> One of the fundamentals tenets of Chomsky and other proponents of UG is that theories of grammar are linked to the question of how children can attain mastery of their native language. Grammatical theory, according to UG proponents, is developed in the context of this remarkable feat of children and is meant to be partial explanation of it.

Schachter argues further, we may have been intrigued and misled in the past by the similarities that have been discovered in language production by child first and second language learners - the morpheme studies, the negation studies and some error types. However, much goes on in language use that is not attributable to the language faculty *per se*, but rather involves other systems independent of but interacting with it.

What seems to occur in SLA, according to Schachter, is a very wide range in ultimate achievement ranging from barely communicative to highly fluent, with most second language speakers fairly evenly distributed along the continuum that might be labeled one of communicative effectiveness. This view confirms a statement made earlier that not all theories used for first language acquisition will necessarily be valid for second language learning. Nevertheless, aspects of UG may be useful to explain the fact that learners' processing systems seem to follow similar patterns.

The Markedness Theory

It was argued earlier (section 2.3.3) that transfer in L2 learning was caused by the differences among patterns of the different languages involved and, consequently, prediction about difficulties was essentially based on the structural relationships of those language patterns. Eckman's (1977) approach, which is based on typological differences, is generally accepted to have offered the possibility to predict (a) areas of difficulty and (b) the relative degree of difficulty. According to Eckman (1977), "if the CAH is revised to incorporate certain principles of Universal Grammar, it is possible to predict what can be termed directionality of difficulty," (Eckman

1977:315)[24].

Eckman argues further that a mere comparison is not sufficient and that one must also add the notion of relative difficulty, which has to be independent of any given language, i.e., it must be universal. The degree of difficulty corresponds to the notion of "typologically marked where markedness is defined as a phenomenon A in some language is more marked than B if the presence of A in a language implies the presence of B; but the presence of B does *not* imply the presence of A," (Eckman 1977:320)[25]. It is assumed, from this hypothesis which Eckman calls the Markedness Differential Hypothesis (MDH), that there should be a parallel between L1 and L2 acquisition data in that structures which are typologically marked, and therefore acquired later in L1 are those that should be more difficult for second language learners.

To illustrate his view, Eckman (1985) considers the distribution of voice constrast in pairs such as /t/ and /d/ in English and German. These contrasts appear in English in word-initial, word-medial, and word-final position as in *ten/den, betting/bedding, cat/cad* respectively. In German those contrasts exist only in word-initial and word-medial positions. Within the CAH framework, German speakers would have more difficulty learning English than English speakers learning German would because German speakers would have to learn the distinction t/d that does not exist in German. Eckman claims that because the voice contrast in final position is more marked, the German language has an unmarked feature compared to English. It is on the basis of such evidence that the MDH predicts that German learners of English who have to learn the marked feature will have more difficulty than the English speakers learning German. It is therefore claimed that

> transfer is not always a bidirectional process, as might be inferred from a strict contrastive approach. ... The reason why some first language structures are transferred and others are not relates to the degree of markedness of the structures in the various languages. The assumption is that universal constraints interact with the first language and that interlanguage forms result from this multiple causation (Mclaughlin 1987:90)[26].

This view clearly summarises the notion that transfer is determined by universal principles.

2.4.2 The Variable Competence Model

The L2 learner's competence is characterised by systematic and variable rules. In this section, variable IL rules are discussed from two perspectives: establishing systematicity in the learner's variable repertoire and investigating IL variability.

Establishing IL variability as systematic

According to Tarone, a theory of IL variation needs to fulfill three criteria:

> first, an adequate theory of IL variation should assume that there is systematicity in the variation itself; second, (that) proposed causes of IL variation should be empirically verifiable; and third, (that) all the known facts of IL variation should be accounted for by the theory (Tarone (1988:133)[27].

In Tarone's view, most current theories of IL variation seem to ignore one or more of these factors. For her, no theory of IL variation to date is comprehensive enough to account for the empirical data. This view reflects the many problems related to establishing systematicity as a common characteristic of the learner's variable repertoire. Some of these problems have been caused by factors such as the status given to variable rules in the IL system, and the nature and sources of influence on the IL, others to the fact that not only is the learner's system constantly changing, but it seems also to rely on rules which are used interchangeably. Yet, if the learner's performance is characterised by regular and structured patterns, how is that possible?

Most researchers in IL agree that language learners often vary in a seemingly non-systematic way to a much wider degree than native speakers in the use of language structures at a specific point in time (Raupach 1987). This should, perhaps, be set against the claim that

> every learner variety, no matter how elementary and inadequate it might be, constitutes *a system in itself* whereby the learner can meet at least some of his communicative needs. The efficiency of the system depends not only on the linguistic repertoire developed by the learner but also on the latter's proficiency in handling the system (Klein 1986:57)[28].

From these views, one may logically conclude that in the study of Interlanguage variability, the L2 learner's scope of variation should be related to the level of the learner's knowledge and the acquisition context. The reason is that although L2 learners might be hypothesised to have a common processing system, individual differences such as age, aptitude, motivation, personality (see also Hague 1989) as well as different external factors such as setting and teaching conditions will result in different repertoires for different learners. The general belief is that individual variability in the learner's performance may be explained as a result of the interaction between the learner's processing system and situational demands. In order to characterise learner language as systematic, therefore, one needs to take into account not only the complexity of the learning process, but also the unavoidable presence of variability as a result of the factors already mentioned.

Investigating IL variability

Tarone's (1979, 1982, 1985, 1988) main view of IL variability is that "the IL is a

continuum of styles along which the learner shifts variably, depending upon the degree to which attention is focused on language form" (Tarone 1982:82)[29]. In addition, she maintains that the most systematic style of IL is the vernacular because "it is the speech style in which the learner pays the least attention to speech form... it is the style which is least permeable to invasion from other rule systems" (Tarone 1982:69)[30]. In another study, Tarone (1985) specifies her view of variability in IL and observes that

> when learners perform more than two tasks, and when those tasks are ordered in terms of degree of attention to language forms required, the styles produced by learners in response to those tasks may be ranged along a continuous dimension (Tarone 1985:394)[31].

The *continuous dimension*, which has to be seen within the learner's IL knowledge, implies the distinction between spontaneous (vernacular, or unattended) and elicited (formal, or attended) data in IL studies. In Tarone's (1982, 1985) view, one needs spontaneous data to capture the true nature of the IL system since the use of elicitation tasks requiring the most attention to form will not reveal an IL that is systematic to the same degree.

This project is not concerned with IL based on unattended speech data, but with the extent to which learners in a formal learning context are able under different kinds of elicitation to make the right judgements and to take decisions on various manipulations of verb forms. This is particularly relevant to their professional language needs as teachers. Accordingly, it is believed that one of the ways one can explain IL variability is "to accept the assumption that IL varieties are contextually conditioned" (Faerch and Kasper 1987:124)[32] and, to try to predict which IL varieties will be activated in which contexts. In Faerch and Kasper's (1987) view, "the more the situation allows learners to monitor their performance, the closer to the L2 norm the IL variety will be, i.e., the IL variety activated in a writing situation will be more 'correct' than the variety used in face-to-face interaction" (Faerch and Kasper (1987:124)[33]. This is one of the assumptions investigated in this project.

2.4.3 The form-function/function-form Model

IL research can be considered, methodologically, from two main perspectives: product-oriented and process-oriented studies. The early IL studies were typically product-oriented. Researchers were often engaged in the description of topics like the language of migrant workers or pidgins and creoles. In those studies the focus was on the description and classification of observable IL phenomena and the way they were associated with errors. The methodology used was Error Analysis (EA) and the focus was mainly on language forms, i.e., on product. Because of its focus on formal errors, Error Analysis

> provided only a partial account of learners' ILs, ignoring what learners were doing correctly or

appropriately.... EA overlooked avoidance behavior, i.e., where learners from a particular L1 background did not even attempt certain L2 constructions, thus producing fewer errors (and giving the impression of more advanced proficiency) than learners of other L1 background. ... EA was seriously constrained by its inherent *target* orientation, inherent because errors, after all, are definable only with reference to a norm or target (Sato 1990:4)[34].

The shift from product-oriented to process-oriented studies seems to have been influenced strongly by the view that dialects as well as pidgins and creoles were no longer considered as distorted, or inferior, but as *languages* in their own right. Thus, studies within this framework were expected to explain learners' behaviour as developmental rather than as marked by error. This approach concentrated on the way learning takes place rather than on the language that has been produced and which can be observed. In this sense, the main concern of IL research was to provide a more comprehensive, psycholinguistically plausible view of language learning as a process. In process-oriented studies, the systematically deviant forms of the L2 learner are viewed as constructive or developmental features.

For Sato (1990:9)[35], "the shift from a focus on product to a focus on process has resulted in the replacement of what might be called a form only analysis of IL data with a form-to-function mode of analysis". Among those who have worked within the form-to-function approach, are Bikerton (1981) and Huebner (1983). The latter argues that the approach consists of first identifying forms and then tracing their functional distributions. The difficulty with this unidirectional approach is that one can rely only on those forms that appear in the learners' data so that other possible (internalized) forms cannot be investigated. Consequently, there was a need to explain such a possible absence of certain forms.

Supporters of function-to-form analysis like Kumpf (1981, 1983) argue that linguistic forms are motivated by particular discourse functions, i.e., the use of a form is indexed to a particular context in discourse. Their argument is that "ILs reflect discourse structure in ways which are characteristic of native languages, and that their grammar can be seen as a function of discourse" (Kumpf 1983:179)[36]. These views justify the motivation behind considering form-to-function and function-to-form as two aspects of a single approach. For Sato (1985, 1990) both form-to-function and function-to-form need to be combined for a more accurate description of data. She, therefore, concludes that "Function-to-form analysis appears to have great pontential, but it would be limited if undertaken without complementary form-to-function analysis" (Sato 1990:12)[37].

The problem then is that of identifying the nature of the *relationship* between features categorised as *forms* and *functions*. Within the form-function model, learners are expected to use given forms for given functions, but there is no guarantee that knowing a given form implies that one can use it meaningfully. The difficulty may be double-edged. On the one hand the learner may have a good mastery of the

forms, but be unable to match them with their respective functions and, on the other hand, the learner may know the functions only and have no clear idea of the forms that match them.

Following these views, this project shares Sato's (1985,1990) view that neither form-function nor function-form alone can give a complete and accurate picture of the way the learner perceives the relationship between forms and functions. This study, therefore, takes the position that verb forms and the function such as temporality will be discussed from a complementary perspective, i.e., from both *form-to-function* and *function-to-form* modes of analysis. The argument is that it is possible for learners to start learning, either with some knowledge of the notion *time* but with inadequate knowledge of morphological tense markings or with a range of morphological tense markings - some standard, others non-standard - which learners are not always able to match with their respective temporal functions.

The relationship between a form and a function or a function and a form is then only part of the solution within process-oriented studies. Both modes of analysis need to be combined for a more adequate analysis. The difference between these two approaches implies that form has to be considered along with function, whether one starts looking at forms or at functions. The next section describes a number of factors considered as essential in the understanding of L2 learners' knowledge.

2.5 Additional factors in second language learning

2.5.1 Language learners' strategies

The second language learner's knowledge

Ellis (1985) and Raupach (1987) distinguish two types of knowledge: declarative and procedural knowledge. The first type refers to *knowing that* and consists of internalised L2 rules and memorised chunks of the language. In the early stages of learning, L2 learners first memorise those parts of the language that will allow them to gain access to the essential knowledge of the language they are learning. Thus chunk expressions like *Good morning, How are you, What is your name?* etc., are likely to be important patterns for early learning interactions. The second type of knowledge is *knowing how*, which consists of strategies and procedures employed by the L2 learner to process L2 data for acquisition and use. This procedural knowledge is subdivided into social and cognitive components. The social component is concerned with the learner's behavioural strategies in managing interactions either verbally or in writing.

An example of behavioural strategies given in Fillmore (1979) describes the way five Spanish-speaking children learned English in a play situation. The Spanish speaking children who had no knowledge of English were mixed with English-speaking children at playtime. The former group had to learn English from the latter group by using any available means, such as gesture, imitation, single words

or just by intuition. The cognitive component of procedural knowledge is concerned with various mental processes involved in internalising and automatising new L2 knowledge by actually using the L2 structures. These mental processes have been described and interpreted differently in the literature. It is not surprising that several terms, such as *processes*, *plans*, or *strategies* have been used to refer to the same underlying behaviour: the way the learner processes the information for learning or communication purposes. The distinction between the way learners *learn, communicate, receive* or *produce* the language has played an important role in categorising and/or defining these terms. In the context of this investigation, only some of the main views are offered.

Views on language learners' strategies

Carton (1971) observes that there are differences not only in the way learners use their ability to make valid, rational reasonable inferences, but also in their tolerance of risk in attempting to make good inferences. The learner can make inferences by using intralingual cues (i.e., existing knowledge of the TL), interlingual cues (prior knowledge of other languages, including loans, cognates or phonological regularities), or extra-lingual cues. Carton (1971) concludes from such evidence that language learning means more than a simple recall of what one knows and characterizes it as "a kind of problem solving in which the student can bring to bear his/her prior experience and knowledge in the processing of language" (quoted in Wenden and Rubin 1987:20)[38]. Many other researchers later developed this view in subsequent studies of learner's strategies, including Tarone, Cohen and Dumas (1976), Jordens (1977), Faerch and Kasper (1980, 1983, 1987), Seliger (1980), Corder (1981), Tarone (1983), Wenden and Rubin (1987), and others, (see Appendix 2 for some of the classifications of strategies).

From a language learning standpoint, Corder (1972) may be considered to have offered a different perspective to the term strategies. His reference to strategies as learning devices, i.e., as processes whereby learners improve their knowledge of the target language, brought new insights to the understanding of the notion. The argument is that a second language learner makes use of strategies when learning, when trying to communicate, when speaking or writing, or simply when receiving information. Similarly, Faerch and Kasper (1983) agree that

> L2 learning can be conceived of as a process in which the learner gradually develops his/her IL system by establishing hypothetical rules (hypothesis formation) and by testing them out (hypothesis testing). Depending on the feedback obtained, hypothetical rules either get rejected or incorporated into the IL system as fixed rules. In addition to including these cognitively based processes, a comprehensive model of L2 learning has to include the process of automatization, in which the learner increases the availability of IL rules by using them in formal exercises or in communication (Faerch and Kasper 1983:53)[39].

Two roles in relation to strategies in L2 learning are derived from these views, namely: (i) strategies are used whenever the learners want to create an internal grammar by adapting their IL grammar to fit the perceived facts of the language (the process of accommodation) and when attempting to fit newly perceived facts into the present state of their IL grammar (the process of assimilation). L2 learners, contrary to what happens in first language acquisition, can either use their prior linguistic knowledge or create new rules from the input data through inferencing. Learners may also form alternative hypotheses through the process of simplication. The process of simplication consists of the attempt by the learners to control the range of hypotheses they intend to build at any stage of their IL development. Learners are often seen to restrict hypothesis formation to those hypotheses which are relatively easy to form and which can facilitate communication (Ellis 1985); (ii) strategies are used to check the knowledge acquired or to test hypotheses. In other words, a learner who has made a certain number of hypotheses would like to check the regularities of those hypotheses. Those that are not confirmed are rejected, but when a hypothesis is confirmed it is incorporated as a rule in the IL system.

There are generally four different ways learners can test their hypotheses:
a) receptively: when using the L2 input to compare hypotheses with the data provided by means of intake analysis,
b) productively: on the various occasions he or she is given to produce the L2 utterances, the learner will assess the correctness of the utterances through the feedback received,
c) metalingually: the learner consults a native speaker, a teacher, a grammar or a dictionary to establish the validity of the hypotheses; and
d) interactionally: the learner seeks help from the listener by eliciting a repair.

To sum up, most researchers agree that strategies play an important role in establishing a bridge between performance and potential learning. Faerch and Kasper (1983), for instance, argue that one of the conditions for communication strategies to have a potential learning effect is for the learners' output to be governed by achievement behaviour and not by avoidance behaviour. That is, if the use of strategies leads to an adequate formal proficiency, this can be considered as a step in the actual learning. For Faerch and Kasper (1983:21)[40], "establishing and trying out hypotheses about L2 on the basis of active participation in communicative events is one of the central elements in contemporary, cognitively oriented models of L2 learning and acquisition".

It is clear, therefore, that IL studies of strategies have revealed important variations among learners in language learning behaviour, and that learning (or communication) conditions and several other factors such as motivation, aptitude, age, etc., are only additional to the learner's underlying ways of processing the information for learning or communication. While it would be logical to believe that a perfect correlation exists between learning and using the language, IL research does not

always reveal this association.

2.5.2 Previous knowledge, experience and learning context

L2 learners make use of several factors when processing information for learning. In each case, there are factors which are more likely to affect the way the information is processed. Of particular interest to this study are the learner's previous knowledge, their experience in the second language and the learning context. Spolsky (1989) argues that the language learner brings to the language learning task, besides motivation, a number of capabilities and a body of previous knowledge and experience. What is important in this view which may be related to earlier discussions, is that

> Some of these capabilities are universal, such as an innate capability for deriving a grammar, an innate or learned capability for inferring interpretation from speech acts, and presuppositions about the uses of language. ... Of particular importance among personal learner characteristics are previous knowledge (of the first or other languages); age; language learning aptitude (especially important in formal learning situations); learning style and strategies; and personality factors. .... The combination of learner factors accounts for the use the learner makes, consciously or unconsciously, of the socially provided formal or informal learning opportunities (Spolsky 89:27)[41].

These differences in (i) the way learners approach learning, (ii) the way learning affects knowledge domains and (iii) the age of the learners generally lead to differences in the mastery of various language skills.

(i) The differences in the way learners acquire knowledge can be seen in the acquisition mode. As Raupach (1987) puts it

> there are different acquisition modes not only across different learners with a similar background, but also in the course of an individual's learning history. A learner's preferring specific forms of acquisition is dependent, among other factors, on how (s)he is exposed to the foreign language and under what conditions (s)he normally has used it (Raupach 1987:148)[42].

(ii) It is also believed that learning affects the learners' knowledge domains differently. In the case under study, i.e., the use and knowledge of verb forms, one cannot expect the learners to master morphological, syntactic and semantic aspects of verb forms uniformly. One would expect considerable differences between these knowledge domains. Another difference in the acquisition mode can be found between first and second language acquirers. It is now generally accepted that a child learns by receiving sufficient evidence of the form of a specific language in order to fix the parameters for that language. It is also widely accepted that a second language learner does show evidence of knowing facts that he or she has

not been taught. However, Spolsky (1989:90)[43] points out a vital difference: "the second language learner already has available a grammar that itself has involved applying the principles of the Universal grammar".

(iii) Another difference in learning is often recognised between young and adult and, between beginners and advanced learners. Each learner's position in the IL continuum being different, it seems unlikely that the criteria and methods used to investigate the language development of beginners would also apply to the changes that take place in adult advanced learners' language behaviour. It is argued that language development cannot be expected to be systematic in the same way. Adult advanced learners have other learning mechanisms which seem to be based on experience and which make their approach to problem-solving more selective and more likely to lead to success (Raupach 1987). The situation of the adult learners

> differs in several important ways from that of other types of foreign language learners. Being adult [advanced] learners, our students have already acquired a large variety of cognitive skills, among which the command of a fully developed primarily language is apparently the most influential. One aspect of being different from beginning language learners in school is that they are more often exposed to meaningful face-to-face interaction in the course of which they have to process the foreign language immediately without normally having attained a degree of proficiency that can cope with the meaning they intend to convey (Raupach 1987:134)[44].

One may argue, based on these views, that learning experience and the previous knowledge of other language(s) are likely to influence learning. Similarly, one cannot ignore the environment in which learning takes place. The context in which learning takes place has recently attracted a great deal of research. The classroom context is seen by many researchers as a "social setting in which the sum total of classroom language learning opportunities is locally determined. This context itself determines, in some sense, the language that is used there" (Allwright 1987:210)[45].

Thus, compared to the natural setting, the situational context offered by the school, especially in a non-second language environment, sets limits for the linguistic development of the second language. Anderson (1980) argues that one speaks a second language by using general rule following procedures applied to the rules one has previously learned, and not by speaking directly as one would do in a native language. This process, according to Anderson, is slow and painful. But for Raupach (1987) the main difference between first and second language

> lies in the way the two languages are being activated by the speaker. Speaking a new language taught by classroom techniques mostly demands the activation of general interpretive procedures involving time-consuming retrieval processes, and learners usually are able to report on the rules implied in the process of *constructing* parts of their speech (Raupach 1987:128)[46].

Thus, both Anderson and Raupach agree that learning a second language is a gradual conversion from declaratively encoded knowledge to procedurally encoded knowledge, i.e., from using rules of the language in a slow and conscious manner to applying them without awareness of the rules. The difference between these two ways of encoding knowledge is the concern of researchers working on language learning strategies.

In this project, the focus is on the relationship between the learner's processing system and the formal setting in which learning takes place. It is expected that adult learners would differ from other learners in the use of strategies when dealing with language awareness tasks.

2.6 Summary and relevance to the present study

2.6.1 Summary

This chapter has offered a brief survey of some of the key issues in IL studies and SLA that the researcher believes to be relevant to the present project. In the first section, a historical perpective on the Behaviourist theory and the CAH has been given as a possible starting point for subsequent studies on learner language. This period is characterised by a negative attitude towards the *errors* made by language learners. It was assumed that knowing a (second) language involved not only knowing the items but also knowing their potential arrangements. Accordingly, the second language learner was seen as having an imperfect knowledge of the items and arrangements of the language he or she was learning. The CAH view was that some of the correct knowledge was replaced or confused by the grammar of the learner's first language. Thus, a second language learner's knowledge of the second language was subject to interference from his or her knowledge of the first (Spolsky 87). Within this framework, L1 was the only source of errors and error analysis was the only way to deal with learning difficulties.

The second section describes the development of the concept IL. The term IL was first introduced by Selinker (1969,1972) to refer to the interim system (between L1 and L2) used by the second language learner. But as research on IL progressed, the idea that the learner language is systematic and independent became established and the learner's language, as a result, was accepted as a language with its own set of rules.

The third section is a survey of three models that may be taken to account for language learning. The choice of three models is motivated both by the nature of features to be investigated and by the types of learners in the study. The Universal Hypothesis is included because it supports the existence of a common behaviour in language learning, i.e., there are universal properties that define the general nature of grammar, a view that derives from the claim that both children and adults show evidence of using features or rules not previously heard or learned. The notion Markedness Theory is discussed in some detail. The Variable Competence Model

is chosen because it maintains the view that the learner possesses a set of systems, dependent on each other, ranging from the vernacular to the superordinate. Such a model implies that one register would be accessed more easily by the learner, while the other registers would be less accessible. The question remains that of knowing which register is more accessible for the learners involved in the project. The researcher takes the view that the learners involved in this project are likely to use the superordinate rather than the vernacular register.

The two types of studies described in the form and function model are seen to be complementary. Sato (1985, 1990) emphasises the fact that despite their limitations, product-oriented methods still serve as a starting point for most process-oriented studies because they provide researchers with useful information for investigations at other levels of linguistic knowledge. According to Sato, one of the merits of process-oriented studies is that they are mainly non-target oriented, and as such, may provide important methodological innovations in IL analysis. This is seen in particular in the relationship between form and function in learners' evolving grammars. It follows from this view that the goal of a form and function approach is to describe and explain the way in which form and function are related systematically when language is used in meaningful communication.

The last section considers the importance of learners' strategies, their previous knowledge and the learning context. The section offers a brief description of strategies before showing their role in second language learning. It is argued that strategies are generally to be considered as *processes* used by the learners to develop their IL and, as such, strategies may reveal important differences between learners. Those differences can be expanded to include differences in previous knowledge and experience in the target language. An advanced adult language learner is a different type of learner from a child or a beginner. Also, the context in which a language is learned is likely to determine the amount and quality of knowledge one may acquire. Thus, it is likely that the *route* and *rate* of language acquisition or learning is influenced by a range of factors, including those discussed in this section.

2.6.2 Relevance to the present study

It is now generally accepted that the knowledge of language and the ability to access it effectively cannot be accounted for by the stimulus-response process. Psycholinguists agree that there are mentalistic forces at work. Language learning and use are a matter of cognition, although some of our linguistic knowledge, to which access may be relatively easy, is stored formulaically in the memory as synthesized chunks ready for immediate use. This view is consistent with the behaviourist theory. But from a psychological point of view, knowledge of language is characterised by a knowledge of generative rules. What is important, as Widdowson (1989) states, is to specify

what aspects of language are synthesized as patterns and what aspects analysed as rules; and how, in teaching, the presentation and practice of these partially assembled units can be keyed in with activities designed to activate rule acquisition. .... The main problem for learning lies not, I think, in the internalization of linguistic rules, but in finding out the range of their application (Widdowson 1989:30)[47].

In this study, the advanced L2 learners are considered as being already sophisticated native speakers of one language and, as such, different from both beginning learners and maturing children. Thus, the possession of cognitive processes should allow the advanced learner to make use of inbuilt knowledge from the start. It is possible equally that the advanced learner has learned the core items and is now learning the peripheral items. These may require a different approach to learning.

To sum up, this review chapter has outlined the background to some of the issues which are considered relevant to the present project. These issues are:

1. the extent and nature of the variation between IL verb forms and TL norms;
2. the extent to which advanced learners from different proficiency levels in an educational context (using attended speech and self-monitoring) may become target-like users of the L2;
3. the extent to which a battery of tests in elicitation contexts (ranging from simple morphological correction to metalingual judgements) may reveal the learners' knowledge of verb forms at the morphological, syntactic and semantic levels;
4. the extent to which learners from different proficiency levels vary in the way they acquire the relationships between form (verb forms) and function (reference to time);
5. to what extent language transfer occurs in the acquisition of verb forms for the learners involved in the study.

Chapter two references

1 S. Gass 1989 Language Universals and second Language Acquisition, *Language Learning*, 39/4, p. 500

2 Terminology used in the thesis:
(a) The distinction between *acquisition* and *learning* follows that made by Krashen (1982). Krashen argues that a child acquires its mother tongue in a *natural environment*, while he refers to *learning* to an explicit in formal, institutional contexts.
(b) The terms *mother tongue*, *native language* and *first language* generally refer to the same idea, i.e., the first language the child is exposed to. On occasion, there will be different emphases as the first language or L1 of the speaker may not necessarily be his/her mother's (parents') language. Similarly, the opposition native language (NL) and target language (TL) is to be preferred as a way of stressing the difference in the process of language learning.
(c) The term *second language* or L2 is used to refer to any language learned after the first one and to foreign languages in general.
(d) The second language learner's language is referred to as Interlanguage or IL.

3 S. Flynn (1987) Contrast and Construction in a Parameter-Setting Model of L2 Acquisition, *Language Learning* 37/1, p. 21

4 R. Lado (1957), *Linguistics across Cultures,* University of Michigan Press, Michigan, p. 2

5 S.P. Corder (1978a), Language-learner Language, in: Richards, (ed) *Understanding Second and Foreign Language Learning,* p. 74

6 W. Nemser (1971), Approximative Systems of Foreign Language Learners, *IRAL* 9, p. 55

7 L. Selinker (1969), Language Transfer, *General Linguistics* 9, p. 36

8 B. McLaughlin, 1987. *Theories of second language learning,* Edward Arnold, London, p. 87

9 B. McLaughlin, 1987, op. cit. p. 63

10 R. Ellis 1985 *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*, Oxford, p. 96.

11 L. Selinker (1969), op. cit. p. 71

12 R. Bley-Vroman (1983), The Comparative Fallacy in Interlanguage Studies: the case of systematicity, *Language Learning,* 33, p. 2

13 S. Gass (1984), A Review of Interlanguage Syntax: Language Transfer and Language Universals, *Language Learning* 34, p. 121

14 S. Gass (1984), op. cit. p. 117.

15 S. Gass 1984, op. cit. p. 123

16 S. Gass 1984, op. cit. p. 125

17 S. Gass 1984, op. cit. p. 129

18 B. Spolsky (1989), *Conditions for Second Language Learning,* O.U.P., Oxford, p. 31

19 B. McLaughlin (1987), op. cit. p.3

20 N. Chomsky (1975), *Reflections on Language,* New York: Pantheon Press, p. 29

21 M. Atkinson (1982), *Explanation in the Study of Child Language Development,* Cambridge University Press, p. 33

22 S. Gass (1989), op. cit. p. 523

23 J. Schachter 1988 Second Language Acquisition and its relationship to UG, *Applied Linguistics,* Vol. 9/3, p. 220

24 F.R. Eckman 1977 Markedness and the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, *Language Learning* 27, p.315.

25 F.R. Eckman 1977, op.cit p. 320

26 B McLaughlin 1987 op. cit. p.90

27 Tarone, E.(1988), *Variation in Interlanguage,* Edward Arnold, London, p. 133

28 W. Klein, 1986. *Second Language Acquisition,* C.U.P., Cambridge, p. 57

29 E. Tarone, 1982. Systematicity and Attention in Interlanguage, *Language Learning* 32/1, p. 82

30 E. Tarone 1982 op. cit. p. 69

31 E. Tarone, 1985. Variability in Interlanguage use: A study of style shifting in Morphology and Syntax, *Language Learning*, 35/3, p. 394

32 C. Faerch and G. Kasper 1987 Perspectives on Language Transfer, *Applied Linguistics,* 8/2, p. 124

33 C. Faerch and G. Kasper 1987 op. cit. p. 124

34 C. Sato, 1990. *The Syntax of conversation in Interlanguage Development,* Gunter Narr Verlag, Tübingen, p. 4

35 C. Sato 1990, op. cit. p. 9

36 L. Kumpf, 1983, A case study of Temporal reference in Interlanguage. In C. Campbell et al. (eds), *Proceedings of the Los Angeles second research Forum,* Vol. II, Los Angeles, UCLA, p. 179.

37 C. Sato, 1990. op. cit. p. 12.

38 A. Wenden, & J. Rubin, 1987. Learner Strategies in Language Learning, *English Language Teaching,* London, p. 20

39 C. Faerch and G.Kasper (eds) 1983. *Strategies in Interlanguage communication,* Longman, London, p. 53.

40 C. Faerch and G. Kasper, 1983. op. cit. p. 21

41 B. Spolsky, 1989. op. cit. p. 27

42 M. Raupach, 1987. Procedural Learning in Advanced Learners of a Foreign Language, in Coleman, J.A. and R. Towell (eds), *The Advanced Language Learner,* SUFLRA-CILT, London, p. 148

43 B. Spolsky, 1989. op. cit. p. 90

44 M. Raupach, 1987. op. cit. p. 134

45 R. Allwright, 1987. Concluding Comments, in R. Ellis (ed), *Second Language in Context,* Prentice-Hall, London, p. 210

46 M. Raupach, 1987. op. cit. p. 128

47 H.G. Widdowson 1989 Parameters in language teaching, *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Language Learning and Teaching,* EGL, Vol.1, p. 30

Chapter III

A BRIEF SURVEY OF GRAMMAR AND VERBS IN ENGLISH AND FRENCH

3.1 Selected views on the grammar of English

3.1.1 Introduction

A description of grammar and, in a more limited domain, of verb forms can be viewed from two different perspectives: the prescriptive and the descriptive. The prespective view aims at emphasizing what ought to be said, i.e., as codified in the standard variety of a language. The second perspective is based on the notion of what may be classified as *possible grammatical structures.* In contemporary linguistic theory, *grammatical* means what is possible for a speaker of the language, both native and non-native. For Fairman (1989) and Greenbaum (1988), although one can expect only a minority to be fully competent in the standard variety, there is a need for the education system (for both native and non-native speakers) to make the standard forms the norms for at least written English, a goal to be aimed at, but not always reached.

In the present study, which is concerned with the description of IL verb forms, there is need to recognize, on the one hand, the importance of teaching or learning correct English and, on the other hand, those factors which may vary according to learners or groups of learners. That is, there are levels of knowledge applicable to teaching and learning, such as the graphemic or morphological level, where accuracy and rule application may be required, and others such as semantics where it is more practical and appropriate to tolerate possible structures. This is the view taken for the study of IL verb forms in the present project. This chapter, consequently, covers both prescriptive and the descriptive views of the English grammar and of verb forms in particular. Section 1 gives some views on the notions of standard – or prestige – and non-standard varieties in English grammar. Section 2 offers

some selected views on the French verb system, limiting the description to the verb morphology and time orientation.

3.1.2 Varieties of English grammar

One of the purposes of this study is to characterise L2 learners' grammar and, in particular, to determine whether the systematic use of verb forms produced by adult L2 learners is comparable to or different from NL norms. In English, as in most languages, discussions of the way the term *grammar* is defined, described or explained are often very controversial. For the purpose of this study, a limited number of views of *grammar* and *verbs* in modern English are cited. The views were chosen because they are contemporary, fairly representative of most studies on the subjects, and above all relevant to this study.

The views used to describe grammar in this section include those expressed by researchers such as Fairman (1988, 1989), Greenbaum (1987, 1988), Lyons (1968), Quirk (1972) and Quirk et al (1985). The subsequent discussion will also include views from Leech (1971), Foley and Van Valin (1984), Palmer (1988) and Reichenbach (1947, in Moravscik 1974). Quirk et al (1985) and Fairman (1989) argue that the grammar of the English language can be interpreted in three different ways:
(i) As grammar that is concerned with the English language;
(ii) As grammar that reflects the common core; and
(iii) As grammar that represents the standard(s).

The first implies that grammar has to be concerned with the language known as *English*, i.e., with English morphology and English syntax, which are different from, say, French or German morphology and syntax. The second suggests that English grammar should include features used by all speakers of the language, such as tense marking or subject-verb order. The third makes reference to a certain prestige variety of the language, i.e., a language used by a group of speakers. A grammar has to be associated with features which are recognised, but not necessarily used, by all the other varieties; it is the grammar of *educated* English speakers in the world's major English-speaking communities. This is the English accorded implicit social and political status and which is referred to as *standard* English.

This description, according to Fairman (1989), raises a number of issues, two of

which are particularly important in the present context. Firstly, most varieties of the English language may be relatively comparable in grammar but will vary more distinctly at the lexical and phonological levels. Those differences have not been comprehensively investigated, and to rely on the limited studies so far carried out into British and American varieties is not a sufficient basis for the characterisation of the whole English language. Secondly, the notion *common core* raises the problem of definition. It is always difficult to agree whether common core means rules, surface features or both. For Fairman (1989), a grammar of the common core should take the following form:

> part of the grammar will consist of some surface features and their rules (perhaps the relative order of adjectives and nouns), but in other areas (tenses, negatives and pronouns, for example) the grammar will not describe surface features or their rules directly because there are no, or only a few, features in those areas common to all varieties (Fairman 1989:12)[1].

A typical illustration of such features which are not common to all varieties can be seen in the concord between subject and verb, in multiple negation and in the surface representation of verb forms. Compare, for example, the natural speech of a New Englander, a Pennsylvanian and a Virginian using *I see it, I seen it,* and *I seed it*, respectively, to refer to the past tense form. The only common features to these dialects, according to Fairman (1989), are *I* and *it*, the other features are region-specific. However, it may also be argued that *I* and *it* are only part of the common core, the other part being represented by the meaning common to all the various verb forms. Time orientation in the speaker's use of the different verb forms, for instance, can be explained by reference to a common ground.

The role of the linguist becomes crucial at this point, that of attempting to offer a plausible explanation for such cases. The question is that of knowing whether one should reject such differences in the spoken English or rather help promote acceptance of regional pecularities. In other words, does one share the concept of standard English as the only acceptable reference, or does one take the view that "the linguist's first task is to describe the way people actually speak (and write) their language, not to prescribe how they ought to speak or write" (Lyons 1968:43)[2]. To reject differences would mean sharing the grammarians' view and prescribing what people ought to speak or write with reference to the *standard*

norms, i.e., to see grammar as representing the standard', while the second view implies recognition of what is actually produced by the speakers. For Fairman (1989) then,

> the general paradigm of descriptive linguistics states first that all varieties of language have their own history; all are equally systematic and equally suitable as means of communication within their context and none is a distortion of another, and secondly that linguists must describe the language people use. But the study of English grammar has always been restricted to the description of one variety of English known as *standard* English and this restriction has continued from the initial formulation of the general descriptive paradigm until today (Fairman 1989a:19)[3].

The point is that varieties have regularities, some of their own and others based on the common core of the same language. Most of these regularities can be seen in the written language. The phrase *out the window* is quite common in spoken English but less common in written English. It is believed that only a minority, possibly the elite, uses *out 'of' the window* both in spoken and written English. But, in some Germanic languages, *out the window* is the standard usage although in spoken and written English it is non-standard. This example raises a further question on the relationship between the standard variety and both the written and the spoken forms of English.

It is generally agreed that the concept of a standard is closely related to written rather than to spoken English. This may not be true for other languages, such as Swiss German for example which has no agreed standard written form. However, this does not affect the overall principle upon which most linguists tend to agree, i.e., there is far more uniformity in printed English than in spoken as illustrated by the spoken *out the window* and written *out of the window.* This is what Greenbaum (1988) means when he claims "If English is to retain its value as an internatonal language, it is important that the norms of written English in countries where English is a second language do not diverge too far from those of the international written standard" (Greenbaum 1988:38)[4].

Such an argument could be used as basis to claim that there is only one grammar of English in spite of the inevitable, regional lexical and phonological variations. It is, however, the written language that is often referred to as the model or basis

for a discussion of grammatical possibilities. Drawing on this view it would be incorrect to regard the English spoken or written by non-native speakers as less standard. Other factors need to be considered when describing or evaluating an L2 learner's performance. Firstly, L2 learners are still in the process of assimilating the new structures, they cannot therefore be expected to perform beyond their knowledge of the L2. Secondly, their knowledge of the L1 may lead them to different interpretations or rule application from the TL speaker's. Thirdly, L2 learners who have developed an awareness of some TL language notions, such as subject-verb concord, plural formation, tense marking, etc, may approach learning in an entirely different way. They may be aware of when it is necessary to refer to standard grammar in the prescriptive sense and when such a rigorous application of norms is not necessary, using instead what is possible or acceptable. Basically, the adult English L2 learners involved in this project may view grammaticality in some cases as representing a regular standard norm and, in others, as what is possible or acceptable. This is one of the views described in this study and which is expanded further in the next sub-section.

3.1.3 A description of grammar for L2 learners

In addition to the different views of grammar of English discussed above, i.e., standard English, core English and varieties of English, there is a need to link the notion grammar to second language learning. Learning a second language involves not only mastering the language structures but also being able to communicate in that language. In order to communicate, learners need to know both forms and meanings in given contexts. The questions are:

a. What kind of grammar is available in learning English as a second language?

b. What kind of grammar is used by the English L2 learners?

The grammar books available to teachers and learners are all, according to Fairman (1989b:8)[5], "covertly prescriptive in that they describe the standard variety in the same comprehensive terms as would be used to describe a grammar of the English language", i.e., the books are clearly prescriptive, not descriptive. Language learners, in Fairman's view, have a need more for a theory of grammatical relativity or appropriateness than for a theory of grammatical absolutism. One could expand the argument and add that there is a need for both teachers and

learners to know both the standard as well as the other varieties, but not necessarily to have them in their active repertoire. What matters, as Fairman (1989) explains further, is that the notion of *appropriateness* is nowadays far preferred to *absolute correctness.* This reflects the position of the Bullock report (1975:8)[6]:

> any person belongs to number of speech communities and correctness becomes a matter of conforming to the linguistic behaviour appropriate to the situation in which he is talking. Many people find this notion of relativity hard to accept but it seems to us far more reasonable to think in terms of appropriateness than of absolute correctness.

The report seems to emphasise that although standard forms are necessary, teachers are recommended to assess their pupils for improvement and extension both in the standard and within the pupil's variety and outside the pupil's own variety into other varieties.

The Kingman report (1988, in Fairman 1989b) also provides ground for linguistic tolerance. The report suggests that the systematic ways in which the grammar of certain dialects differs from the grammar of standard English needs to be mentioned by teachers. That is, both teachers and learners need to know about the existence of other varieties and accept them as such. What is important and needs to be emphasized in language learning is an effective and appropriate use of any variety, standard and otherwise. This means that for all varieties there should be common ground between a grammar of the standard variety and a grammar of communicative use, an issue which is raised again in the next section.

3.1.4 From standard to communicative grammar

Another important notion related the description of grammar is that of the common core. This notion is believed to link all varieties in a single language. But unfortunately, the concept seems to have no direct relationship with a grammar of surface features. These features are the ones used by the speaker and which, in many cases, seem to vary from one speaker to another. That is, common core is not what is actually used but rather the way a speaker thinks of meanings behind the forms he uses (Fairman 1989). When one uses, for example, concepts such as *book, dog, cold,* etc, it is an ideal to which one refers. It is, however, generally accepted that two different speakers may not have the same idea or picture of the

same concept. Each individual speaker is likely to form his/her own idea of given words or sentences.

Among the well established views on word meanings, Locke (1690)'s view remains undoubtedly one of the most referred to in language description. In Locke's view,

> words in their primary or immediate signification stand for nothing but the ideas in the mind of him that uses them... That, then, which words are marks of are the ideas of the speaker: nor can any one apply them, as marks, immediately to any thing else but the ideas that he himself hath (quoted in Fairman 1989b:16)[7].

This means that we all have our own ideas of what words mean and, if we are to communicate successfully, we need to adjust our own use of words. In Locke's view, what words stand for refers to their common use - as agreed by the community- but not to an idea or standard. Consequently, the speaker's communicative competence "consists not only in using the language in the same way as other users do, but also in being aware of when and how communication has not been, or may not be, successful, and in knowing how to achieve success" (Fairman 1989b:18)[8]. What is interesting with this view is that it distinguishes between levels where conformity to a given variety is practicable and appropriate and levels where the use of a standard variety is required. An example of such a case is referred to earlier in this chapter when discussing the use of *out the window* and *out of the window.*

The first version, although non-standard, is used in spoken English by the majority of English speakers. The second version, the standard one, is found only in written English. The same thing could apply to the use of the verb forms *see, seed, seen* or *saw* discussed earlier in this chapter. The written forms for all these different representations are used to express pastness. In this particular case, one needs to refer to the circumstance of use to establish such similarity in use. That is, what really matters is not the way the structure or word is said or written but, rather, the function or meaning expressed. This is the basis on which one can subject it to scientific inquiry and hope to detect possible systematic principles of L2 learning. Accordingly, the claim that IL phenomena are variable in morphological and syntactic terms, but homogeneous in functional ones, can be clearly justified.

It follows from this view that a study of language as functional should attempt to offer a comprehensive description of both the language forms identified in the L2

learner's IL as well as their functional distributions. This is true because functions cannot be determined without reference to forms. The function of a predicate, such as a verb structure, is to link together arguments. But, it would be difficult to determine the functions of the verb predicate simply by studying the grammatical structure of the sentence, i.e., by ignoring the role of the morphological structure. Consequently, for L2 learners, the mastery and understanding of verb structures constitutes a challenge they have to face if they want to communicate effectively and appropriately. In the present study, the term *function* has to be understood as *the meaning of the verb form in relation to its use in a given context, in particular in contexts with and contexts without constraining time references.* The third subsection of this chapter offers an overview of verbs, their types, their forms and some of their functions.

3.1.5 Verbs and verb types in English

In most languages, and in English in particular, "the verb, or rather the verb phrase is so central to the structure of the sentence that no syntactic analysis can proceed without a careful consideration of it" Palmer (1988:1)[9]. In addition, the internal semantic and syntactic structure of the verb phrase seems to be so complex that learning verbs should involve several skills. If this is so, then in acquiring knowledge of verb forms, there are two stages: firstly, learning verb forms is to a very large degree learning how to operate the verbal forms of that language, i.e., learning the morphology of verbs and knowing how to control it, and secondly, learning verb forms also means learning to link arguments to predicate structures and recognising the utterance circumstances of use (Godfrey 1980, Palmer 1988).

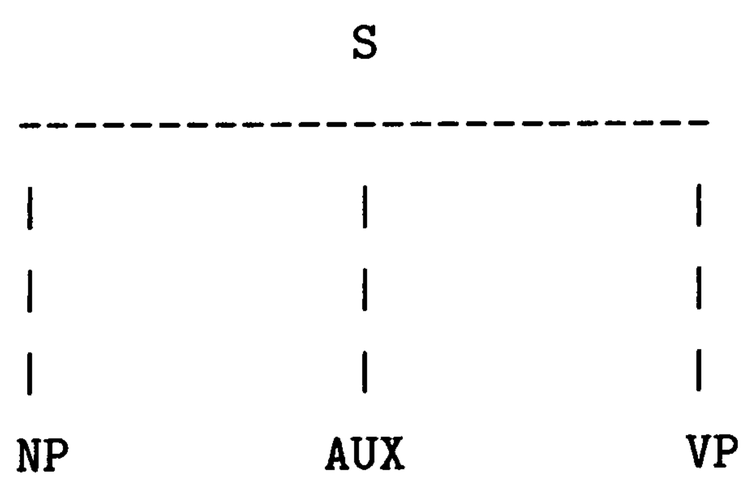
The first point deals with learning the syntactic and morphological aspects of sentences, while the second one is more concerned with the actual use of those sentences in real communicative situations. In the same way, learning verb structures involves not only mastering their formal aspects, but also knowing how to link verb forms to the different functions implied in the structures. English, for example, is considered as having little inflection when compared to languages such as Latin or Arabic. However, it has a variety of other features indirectly associated with time that can be used in the structure. Consequently, the nature of information conveyed by verb forms in English may not be so obvious to English L2 learners.

One of the researcher's prime concerns is to decide on the terms to be used in the study. *Verb* is undoubtedly a very broad term that needs specification. But, to avoid further ventures in search of exact definitions of *verb*, this study limits itself to Richards, Platt and Weber (1985) three part definition. For them, a verb (a) occurs as part of the predicate of a sentence, (b) carries markers of grammatical categories such as tense, aspect, person, number and mood and (c) refers to an action or state. Although all these definitions are related, this study will focus specifically on verbs as *carriers of grammatical categories.* Those major grammatical categories relevant to the selection of verbs are therefore discussed briefly.

For the purposes of this study, English verbs have been divided into four major categories within which further distinctions are also possible: auxiliary and full verbs, regular and irregular verbs, finite and non-finite verbs and dynamic and stative verbs.

Full versus Auxiliary verbs

According to whether a verb can be used in a sentence as the only verb or with another verb, a verb is given the status of *full* or *auxiliary.* In the Generative model, a sentence has three main constituents: the noun-phrase (NP), the auxiliary (AUX) and the verb-phrase (VP)



According to this model an auxiliary plays a different role to the main verb. Within this model, the tense is carried by the verb element under the AUX constituent. But, there are serious difficulties in categorising verbs to be included in AUX. Here are three examples:

	NP	AUX.	FULL VERB
1.	The boy	did	not do his homework
2.	Mary		continued talking for an hour.
3.a.	He	has	been ill for six months.
b.	John	may have	seen the Queen.
c.	Andrew	has not	seen the Queen yet.

Such examples show that there are still problems of specification in terminology that have to state or define as clearly as possible the characteristics to be attached to the terms *full* or *auxiliary.* Similar difficulties, due to a lack of clear-cut distinction between terms, are seen in most attempts to characterise verbs. Palmer (1987) points to similar difficulties in his discussion of *be, have* and *do* and further observes that they are more idiosyncratic than the other verbs. To illustrate his view he argues that *be,* for example, has three different forms *am, is, are* for the present tense, and two for the past tense, *was* and *were.* For language learners such difficulties may be even more acute for two main reasons: firstly, verbs such as *be, do, have* are taught as auxiliary verbs, and secondly, the difference between *have* in example 3b and *has* in examples 3a and 3c is syntactic, not semantic. But it would clearly be misleading to consider *has* as an auxiliary and *have* as a full verb.

Regular versus Irregular

Historically, this distinction has been made according to the way verbs form their past tense. When the past tense is formed with *-ed*, verbs are variably described as *regular, weak* or *inflectional*, but when the past tense is made in different ways, such as a change of vowel or consonant in the basic unit, then the verb is known as *irregular, strong* or *lexical* verb. However, Palmer (1987) argues that for most of these verbs - both regular and irregular- the past tense is basically identical. For Palmer (1987),

> there is one regular or productive formation that would apply to any word newly introduced into English; this is the regular -ed formation. The other formations might seem to be all irregular but in fact many of them belong to the secondary -ed formation, which differs from the regular one in having three simple phonological rules (Palmer 1987:249)[10].

The three phonological rules include (i) devoicing, (ii) vowel shortening and (iii) consonant reduction.

(i) For a number of verbs ending in an alveolar nasal or lateral sound, such as *burn, learn, smell, spell,* etc., the past tense is formed with -ed but a devoicing rule on the -ed suffix causes a change in the production as in (a) *burn – burned/burnt*; and (b) *smell – smelled/smelt.* In practice, the devoiced types *burnt* or *smelt* tend to be preferred by native speakers of English to their regular counterparts. Such a tendency to devoice could be understood as a natural process.

(ii) For some verbs such as *keep, sleep, sweep, weep,* etc, the long vowel [i:] is shortened when the suffix -ed is added. This may be compared to what happens with pairs such as *serene* [siri:n] and *serenity* [sereniti] where the added suffix influences the long vowel which is then shortened; the same thing happens with verbs such as in *keep* [kept], *sweep* [swept]. A typical example from this class, where the added suffix is not devoiced, is found in *flee* [fled].

(iii) Most verbs with an alveolar plosive [d] or [t] such as *bet, cost, cut, hurt, let, shed, spread, upset,* etc. would basically form their past tense with the regular -ed, but since English phonology does not permit within the word either the sequence [dt] or [tt] it is argued (Palmer, 1988) that the suffix is deleted in this context. As a result, the verbs keep the same forms.

In addition to these three basic rules, other combinations are also possible, such as devoicing and vowel shortening in [mi:n] – [ment], devoicing and consonant reduction in [bend] – [bent] or vowel shortening and consonant reduction in [bli:d] – [bled]. All these rules offer phonological evidence in support of the view that basically - or possibly historically - many *irregular* verbs form their past tense using what Palmer (1988) calls *secondary -ed* formation although, one has to recognise the existence of real idiosyncratic forms like *fly, make, buy, stand,* etc.

Finite versus non-finite verbs

When verbs are used as *carriers of grammatical categories,* it was argued earlier, they are marked to show tense, number, person or mood. Accordingly, finite verbs are those verbs that are marked with tense, number, person or mood and non-finite

verbs do not show any of these. The following examples will suffice to illustrate the argument.

4 a. The chairman opened the meeting with an angry remark.
  b. My daughter wrote a good composition last week.

5 a. Many guests didn't like the African food.
  b. The children want to play in the garden.

The verbs *opened* and *wrote*, in the first example, and *did* and *want*, in the second example, carry tense and are therefore finite verbs, whereas *like* and *play*, in the second example, are said not to carry tense and are not finite verbs in these examples. It is, however, argued in this study that certain verb forms can carry tense which may not necessarily be marked morphologically.

Dynamic versus stative verbs

The term *dynamic* generally refers to verbs of action (e.g., 6) involving movement, doing things, etc. which imply an activity. The other category *stative verbs* are used to describe states(e.g., 7a), sometimes unchanging conditions (e.g., 7b) or general truths (e.g., 7c).

6. The little girl is reading a book.
7.a. Bob hates books.
  b. A large section of the population
  in England believes in God.
  c. The earth is spherical.

3.1.6 Verb forms in English

Verb forms will be discussed from two basic perspectives: tense marking and aspect. The choice of two perspectives was motivated by the assumption that learning verb forms involves, on the one hand, the morphological features and the influence of possible syntactic variables used in the structures and, on the other hand, the functions in the structures. It would therefore be inadequate to deal with the morphological and syntactic levels only, one also needs to be concerned with

the semantic level. Two meanings of verb forms will be considered, more specifically time orientation and the hypothetic meaning found in conditional clauses. The first part of the discussion deals with verb morphology, i.e., tense and aspect forms.

Tense forms in English

According to Kilby (1984), tense is primarily a morphological characteristic of verbs in that it involves marking the time of the event or state specified by the verb relative to the moment of the utterance in a formal way. At the same time it would be a mistake to believe that tenses indicate only features of time or that time itself is marked only in verbal systems. There are many languages from which the category tense is wholly missing, but this does not mean that the concept of time cannot be expressed in them. In *Thai*, aspects of time are indicated by the use of adverbs and particles rather than by the inflection of verbs.

Another important point related to tenses concerns the two-way distinction in tense marking. In English, we distinguish two kinds of tense markers: past and non-past. Non-past tense markers include the third person singular -s and the non-infinitival present tense Ø.There are three past tense markers: the regular -ed, the various irregular past tense markings and the Ø form. In this study, mainly verbs that carry tense are considered. This category will be referred to as *verb forms*, i.e., conjugated tokens of verbs. A summary of morphological tense marking is offered in figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 — Morphological representations of English verbs

	ROOT		Inflectional morpheme		
(a)	V	+	{ pres. }	{ -s }	{ Ø }
(b)	V	+	{ past }	{ -ed }	
(c)	V	+	{ pres. part. }		
(d)	V	+	{ past part. }		

(Adapted from Parker 1986:71)[11].

These verb form representations are taught right from the beginning of English learning at the College level with an emphasis on the rules for past tense formation. However, if the *-ed* morpheme represents a common type of past tense marking, lexical past tense formation is still subject to confusion for most L2 learners of English.

Aspect in English

Aspect is a rather different feature of verb forms. The notion is generally discussed through the distinction between progressive and non-progressive forms although other aspectual oppositions, both marked and unmarked morphologically, occur in English. The progressive form is conventionally taken to indicate that the action is continuing for a period of time, while the non-progressive one reports the action at a precise moment. The Stoic grammarians used the term *aspect* to refer to the distinction between *perfective* and *imperfective* in the inflection of verbs in Greek and Russian and other Slavonic languages.

From this perspective, perfective indicates completion, whereas imperfective may take any other meanings, such as *to be in the process of, to be spending sometime on, to be in the state of*, etc. That is, in Greek and Russian the perfective aspect is marked, but the imperfective is unmarked. In addition to this, the distinction completion non-completion is not relative to the time of the utterance. Completion/non-completion can be distinguished in the past, present or future. But unlike the system in Greek and Russian, English has two aspects which combine fairly freely with tense and mood.

The perfect

8 a. I have (she has) eaten fruits.
b. I had eaten fruits.
c. I will have eaten fruits.
d. I would have eaten fruits.

The progressive

9 a. I am (she is, we are) eating fruits.

b. I was (we were) eating fruits.

c. I will be eating fruits.

d. I would be eating fruits.

Combination of perfect and progressive

10 a. I have been eating fruits.

b. I had been eating fruits.

One can also find in English some other restricted uses of aspect which may or may not be marked morphologically, two of which are commonly used by English speakers:

11 a. the habitual aspect: I used to eat fruit.
I eat fruit.

b. the mutative aspect: I got arrested.
I am arrested.

It is equally important to bear in mind that in English not all the verbs would normally occur in the above mentioned situations. For instance, verbs like *think, know, understand, hate, love, see, taste, feel, possess, own,* etc., would not generally occur in progressive aspect. They are known as stative or non-progressive verbs, i.e., they refer to a state of affairs rather than to an action, event or process. But, when they happen to be used as *verbs of activities* under particular circumstances, they can take the progressive aspect (e.g., 12).

12. I am not feeling well.

Similarly, when they combine with either the past tense, or one of the modals, they are no longer treated as stative verbs, but as referring to certain events (e.g., 13 & 14).

13. As soon as I saw him, I knew he had lost the game.

14. You will feel a slight pain when I insert the needle.

Tense-aspect distinction

Foley and Van Valin (1984) make a clear distinction between these two basic verbal categories, tense and aspect. In their view, *tense* locates the time of the reported event with respect to the time of the speech event. The reported event can be before, simultaneous with or after the speech event. Tense therefore is concerned mainly with the grounding of the reported event in the real world expressing its temporal orientation with regard to the act of speaking. *Aspect*, on the contrary,

> simply expresses the temporal structure of the reported event without reference to anything else.... aspect is concerned with the structure of the narrated event itself. The speech event and its participants are of no importance (Foley and Van Valin 1984:209)[12].

In other words, aspect is about whether the action is finished or not, or whether it is of very short duration or punctual, or of a long duration. An event can, consequently, be viewed as complete, i.e., with no continuing relevance, in which case the perfective aspect is used, or as incomplete, i.e., progressive, in which case the imperfective aspect is used.

Tense-time distinction

Lyons (1979) argues that the basic role of *tense* is to relate "the time of the action, event or state of affairs referred to in the sentence to the time of the utterance (the time of the utterance being 'now'). Tense is therefore a deictic category which is simultaneously a property of the sentence and the utterance" (Lyons 1979:305)[13]. Time may, therefore, refer to past, present or future, whereas tense is determined by the utterance situation or by other related contextual features. The problem the linguists face is, therefore, not that of recognizing a variety in the tense systems found in different languages, but rather how to describe them as universal phenomena. For instance, there is still a considerable controversy on the way tense and aspect should be described in English.

According to some studies (Lyons 1979, Perdue 1984, Trevise 1987), the traditional opposition between past and present can be best analysed as *past* and *non-past*. It seems quite logical that while *past* represents a clear reference to *before now*, *present* has often been subject to ambiguity in meaning. How would one decide on the tense (the time of the utterances being now) of the following sentences?

15 a. He lives in Durham.
   b. They meet on Sundays.
   c. The earth is spherical.

Trevise (1987) argues that a present tense can refer to past time in the case of historical present (e.g., 15c). It is equally true to add that the present tense can refer also to both past and present in the three examples. It then sounds logical to argue that (15a) is timeless, (15b) refers to a habitual event and (15c) states an eternal truth. Therefore, to link such sentences to *now* would be totally wrong (also of course possible under this particular circumstance of wanting to indicate a change of state). A form like *jumped* is said to be positively marked past, whereas *jump* or *jumps* is unmarked. This means that the opposition between past and non-past is realized systematically by suffixation of the first element of the verb phrase, as in

16 a. jump ---- jumped
   b. will jump ---- would jump
   c. has jumped ---- had jumped
   d. is jumping ---- was jumping
   e. has been jumping ---- had been jumping
   f. will have been jumping ---- would have been jumping

Items (b) and (f) can also refer to future and they can be categorised as non-past forms realised by means of auxiliary verbs *will* or *shall*, and which are better described as modals, like *can, may* and *must.* Their inclusion in the modal group can be justified by the fact that these auxiliaries occur also in sentences that do not refer to the future, as in the examples

17 a. Will you close the window, please?
   b. Shall I make you a cup of tea?
   c. Would you mind staying with us?

Examples 17a and 17b provide further support to the idea that the future tense should be described as partly modal.

Modality

Modality (or mood) may be expressed with the help of auxiliary verbs. That is, where there are no auxiliary verbs, such as in statement of facts (in declarative sentences), one would not normally expect mood to be expressed. The imperative and the interrogative offer better evidence for modality in that the speaker's mood is expressed directly, either by being directed to the hearer (imperative, e.g., 18a), or through the speaker's expectations (interrogative, e.g., 18b).

18 a. Go away
   b. Is Peter in his office?

But modality is more than that. There are other ways of expressing mood; thus, there seem to be no clear boundaries between essentially scalar categories such as volition and intention, necessity and obligation or certainty and possibility. Such differentiations would require specific contexts and should be interpreted according to particular languages. In English, intentions or wishes may be expressed by verbs other than the modals, as in

19 a. I wish I was rich enough to help them.
   b. It is time we had a break.

where mood is clearly shown through a combination of tenses rather than by a modal. It can be concluded from this short survey that the relationship between time, tense, aspect and modality in English is fairly mixed, and this may be the reason why English L2 learners find the notions particularly difficult to master.

3.1.7 Verb functions: time orientation and other meanings

In dealing with structural aspects of language, there is direct involvement with forms that convey meanings. This means that semantic features can always be matched with some formal features in a language, just as formal regularities need to

be assigned some sort of meaning. A grammatical analysis should rely, therefore, on both semantic as well as formal features. Accordingly, tense forms, i.e., variations in the morphological form of the verb, can be used to signal meanings. Verb forms can be used to accomplish certain things like reference to time, indicating a wish or an intention or expressing the way in which an action or event occurs. In Palmer's (1987) terms,

> tense appears to have three distinct functions, first to mark purely temporal relations of past and present time, secondly in the sequence of tenses that is mainly relevant for reported speech and thirdly to mark unreality, particularly in conditional clauses and wishes (Palmer 1987:37)[14].

With a different emphasis, Foley and Van Valin (1984:209)[15] argue also that "tense is crucially concerned with grounding the reported event in the real world, expressing its temporal orientation with regard to the present act of speaking". It can, therefore, be argued that one of the major functions of tenses and thus verb forms is to express the way in which events are related in time to one another and to the moment of speech.

According to Reichenbach (1947, in Moravscik 1974) tenses determine time by referring to the time point of the act of speech. In other words, the time indication given by tenses can take three interpretations:
- the point of speech, S for short;
- before the point of speech; and
- after the point of speech.

Referring to the point of speech, there are two time points that lead to the interpretion of tenses:
- the point of the event, E for short; and
- the point of reference, R for short.

In the example,

20. In 1678 the whole face of things had changed
    the nation began to find out...

the point of speech (S) is *now*, the point of reference (R) is 1678, and the points

of events are before 1678 for *had changed* and 1678 for *began.* Thus, any events connected with the date 1678 (or R) will be in the simple past, while those events before R will be in the past perfect. The diagrams (21) and (22) illustrate both tense structures.

```
                E          R          S
21.      ----|--------|---------|-----    had changed

                      E,R        S
22.      -------------|---------|-----    began
```

Diagram 21 differs from 22 in that the event described by the verb *began* coincides with the time point of reference, that is 1678. In example 23,

23. John has broken his leg.

the point of reference R and the point of speech meet but the event E, occurs before both R and S. The interpretation for such a structure is that E has something to do with the present time. In other words, sentence 23 means that there is some connection between the act of *breaking* and the point of speech; namely, the effect resulting from *breaking* is still relevant. This can be illustrated as follows:

```
              E           R,S
--------|-----------|--------    has broken
```

Example 24 gives a fourth possibility in the interpretation of tense-time relation. It shows that it is possible to have the three points (E,R,S) coincident when the event referred to takes place at the moment of speaking. The graphic representation of example 24 would look as follows:

```
                                    E,R,S
24.      ------------------|----------
```

I see John.

Two other structures are described as simple structures, one for the simple future and the other for the future perfect. The first has coincident point of speech and point of reference with E located after S. The second has a similar structure but is the reverse of the past perfect. Examples 25 and 26 represent two other structures:

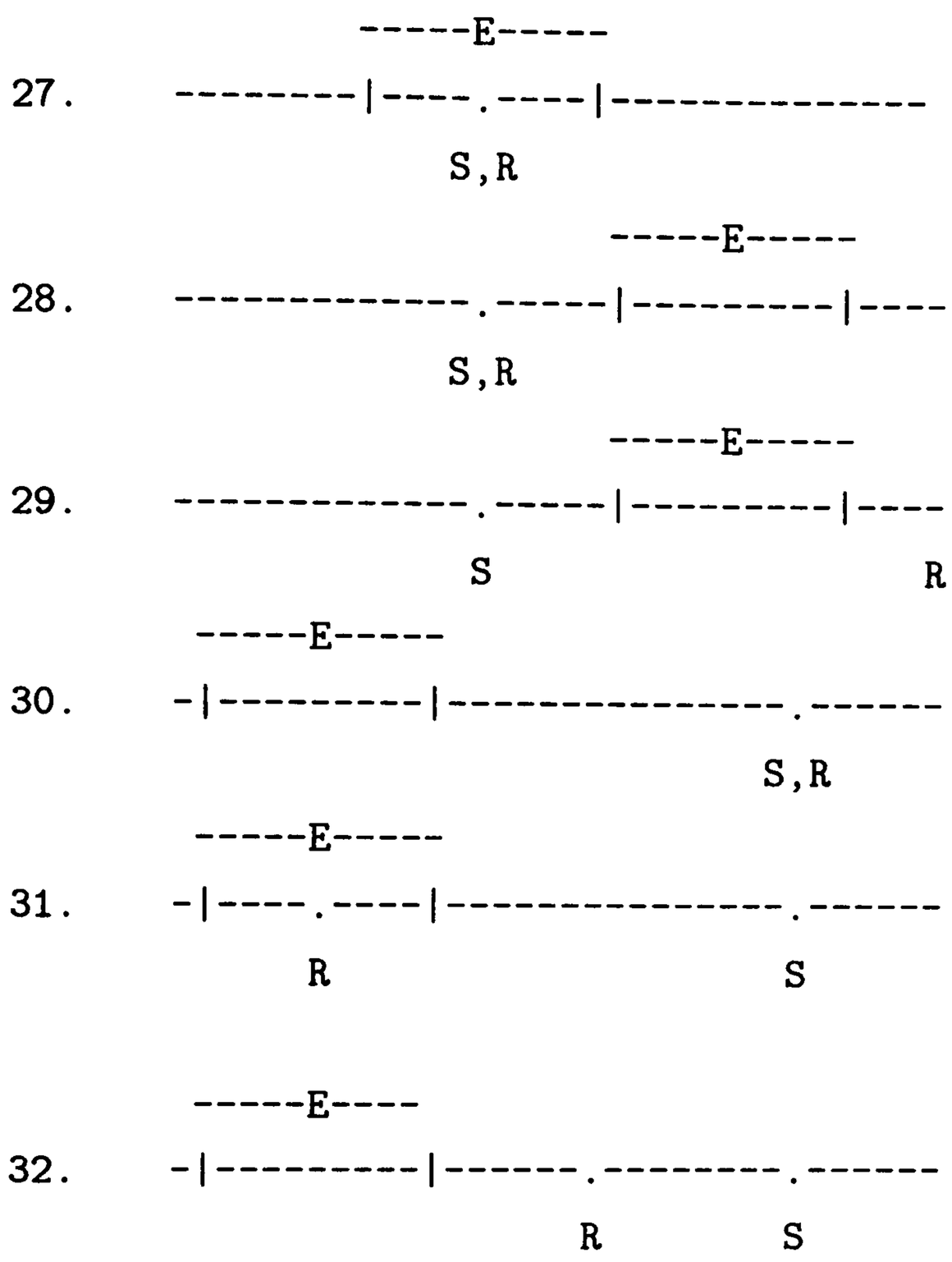
25. We shall play cards.
26. We shall have played cards

```
                        S,R          E
(25)     --------|----------|----------
```

```
                        S            E        R
(26)     --------|----------|-------|---
```

In this first series of examples, i.e., from 21 to 26, the duration of the events described is either short or referred to as such. In the next series, verb forms are used to indicate continuing events. Continuing event does not necessarily mean *continuous*, but may also mean *repetitive.* Continuity is represented by a long line, while repetition takes the form of a series of Es. These verb forms illustrate the aspect, as in:

27. We are playing cards.
28. We shall be playing cards.
29. We shall have been playing cards.
30. We have been playing cards.
31. We were playing cards.
32. We had been playing cards.



Languages vary a great deal in the use of tenses in general, and of extended tenses or aspect in particular. French, for example, has two verb forms for the simple past: the *imparfait* for duration and the *passé simple* for short events, as in the examples:

33. Je voyais Jean
    1st pers. sing.PRO IMPERF see PN Jean
    'I had been seeing Jean'

34. Je vis Jean
    1st pers. sing.PRO PAST see PN Jean
    'I saw Jean'

The French *passé composé* has two components (as in 35 and 36) but only when the time is not determined. When time specifications are added the French system

remains the same but the English translation will take a different tense, as in 37 and 38.

35. J'avais vu Jean
    1st pers. sing.PRO PAST have PASTPART see PN Jean
    'I had seen Jean'
36. J'ai vu Jean.
    1st pers. sing.PRO PRES have PASTPART see PN Jean
    'I have seen Jean'
37. J'avais vu Jean l'année dernière.
    1st pers.sing.PRO PAST have PASTPART see PN Jean
    year last
    'I saw Jean last year'
38. J'ai vu Jean ce matin.
    1st pers.sing.PRO PRES have PASTPART see PN Jean
    this morning
    'I saw Jean this morning'

This short description of the relation *tense-event-time* already raises the question of knowing whether L1 French speakers are hindered in their interpretation of tense forms by such differences as those displayed by 35/37 and 36/38, and also, in the use of present tense and *depuis,* as in

39. Je suis ici depuis hier.
    1st pers.sing.PRO PRES be since yesterday
    'I have been here since yesterday'

Hence, time is not identified only through the relationship specified in Reichenbach's view, but also through the interaction between tense and other syntactic elements. According to Smith (1981), to identify the time (past, present or future), one needs to understand the interaction of the tense system of the language with other syntactic, semantic and pragmatic variables. The presence of these variables shows that the relationship of time to tense is far from being one-to-one and that to

localise the time is not even an exclusively linguistic matter. That is, time can be determined not only by syntactic but also by semantic or even pragmatic factors. For Smith (1981) then,

> each morpho-syntactic tense form has a 'default' meaning that specifies time rather than modality or remoteness, but that this default meaning can in every case be overruled by either co-text or context: by linguistic or pragmatic factors (Smith 1981:253)[16].

In the examples below, 40a, 40b and 40c, *tense default meaning* has to be understood as a tense which is in one-to-one relationship with the time of the events. Thus, the past tense in (40a) refers to the past time, the present tense in (40b) refers to the present time and what Smith calls the future tense in (40c) is related to the future time.

40a. The chairman resigned.
  b. The secretary is happy.
  c. The share-holders will celebrate.

Smith then claims that this straightforward relation between time and tense (default meaning) does not always hold and can be overruled by co-text or context. In the examples 41a, b and c the verb is identical, i.e., morphologically past, but they each refer to a different time location: 41a refers to past time, 41b to the present time and 41c to the future time.

41a. Mary came at three o'clock.
  b. If Mary came now we would elope.
  c. According to our original plan, Mary came next week.

Such a relationship between tense and time would require the speaker or learner to acknowledge the role of contextual factors:
- in 41a, the presence of the adverbial *three o'clock*,
- in 41b, the use of *if* (with now) to express possibility, and
- in 41c, the occurrence of another (deictic) adverbial *next week*.

Similarly, the present form of a verb can also be used to refer to three different time locations, namely, past (42a,b), present (42c) and future (42d).

42 a. Jane tells me you are having an affair with my wife.
b. The next day they both wander about,
still more absent-minded.
c. They want to see the headmaster.
d. The hostages arrive tomorrow.

In example 42a the present tense does not need to be modified by an overt past adverb in order to yield the past time interpretation, the verb *tell* (also *report, inform, imply, hear* etc..) fulfils the same the function. In the example 42b the present tense used is known as the historic present, the sort of present often found in narration. 42d is another illustration of the use of a deictic adverb to indicate the time location. The present tense can also be used in ways that generate different interpretations depending on the semantic class of the verb, i.e., whether it is dynamic (43a) or stative (43b).

43 a. Fred smokes a pipe.
b. John admires Rembrandt.
c. John admires the Rembrandts

Smokes carries the meaning of habitual, while *admires* describes a single state which can become habitual as in example 43c. That is, "the possibility or necessity of a habitual interpretation is dependent on the presence of frequentative adverbials and the context of utterance as well as the stativity of the verb" (Smith 1981:255)[17]. It is clear that what has been claimed for the past and present tenses applies also to the use of the future forms. Similarly, the events described with the future forms can refer to past (44a), present (44b) or future time (44c).

44 a. Mary will be there by now
b. That will be Fred at the door.
c. Bill will leave tomorrow.

Clearly, there should be no controversy over 44c as its default meaning in relation to the event time is already established as future by the simultaneous presence of the (deictic) adverbial *tomorrow*. In example 44a, the time determination *by now* implies that the event took place (or had been accomplished) prior to the conversation. The other example, 44b, expresses a way of bringing a future event into the present.

3.1.8 Summary

Summarising, this section presented some perspectives on grammar and verbs in English. The survey shows that it is clearly difficult to take up a position in either of these areas without making reference to the other. However, the survey has been limited to demonstrating that with reference to *learning*, there is a need to distinguish between knowledge domains where a rigorous application of rules is required and those where possible grammatical structures may be tolerated.
The next section deals with a brief survey of the French verb system.

3.2 A brief description of verb forms in French

This section identifies and summarises some key aspects of the French verb system for use as points of comparison and contrast with the English counterparts. The summary will be used to explain certain behaviour in the informants' attempts to use English verb forms; it is not the researcher's intention to go into a detailed or systematic description of the French system which can be read in many expert studies. This section is therefore limited to cases where the informants (L2 French speakers learning English) are likely to encounter various kinds of non-correspondence.

Two subsections make up the survey and describe (a) the morphology of French verbs and (b) time orientation in the French verb system. Both subsections outline some of the many cases of non-correspondences between French and English. Non-correspondence in tense marking and the notion of temporality do not necessarily imply that French speaking learners will always face difficulties when attempting to use the English counterparts. Learning conditions (naturalistic, formal), the age of

the learner, motivation for learning and other factors may determine whether the features classified as *non-correspondent* hinder or facilitate the learning of English.

3.2.1 The morphology of French verbs

French has particularly rich and complex morphological tense forms. A verb form in French can be simple or compound. Similarly, tenses range from common everyday forms to rare historical ones. Judge and Healey (1983:99)[18] illustrate the idea.

(1) Il chante
3rd pers.sing.PRO PRES sing
'He is singing'

(2) Il a chanté
3rd pers.sing.PRO PRES have PASTPART sing
'He has sung'

(3) Il a eu chanté
3rd pers.sing.PRO PRES have PASTPART have PASTPART sing
'He had sung'

(4) IL chantait
3rd pers.sing.PRO PAST sing
'He was singing'

(5) Il avait chanté
3rd pers.sing.PRO PAST have PASTPART sing
'He had sung'

(6) Il chantera
3rd pers.sing.PRO FUT sing
'He will sing'

(7) Il chanta
3rd pers.sing.PRO PAST(remote) sing
'He sang'

(8) Il eut chanté
3rd pers.sing.PRO PAST(remote) have PASTPART sing
'He had sung'

These 8 verb forms give only an indication of what one category of verbs -with infinitive in *er*- may look like with only one pronoun *he* in the indicative and conditional forms. There are more than 14 forms for this verb. This means that there are many more verb forms than those represented here as the presence of different pronouns results in further variety. Form (1), for example, represents one of the six forms found in the indicative mood of the present tense. Forms (2) and (3) stand for two different types of compound - (2) as compound past and (3) as double compound past. Form (4) is the imperfect (*imparfait*), (5) is the pluperfect and (6) represents the future. Forms (7) and (8) represent past historic and past anterior respectively.

There are more than four classes of verbs in French within each of which several categories can be found. For instance, class (1) includes most verbs ending in *er* such as *chanter*, class (2) includes verbs ending in *ir* as in *finir* and class (3) includes those ending in *oir* as in *savoir*. There are significant variations in the way these verbs are conjugated and each class has different tense forms depending on whether it is indicative, imperative, subjunctive or passive. Some of the forms are so peculiar that they are sometimes referred to as *historitical* (i.e., usually found in old written French) and used only in the written French. In addition, many tense forms are not used frequently in the spoken French, in particular forms like *double compound* tenses. This may explain why French speakers, more specifically learners, are likely to prefer the simple, common forms. It is, not surprising, therefore, that such a tendency to simplify will be seen in the way French speakers learn other languages, including English.

There are further reasons for this tendency, including: (i) the distinction that a speaker needs to make between absolute and relative time (described in the next section); and (ii) the fact that present tense forms outnumber those used for past or future tenses with the result that, at times, several tense forms may equally fit the same time slot, or, conversely, the same tense form may appear in several time slots. This situation is particularly striking with the present tense forms. Consider, for example, the various (time) functions that can take simple present tense forms:

45 a. *punctual action:*

Je vous félicite.

1st pers.sing.PRO 2nd pers.PRO PRES congratulate

'I congratulate you'

b. *an action limited in time:*

Je mange

1st pers.sing.PRO PRES eat

'I am eating'

c. *an eternal truth:*

La terre tourne

ART earth PRES rotate

'The earth rotates'

d. *a timeless event:*

L'eau bout à 100o

ART water PRES boil PREP 100o

'Water boils at 100o'

These examples show that certain French tense forms and, in particular, the present are likely to pose some problems to French speakers learning English "because a far greater use is made of the French present than of its English equivalent" (Judge and Healey 1983:103)[19]. It appears from these views that French speakers learning English have to unlearn the French tense system to acquire the English one. The situation could be illustrated as follows:

46 a. Il mange

3rd pers.sing.PRO PRES eat

'He is eating'

b. Il mange à une heure

3rd pers.sing.PRO PRES eat PREP ART hour

'He eats at one o'clock'

c. Il mange depuis deux heures

3rd pers.sing.PRO PRES eat since two hours

'He has been eating for two hours'

As can be seen, through these examples, the single French form *mange* translates into three distinct English forms. This situation could easily be a source of confusion for French speakers learning English, in that they are likely to transfer their preference for simple and present tense in the process of learning English. Similarly, duration action can be indicated either by a simple present form as in example 46, or a set of expression such as *être en train de* (to be in the process of) and the infinitive. The former seems more natural while the second usually suggests an emphasis on the action being performed. In the examples:

47 a. Il travaille
3rd pers.sing.PRO PRES work
'He is working'
b. Il est en train de travailler
3rd pers.sing.PRO PRES be process of INF work
'He is working'

the ambiguity in the intended meaning may be clarified either by adding the place where work takes place (e.g., *en ville* — in town), or the time (e.g., *ce soir* — this evening), or the period of time involved (e.g., *de 8h à 15h* — from 8 am to 3 pm). It is also possible to get a habitual event in the same slot by using timeless expressions such as *dans une école* (in a school). Again, the perfect tense (aspect) does not by itself make the distinction between short and long actions, one needs other expressions such as *depuis trois heures* (for three hours) or *pendant la guerre* (during the war) to refer to short or long actions/events. Depending on their nature, some linguistic elements/expressions may help to link the past to the present when used with present tense verb forms (e.g., 48a,b) or describe a long event completed in the past (e.g., 49). Thus, in the examples below,

48 a. Il travaille depuis trois heures
3rd pers.sing.PRO PRES work since three hours
'He has been working for three hours'
b. Il vit ici depuis dix ans

3rd pers.sing.PRO PRES live here since ten years
'He has been living here for ten years'
'He has lived here for ten years'

49. Il avait travaillé pendant la guerre comme guardien
3rd pers.sing.PRO PAST have PASTPART work during the war as a guard.
'He worked during the war as a porter'

Examples 48a and 48b describe continuous events. This continuity is not, as is often seen in English, expressed by auxiliary verb forms but by linguistic expressions external to the verb phrase. Thus, the French verb form alone does not tell us much about the time of the action/event, one needs additional linguistic elements to show whether the event or action as expressed by the verb form should be considered complete or incomplete. However, verbs expressing short actions such as *rencontrer* (meet) seem to behave like their counterparts in English in that no additional linguistic elements is required to express completeness or incompleteness. The following examples illustrate the idea.

50. Il a rencontré la reine
3rd pers.sing.PRO PRES have PASTPART meet the Queen
'He met the Queen'

51. Nous avons vu l'accident
1st pers.plur.PRO PRES have PASTPART see the accident
'We saw the accident'

Compared with the other tenses described above, the future in French seems to be more specific and less subject to ambiguity. Byers (1989) states that there are two distinct types of future time in French: one is *absolute*, i.e., the action/event is expected to happen at a given time or during a given period as in example (52) where the person referred to is pregnant; and the other *relative* where there is nothing definite about the time or period the event/action is expected to take place as in example (53).

52. Elle va avoir un bébé
    3rd pers.sing.F PRO PRES go INF have a baby
    'She is going to have a baby'
53. Elle aura un enfant
    3rd pers.sing. F PRO FUT have a child
    'She will have a child'

In the latter, *having a child* is seen as a wish or an intention that will be realised some day in the future. Contrary to what happens in English, in this case French does not use an auxiliary for the future. The verb form used for future is a combination of both verb and tense, that is, tense is *conflacted*, (i.e., embedded) in the verb. This point is discussed further in the next subsection.

3.2.2 Time orientation in the French verb system

Judge and Healey (1983) take the view that "time and tense in French are combined in the various tense forms, but in ways which are not always easy to analyse, given that time and aspect are fused, whereas in English they are clearly specific morphlogical forms" (Judge and Healey 1983:90)[20]. In the examples,

54. Hier je marchais dans la rue, quand tout à coup ...
    Yesterday 1st pers.sing.PRO PAST walk in the street,
    when suddenly....
    'I was walking in the street yesterday when suddenly...'
55. Hier j'ai marché toute la journée
    Yesterday, 1st pers.sing.PRO PRES have PASRPART walk
    all the day.
    'I walked all the day, yesterday'
56. Elle va avoir un bébé
    3rd pers.sing.F PRO PRES go INF have a baby
    'She is going to have a baby'
57. Elle aura un enfant
    3rd pers.sing. F PRO FUT have a child
    'She will have a child'

Both sentences (54,55) refer to the same time, *yesterday*, but they differ in the way they describe the action: in (54) the action is seen as ongoing whereas, in (55) the action is seen as completed. These two past tenses differ in terms of aspect but not in terms of time. This view also applies to English. Similarly Byers' (1989) distinction in sentences (56,57) shows a similar and useful way of maintaining a difference between a tense form used for an event that occurs at a definite moment and one that is seen as relative, that is, an event that occurs at a time not clearly specified. Thus, both Judge and Healey (1983) and Byers (1989) share the view that a distinction is often maintained in French between *absolute time*, as in examples 54 and 56 and *relative time* as in examples 55 and 57. In short, it may be said that time orientation in French can be interpreted in two ways: on the one hand, it depends on the realationship between tense forms and time adverbials just as in English and, on the other hand, it needs to take into account the distinction between *absolute* and *relative* time.

Summarising, this section has outlined two key areas of French verb forms, namely verb morphology and reference to time. It has been pointed out, for example, that non-past verb forms outnumber those used for past or future in everyday conversational French. The resulting effect is that French speaking learners carry the tendency when learning other languages, including English. It has aslo been emphasized in this section that tense forms and future time can be related in two different ways. The tense can refer to an *absolute* time when there is indication that the event/action will take place at a given time/period and tense refers to a *relative* time when no such indication is present.

3.3 Summary

The first section of this chapter outlines (a) some general views on the grammar of English by showing the difficulties associated with notions such as standard and variety and (b) other important features related to verb as the main predicate of a structure. It should be pointed out with regard to (a) that although the notion of standard variety is useful and appropriate in some cases, grammarians should consider replacing *standard* with another more appropriate term since the established concept seems to be strongly associated with other terms which have prescriptive or evaluative meanings (Fairman 1989). The notion *common core*

raises another type of difficulty. The term is viewed, on one hand as a set of rules shared by all speakers – a potentially prescriptive notion – and, on the other hand, as a shared meaning in a communicative situation, i.e., language is first of all a functional activity.

I went on to argue for the need to limit the aspects of verbs to be investigated. This restriction was necessary in that a description of English verb morphology (tense, aspect) shows not only how complex its structure is, but also that a study of verb forms cannot be separated from the meanings they express. This is discussed further with reference to Smith's work. Smith's (1981) view is that the morphological aspects of verb forms may not always be a sufficient source of information to give a correct interpretation of event time. One may need recourse to other factors present in the structure, i.e., the co-text, or the wider domain of knowledge, i.e., the context.

The second section gives a scketchy description of the French verb forms. It is argued that French speakers learning English are likely to transfer the unmarked tense forms (i.e., the present forms) because they are currently used in modern spoken French. The relation tense-time is better understood when the learner can make the distinction between *absolute* and *relative* time. On the basis of these views the next chapter may be seen as an application of some of the abstract notions developed in this chapter. Specifically, chapter 4 examines from a more practical point of view, what structures of grammar tend to be used by English second language learners, how they go about manipulating those structures and why this is so.

Chapter three references

1. T. Fairman (1989) Writing Descriptive grammar , *BAAL Newsletter*, No 33 (1989a) and No 34 (1989b), p. 12

2. J. Lyons 1979 *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics,* Cambridge, p. 43

3. T. Fairman 1989a op. cit. p. 19

4. S. Greenbaum 1988 *Good English and the Grammarian,* London, Longman, p. 38

5. T. Fairman 1989b op.cit. p. 8

6. The Bullock report was compiled by a committee of Inquiry appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science under the chairmanship of sir Alan Bullock, FBA, 1975, p. 8

7. J. Locke's (1690) view on language and communication, summarised in Fairman (1989), combines two notions: conformity and adjustment and has the merit of expanding beyond the Platonist's view which requires only conformity to a particular form or variety in order to achieve successful communication (in T. Fairman 1989b op. cit. p. 16)

8. T. Fairman 1989b op. cit. p. 18

9. F.R. Palmer 1987 *The English Verb*, Longman: London, p. 1

10. F.R. Palmer 1987 op. cit. p. 249

11. F. Parker 1986 *Linguistics for Non-linguists*, London: Taylor and Francis, p.71

12. W.A. Foley and R. Van Valin 1984 *Functional Syntax and Universal Grammar,* London: C.U.P., p.209

13. J. Lyons 1979 op. cit. p. 305

14. F.R. Palmer 1987 op. cit. p. 37

15. W.A. Foley and R. Van Valin 1984 op. cit. p. 209

16. N.V. Smith 1981 Grammaticality, Time and tense *Biological Science,* Vol. 295, p.253

17. N.V. Smith 1981 op. cit. p. 255

18. A. Judge and F.G. Healey 1983 *A Reference Grammar for Modern French,* London: Edward Arnold, p. 99

19. A. Judge and F.G Healy 1983 op. cit. p.103

20. A. Judge and F.G. Healey 1983 op. cit. p. 90

Chapter IV

THE TREATMENT OF VERB FORMS IN IL STUDIES

4.1 Introduction

The first part of the review of literature on second language theories and on *grammar* and *verbs* in chapters two and three was concerned with views and trends as seen in the established literature. This chapter surveys a certain number of research studies that have tried to explain IL phenomena using live subjects. In other words, this chapter summarises research studies that have investigated IL verb forms or related features in experimental conditions. To be included in this review, studies had to meet three main conditions:

a- the studies are primary research investigations where data are collected from live subjects,
b- the studies deal with verb forms and/or related concepts such as tense or aspect, or with functions such as time orientation or temporality, and
c- the studies make use of a multi-level analysis of data, such as the form-function relationship.

For a study to be included in the review therefore both theory and method need to be complementary in the analytical procedures used to describe, compare, or explain the features investigated. The studies are based on observable phenomena and set in well-defined theoretical frameworks. It is on the basis of these views that the studies surveyed will become part of the subsequent discussions. The first study considered as relevant to this project is included for its background similarities, i.e., the linguistic environment in which it was conducted and the informants involved.

4.2 A review of existing IL studies

4.2.1 B. Ntahwakuderwa (1987): English L2 learners in Zaire

This study is included for two main reasons: firstly, because of the linguistic environment in which the study was carried out, an environment similar to the one used for this project, including subjects drawn from the same Institution as was used in this study. Secondly, in the analysis of data for his study, the researcher refers to the form-function model.

Aims and subjects

This study was concerned with "the use of definite and indefinite reference and infinitival complementation as well as other relevant features of the learners' IL which may manifest themselves through their performance" (Ntahwakuderwa 1988:69)[1]. That is, the study aimed at investigating the various ways in which subsystems of the learner's IL are acquired, "first from the mastery of certain linguistic forms, then towards the mastery of their appropriate functions" (Ntahwakuderwa 1988:135)[2].

Half of the subjects (76 out of 163) used in this study came from a Teachers' Training College. The other half was drawn from other institutions: 66 from secondary schools, and 21 from 1st and 2nd year university courses. In terms of exposure to English, the first group of learners had five hours of English instruction per week, whilst at the tertiary level the number of hours dropped to only two per week. Compared to the other two groups, the students at the Teachers' College were more exposed to English with an average of thirty hours per week. As Ntahwakuderwa puts it

> Teacher trainees have, in effect, more opportunity to have access to adequate input, since English is the medium of instruction and subject-matter at the same time. Therefore they were credited with the ability to perform better on any of the tasks which would be found suitable for the lower level; that is the intermediate (university) and elementary (secondary) Ntahwakuderwa 1988:123)[3].

Approach to data analysis

According to Ntahwakuderwa, the form-function model has to be seen as "the background relative to the way in which the learner has created his transitional competence and the problems he may have been struggling with" (Ntahwakuderwa 1988:106)[4]. The approach was chosen because it reflects IL behaviour in that IL users are likely to produce target-like linguistic forms before understanding their meanings fully. Based on this view, the researcher concludes that form-function mapping can be positively associated with levels of proficiency.

Results of the study

As it is not possible to report all the results, it will be sufficient to say that the researcher found no significant differences between the subjects' performance on the use of reference at the three different levels of proficiency. More specifically, he demonstrates that apart from the indefinite article *a/an* in the subject NP environment (which has reached the $\geqslant$ 80% correctness criterion), articles in all environments are still being realised variably (i.e., between 79% and 55%) or in a pre-systematic way (i.e., between 54% and 0%). Referring to the use of tense, the researcher found that errors related to irregular past tense represented 11.3% of all errors, but errors involving tense and aspect within the VP constituent accounted for 30% of all errors. In Ntahwakuderwa's study, both aspect and irregular past tense were among the five top categories of errors identified in the study.

In the light of these results, the researcher conludes that the lack of development may be due to the fact that definite and indefinite reference represent a highly complex subsystem, and thus may not be mastered fully until very late in the learning process. Taken within the form-function model, the results

> indicate that at the beginning stages, syntactic forms usually appear or are often used independently of their meanings. It is only gradually that the relationships between forms and function seem to be mapped. It would seem that in SLA, syntax proceeds faster than semantics, i.e., in a similar manner that learning putatively takes place at a faster rate than acquisition (in Krashen's 1981 terms) Ntahwakuderwa 1988:184)[5].

Referring to composition as a means of global assessment, Ntahwakuderwa observes that in general most learners improved in their ability to write compositions which contained fewer and fewer grammatical errors as they progressed in English. In particular, he argues that errors involving the regular past tense in compositions

should be regarded as less severe because the learners were concentrating more on the meaning of the sentence, and somehow overlooked the morphological marking of the verb. He therefore points out that to be able to explain errors one would need to take into account both the attempts to use a certain form or feature, as well as non-attempts to use the feature or form, i.e., all possible instances of risk-taking or avoidance.

Among Ntahwakuderwa's findings, two are particularly relevant to our study and they include:

1. The production of certain forms occurs before their functions are manifest. The functional distribution of forms can be examined by looking at the learner's IL performance on different tasks.

2. In a more formal instructional environment, length of exposure to the L2 and the learner's degree of involvement in the learning task are more likely to lead to a faster rate of and greater success in SLA than motivation or general favourable attitudes.

Conclusion and relevance

It was pointed out at the beginning that Ntahwakuderwa's study was carried out in a similar environment to the one to be used for our project. More specifically, some of the subjects used in Ntahwakuderwa's study came from the same College as those involved in our study. They were all mature students following intensive courses in English, including lower intermediate students at level 1, mid-intermediate students at level 2 higher intermediate students at level 3. The scores they obtained in all the tests administered to them in Ntahwakuderwa's study showed that there was still a problem to solve before any investigation could be made, that of determining the areas where such advanced learners were likely to have real language difficulties. This justifies the design of the preliminary data collection exercise which is described in the methodology chapter and which amongst other purposes was designed to reveal precisely these areas.

It seems to us that using subjects from different learning and teaching backgrounds, i.e., using samples which are not basically from a homogeneous population, may bring in extra factors that the investigator may not be able to control. In the

present case, differences in age, experience and learning modes between one group of informants and another could have influenced the overall results. That is, the length of exposure to English and the degree of involvement in the learning task cannot be the only possible explanations for the results obtained. In our project, data will be collected from a homogeneous student population taught in similar conditions, and with little difference in age and learning modes.

And finally from the methodological point of view, the present study had to investigate the view that "at the beginning stages, syntactic forms usually appear or are often used independently of their meanings. It is only gradually that the relationship between form and function seem to be mapped" (Ntahwakuderwa 1988:184)[6]. In short, Ntahwakuderwa's study is an important and useful background from which this project intends to expand and add a new dimension to the many ways one could explain Zairean College learners' problems in learning English as a second language.

4.2.2 C.J. Sato (1985): IL development

Aims and subjects

Sato's study on *The Syntax of Conversation in IL development* is a longitudinal investigation of two immigrant children in the USA. She investigates the development of past time reference and propositional encoding through actions and events in an L2 setting that allow past time reference to be inferred. More specifically, she identifies and describes the following linguistic features:
- Obligatory contexts for past tense marking in English,
- Past tense marking on verbs, both inflectional (i.e., regular), and lexical (i.e., irregular),
- Temporal adverbials (e.g., yesterday), and
- Unmarked past tense contexts.

Results of the study

In her analysis, among other things, she finds that learners' ILs are characterised by low frequencies of lexical past verbs, the absence of inflected past forms, and heavy reliance upon the interlocutor's establishment of past time reference. On the basis of this information, she argues that the lack of inflectional past marking

is partially attributed to the first language syllable-structure transfer. She notes in particular that

> inflectional past marking in English is not acquired by speakers of south-east Asian languages, such as Thanh and Tai, for at least a year and some months after arrival in the second language setting. However, adverbial markers and lexical past are acquired much earlier (Sato 1985:143)[7].

She therefore suggests that some early lexical past forms, such as *went, took*, etc., may subsequently give way to forms such as *goed* and *taked* prior to the internalization of the distinction between lexical and inflectional pasts. In the light of this information, she concludes that tense development is a slow process in a naturalistic acquisition context.

Approach to data analysis

Sato's study is carried out within a multilevel approach and refers to several levels of knowledge. She gives two reasons for that: (a) SLA falls within the domain of several disciplines such as sociology, psychology, neurology, etc., and (b) the existence of an interdependence between linguistic levels or structural domains such as phonology, morphology, lexis and syntax. This explains her preference for an approach that can allow an explanation of different selected linguistic features in relation to different levels of knowledge. She strongly argues that one single type of analysis, for example based on morphological, lexical, or syntactic features only, may not be sufficient to explain certain linguistic behaviours.

In Sato's view, an analysis based on *form* or morphological tense marking only measures the extent to which a learner can produce target-like forms, but does not indicate that the learner necessarily knows the functions or use of these forms. But form to function analysis commits one to a multi-level analysis, and allows the researcher to consider the entire repertoire of strategies and linguistic coding devices. A form to function approach also reveals a comprehensive analysis of the functional distribution of a particular form in the learner's IL, while a function-to-form analysis looks at the evolution of grammatical encoding of a functional domain, such as the expression of temporality.

It follows that function must be considered along with form, and therefore both

form-to-function and function-to-form analyses must be combined. Sato sees such a combination as a logical consequence in the development of IL theory from its early days. Her view is that

> product-oriented lines of research have provided a foundation for their process-oriented successors. Beginning with studies in the contrastive analysis model and continuing through error analysis and performance analysis in the 70s, the need for redirection became evident largely because of the limitations of each 'new' approach in turn (Sato 1985:2)[8].

Similarly, the notion of IL variation (Bickerton 1971, Ellis 1985, Tarone 1983, 1985), and in particular that of variability as systematic (Tarone 1988) has to be seen, in Sato's view, through changes in time. Accordingly, any approach that seeks to account for variation should be based on a process-oriented type of analysis of IL development.

Conclusion and relevance

Sato's study is relevant to our project in two ways: it identifies two of the important features which are often a source of difficulties for L2 learners of English, i.e., *past time reference* and *tense marking.* In particular, she argues that ILs are characterised – at earlier stages – by low frequencies of lexical past verbs, absence of inflected past forms and reliance upon past time reference, an argument that is worth further investigation. Secondly, it provides us with an important methodological background, an approach that takes into account not only of complex linguistic features, but also of the existence of an interdependent relationship between the different levels of knowledge in linguistics. It is therefore clear that notions like *tense marking* and *reference to time* cannot be analysed as discrete phenomena, but only within a multilevel analysis context. Similarly, the relationship that exists between the form of a feature and its function cannot be unidirectional. Both form-function and function-form need to be considered in the analysis.

Sato's emphasis on the role and importance of a multilevel approach in a study of IL features reflects the views of a number of recent research studies which it is necessary to confirm with further evidence. The way adult L2 learners of English in Zaire mark tenses and perceive reference to time offers ground for such further investigation. While Ntahwakuderwa's study provided us with an essential

general background to the learners' problems, Sato's study provides a theoretical framework for data collection and analysis.

4.2.3 R. J. Lund (1986): Formal accuracy with finite verbs

Aims and subjects

Lund's study investigated L2 learners' knowledge of the form and position (by which he means placement) of finite verbs through a comparison of the performances of 21 College students of German, 7 in each of year 1, year 2 and year 3, on three tasks requiring different applications of linguistic knowledge for the following features:

a- position of the finite verb,

b- form of the finite verb, that is, the morphological tense marking, and

c- source of the sentence to be judged. (*Source of sentence* has to be understood in this context to mean sentences from individuals as well as those representing each year of instruction, i.e., learners were asked to make judgements about their own individual sentences as well as those from learners at other levels of instruction).

Instruments of measurement and data analysis

Two different task types were administered: production and linguistic awareness tasks. The production task was a semi-structured interview in spoken German, while the linguistic awareness tasks included the correction of errors and the discrimination of correct from incorrect versions of sentences. According to Lund, correction and discrimination are different linguistic activities because each requires linguistic knowledge to be applied in different ways. This also implies that linguistic awareness is different from production. The latter may refer either to the learner's communicative utterance in the target language, or to a specific task in which the learner is expected to provide an extended sample of speech in an informal conversation. Similarly, obtaining data from production and awareness tasks has to be considered as two different kinds of measurement.

Lund used two types of tasks, awareness tasks and production tasks. In his view, these types of task yield different results. Thus, his argument is that

> in the production tasks, language is used as a tool of communication, in the awareness tasks

> language is the object of conscious attention. This conception suggests a distinction, not in terms of the nature of knowledge, but in the application of knowledge (Lund 1986:41)[9].

Results of the study.

The study of verb forms and placement, both in production and awareness tasks led Lund to make three major observations:

i. Performance in production and awareness tasks may vary even for the same structure,

ii. Obligatory contexts for production may produce different accuracy rates from free contexts for the same structure,

iii. Correction scores are sensitive to prior instruction.

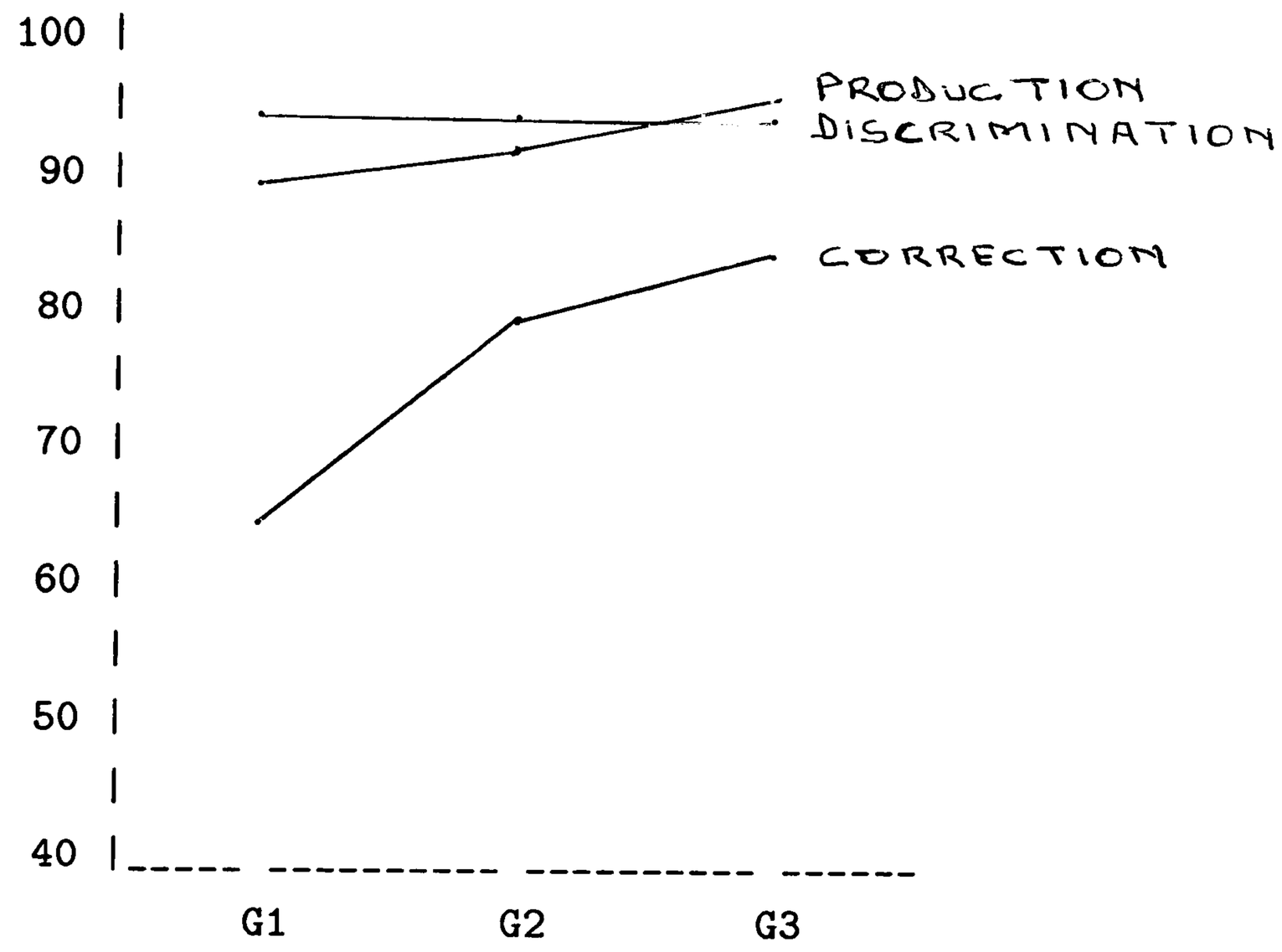
These observations support earlier findings by Tarone (1984) and by Hamayan (1978) who argue that linguistic awareness may not be systematically related to production. This view applies not only to features, but also to individuals. Lund's comparison of results of awareness and production tasks reveals that production tasks are characterised by "subjects using easy, familiar verbs, and confining their communications to present tense" (Lund 1986:130)[10].

Lund points out, however, that those contexts that were difficult in production also usually caused difficulty in correction. But the relative difficulty in correction also depends on the types of features (see also Tarone 1979), i.e., some features are less difficult to correct than others. Thus, according to Lund, learners will not be equally able to correct each of the non-standard features in the domain of verb forms, and one should expect variation between the performance of one individual and another even within a given population of learners. This is what Lund means by *independence of performance* on various language tasks.

Figure 4.1 (reproduced) shows the overall results for the three groups of learners from year one (i.e., G1), year two (i.e., G2) and year three (i.e., G3), Lund (1986:69)[11].

The graph illustrates group performance on the basis of correct responses expressed in percentages. Each task line on the graph represents a separate tendency with correction showing the most significant ($p < 0.01$) and discrimation the least significant change. In particular, correction scores for groups 2 and 3 are significantly

Figure 4.1 — Group means by Tasks



higher than group 1 scores. These results also show that there is a significant interaction between groups and tasks. That is, each task produced a different profile of results. However, discrimination scores are almost identical for all groups, while correction scores improved most between the first and the second year. In short, Lund's study has two important outcomes for both second language research as well as the study of IL phenomena, in particular: firstly, the study shows the nature of the relationship between consciously learned knowledge and the ability to produce language from internalised competence. In Lund's terms, "metalinguistic performances, such as various grammar-oriented tasks, may not be assumed to accurately reflect either the ability to communicate or formal accuracy in a communicative situation" (Lund 1986:154)[12].

Formal grammatical skills, as evidenced in correction and discrimination, do not equate directly with skills in production. By extension, the study seems to reveal that formal instruction does not include enough practice in the communicative use of the features. Secondly, the study suggests that the relationship among task performances, such as production and linguistic awareness, may not be closely related. Lund considers that learners not only apply knowledge differently according to task conditions, but also that "similar learners in the same environment may still not be learning in the same way" (Lund 1986:152)[13].

Conclusion and relevance

Lund's study is useful to our project in the extra dimension it gives to the nature of instruments one needs to investigate the learner knowledge of the various aspects of verb forms. In addition to the study's concern with the production of morphological features (see also Sato 1985, Hassan 1986) and the use of finite verbs in a given structure, the study also focuses on the impact of task conditions in the elicitation of data. According to Lund, learners are likely to apply their knowledge differently depending on how they are expected to deal with the activity. Activities such as correction of errors, discrimination of correct from incorrect versions of sentences and oral interview are linguistic awareness tasks that require conscious attention and different applications of knowledge. This leads Lund to conclude that performance on various linguistic awareness tasks does not seem to be even across tasks. Rather, there is what he calls *independence of performance* between tasks.

In the light of Lund's findings, the present study takes the view that linguistic awareness tasks may provide the investigator with important information on the way L2 learners reveal their knowledge of given features. Similarly, being adult students, one would expect the subjects in our study to have sufficient knowledge to be able to complete linguistic awareness activities. As argued earlier (chapter 3), the analysis of verb forms requires a reference to several levels of knowledge, and as such, a collection of data that relies on a single level of knowledge, such as on morphology only, would be incomplete. Thus, the type of informants used in the study and the features investigated motivated the design of tasks that required different applications of knowledge. In addition, Lund's observation that

metalinguistic performance may not accurately reflect formal accuracy will also be investigated.

4.2.4 Ali A. Hassan (1986) : Relative clauses and verb tenses

Aims and subjects

Hassan's study investigates relative clause formation and the marking of tense in the English IL of 32 Palestinian university students. Three composition types were designed to elicit the learners' use of various tenses and relative clause formation in English. The three topics used for composition writing were framed as follows:
- Description of a set of events in the past (AL-Adha feast),
- The importance of university studies, and
- Future plans after graduation from the university.

The first topic covers customary behaviours and actions in a religious context, the second topic requires the description of an on-going situation, and the last topic offers an opportunity for the learners to project themselves into unknown situations.

Approach and data analysis

The results show that Palestinian learners typically tend to switch from one English tense form to another to express an aspectual system similar to that of Palestinian Arabic. The English past tense and present tense are used to mark Palestinian perfective and imperfective aspects, respectively. For instance, Hassan observes that

> verb that are coded through the English present tense morphology are found to designate incomplete actions. Verbs that are coded through the past tense morphology do not necessarily designate actions that are completed in the past, for as long as the verb refers to a completed action, it will be marked through the past tense morphology whether the action is completed in the past or in the present (Hassan 1986:55-6)[14].

This is as shown in the following examples:

1. When I *finished* the four years, I wish....
2. If I *finished* my high education, I should teach...

3. I *helped* my father for killing the sheep and
   we *give* part of it to my relation...

In these examples, *finished* in the first two examples illustrates non-past completed actions marked with past tense morphology. In this case, the action or event is perceived as still to come. In example 3, *helped* also refers to a completed action, but *give*, which apparently describes a customary action repeated every year, is marked as imperfective and as designating incomplete action. It is therefore clear for these learners that verbs are coded perfective or imperfective according to the nature of the actions described. On the basis of these observations, Hassan argues that the perfective and imperfective perform different discourse functions: the perfective is used to relate or narrate bounded events, whereas the imperfective is used to provide background information about on-going, current events or situations. Thus, according to Hassan, tense shift cannot be explained on the basis of inappropriate tense rule application, but rather as a (normal) selection of an aspect based on the nature of the events or states. On the basis of these results, Hassan draws three major conclusions:

(i) There is a considerable amount of influence from the Palestinian aspectual system on the learners' use of English,
(ii) EFL teachers should not over-react to their students' tense usage in narrative passages and should not require them to write in a particular tense or in an artificial manner, and
(iii) Learners' errors should be tolerated and should not be considered as indications of faulty learning.

Conclusion and relevance

Hassan's (1986) emphasis on the morpho-syntactic features of verb forms shows that linguistic categories which exist in both NL and TL but which are different in their functions and distributions can cause learners to make errors. His study also reveals some important facts about the functions of the aspectual distinction in IL studies. Hassan's study is interesting for the method used for collecting spontaneous written data relative to the production of verb forms. This technique – also used in the preliminary task to this study – is the best way of identifying learners' grammatical difficulties in the production of verb forms. Hassan shows

that rapid composition writing is most effective seeking to determine learners' accuracy as well as their perception of the functions of verbs in given syntactic contexts.

However, Hassan's study is based only on data from compositions, i.e., on knowledge revealed in a production exercise. As a result the information may not be sufficient to offer a complete picture of the learners' tense system and tense problems in particular. For example, it is not clear whether *tense shift* in learners' data is a systematic phenomenon or just a random one, and whether learners' decisions about the functions of input data to which they are exposed match their output decisions. This view justifies reference to the data obtained through elicitation procedures in this project.

4.2.5 H. W. J. Hung (1986): IL and temporal expressions

Aims and subjects

This is a cross-sectional study on the use and development of tense-aspect and time adverbials carried out with 150 Cantonese learners of English in Hong-Kong. Five groups of 30 school pupils took part in the experiment which was based on two elicitation tasks: letter writing (LW) and filling-in blanks (FIB). According to Hung, his study was motivated by two major considerations: (a) that tense and aspect are major problem areas for ESL or EFL learners with a wide range of different linguistic backgrounds, and (b) that in most IL studies, terms like *time reference*, *temporality* or *time adverbs* are just touched upon, not really tackled in detail. Hung argues that the fact that temporal adverbials, for example, may be either a propositional phrase, a clause or simply a single adverb would be not only difficult to distinguish, but also very confusing for second language learners and teachers alike. Additionally, Hung's focus on such teaching and learning difficulties allowed him to explain his subjects' ability to express or refer to given temporal notions through the use of tense-aspect and time adverbials in compositions.

Approach and data analysis

The two elicitation tasks consisted of a letter-writing task on a set of instructions provided by the researcher, and a Fill-in Blank task intended to investigate variation - for tense-aspect - in specific contexts. The purpose of the study was "to

describe the development and use of tense, aspect and time adverbials in Cantonese learners of English in a formal learning setting" (Hung 1986:4)[15]. In order to bring the use of tense-aspect and time-adverbials together, Hung argues that the tense-aspect form of a verb in English is determined not only by the temporal frame, but that it also interacts with modality, and the semantic and idiosyncratic properties of the verb, as well as the speaker's subjective perception of time. Hung's study is therefore intended to offer a picture of the learners' linguistic evolution in the way temporality is handled. This justifies his decision to work within a function-form approach because he considers his learners to have some prior knowledge of the notion *temporality* and to be expected simply to match this knowledge of time with the appropriate forms. According to Hung,

> The L2 learner is ... chronologically and cognitively more mature and his more advanced communicational maturity – ability – as well as prior (L1-based) knowledge of basic semantic concepts such as temporality, causality, etc... will necessarily influence his L2 acquisition process in terms of the way(s) he organizes what he perceives and what he produces (Hung 1986:16)[16].

Hung also justifies his use of a function-form approach, by working from the assumption that the tense-aspect form of a verb may be determined either by the temporal frame – present in the structure – or by the speaker's perception of time: "the form and function of English tense-aspect are, therefore, not always in a one-to-one correspondence; and this misfit creates usage problems which non-native teachers and pupils find extremely difficult to tackle" (Hung 1986:6)[17].
Those difficulties are revealed in his findings. In particular, he found that tense-aspect morphology appeared to follow a certain order, with simple present tense as the easiest, in Hung's terms, and past perfect as the most difficult.

Hung's findings also show that there was no significant difference in the performance of some tense-aspect categories for both tasks, (specifically when the forms were present progressive, present perfect, simple past or simple future). Whereas his learners showed quite significant differences for some other categories (when the forms concerned were simple present, past progressive or past perfect). Similar observations are made on the use of time adverbials. The following order of acquisition of the three time-adverbials shows that learners seem to prefer single

adverbials to more complex structures, such as clausal time adverbials:
- Singleton time-adverbials,
- Phrasal time-adverbials, and
- Clausal time-adverbials.

There was a highly significant level-effect ($p < .001$) in the subjects' use of tense-aspect and time adverbials. In Hung's view "the subjects' performance showed a continuous upward progression in the use of tense-aspect and time-adverbials from level 1 through level 5" (Hung 1986:214)[18]. Table 4.1 gives an overall view of accurate uses of the features for both tasks from level 1 to level 5.

Table 4.1 — Mean scores for five groups

Feature	Task	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5
Time-aspect use	LW	22.9	31.6	48.7	50.7	67.4
Time-aspect use	FIB	23.2	26.4	40.1	50.7	62.4
Time-adverbials use	LW	31.1	44.1	56.7	63.5	77.6

The table shows that the progression in the accurate use of the features is not at a constant rate. Thus Hung concludes

> the developmental course did not always proceed in a uniform rate from one level to another.... at a certain level or during a particular period, subjects' performance showed remarkable, significant development, while at some other level(s) or in some other period(s) the development was not significant (Hung 1986:215)[19].

Conclusion and relevance

Hung's study shows that functions like temporality develop earlier than the forms that match them. Hung therefore argues for function appearing before form in the process of learning. This is a different view from the one taken by Ntahwakuderwa. The question remains that of knowing how both processes form-function and function-form operate for a given group of learners and for a given feature. One is bound to believe that both processes are likely to be used by learners, and for any given feature.

Another interesting point raised in Hung's study concerns the notion of temporal adverbs, i.e., clause, prepositional phrase and single adverbs. Although such a

description is valuable, it appears that one important aspect of language use where learners also use tense has been ignored. This project will investigate the use of tense in contexts with time reference by comparing such contexts to those where there is no clear time reference. The reason is that such a division not only reflects language use in a real life context, but may also reveal learners' preference for or the difficulties created by one or the other type of context. The argument is that one learns more by leaving options open than by restricting the investigation at the outset.

4.3 The relevance of the IL studies to the present study

The IL studies surveyed in this chapter are relevant to this project in three ways: (a) in the theory of IL they confirm, (b) in their reference to a multi-level approach in the analysis of data, and (c) in their description of verb forms.

4.3.1 Verb forms and IL

Most studies on SLA, in particular those surveyed, take the view that L2 learners actively and continually revise their underlying grammar systems as they move towards the TL. Similarly, an increasing number of contemporary research prefers process-oriented methods such as form-function studies. The reason is that process-oriented methods emphasise the idea of *how* and *why* errors are made rather than *what* errors have been made, which is the main concern of product-oriented methods. Sato, however, points out that despite their obvious limitations, product-oriented methods still serve as a starting point for most IL studies because they provide researchers with useful information for investigations at other levels of linguistic inquiry. This is particularly relevant with verb forms or related functions described in the surveyed studies.

4.3.2 Form-function/function-form: a multi-level approach

The IL studies surveyed are only a few of the many studies which have focused on both the meanings and the morphological features characteristic of verbs. Two possible reasons may justify the investigation of verb forms: (i) verb forms are the most available and easily observable features in early stage in SLA, and (ii) verb forms may provide basic information for investigation at other levels of knowledge including syntax, semantics and pragmatics.

Tarone (1988) argues that evidence based on observable and objective data is one of the strongest criteria for an adequate theory, because all observers can easily agree upon empirically verifiable facts. In this respect, verb tense morphology is an important characteristic features of verbs. Tense marking constitutes then a logical and obligatory route to the other levels of knowledge conveyed by verbs. It is equally true that in the context of second language learning, learners need to know not only how to use morphological features, but also to be able to establish the relationship between morphological marking and other levels of knowledge

conveyed by the verb.

In the studies surveyed, the research begins with the data, or the product, which the researcher uses in order to explain the process. The merit of process-based analyses lies in the fact that they provide important methodological innovations in IL analysis, namely with regard to the relationship between form and function in learners' evolving grammars. This is relevant to the goal of a form-function approach, which is to describe and explain the way in which form and function are related when language is used in meaningful communication. The problem is then that of identifying the nature of the *relationship* between features categorised as *forms* and those labelled *functions*. Within the form-function model, learners are expected to use given forms for given functions. There is no guarantee that knowing a given form implies one can use it in meaningful situations. Learners may have a good mastery of forms, but not be able to relate them to their respective functions, the position taken by Ntahwakuderwa. On the other hand, learners may know the functions but have no clear idea of the forms through which they may be realised, as discussed by Hung.

We take Sato's view that neither form-function nor function-form alone can give a complete and accurate picture of the way learners perceive the relationship between forms and functions. This position was confirmed by the results of the preliminary study for this project. It is argued in the preliminary study that it is possible for learners to embark on learning, either with some knowledge of the notion *time* but with inadequate knowledge of morphological tense markings. Alternatively, learning can start with a range of morphological tense markings – some standard, others non-standard – which learners are not always able to associate with their respective time functions.

Although it is necessary to use the description of forms to check on the improvement in the production of target-like forms, as illustrated in Hassan's study, an analysis needs to be complemented by a description of the associated functions. In other words, mapping a form to a function (Ntahwakuderwa) or a function to a form (Hung) is, in Sato's (1985) view, only part of the solution within process-based models. Both models need to be combined for a more adequate analysis. The argument is that form-to-function involves a comprehensive analysis of the functional distribution of a particular form in the learner's IL, while function-to-form analysis looks at the evolution of grammatical encoding in a functional domain.

For the purpose of the study it was important to take a clear position: this study takes the view that the movement towards the TL in the acquisition of verb forms and temporality is a smooth convergent process based on related stages. It is believed that learners acquire the form-function relationship in three different stages. At the early stage, form is perceived as a different concept from function, and as such each is acquired separately from the other. At the second stage form is related to function in a one-to-one relationship. At the third stage where form may be overruled by context and co-text, the acquisition is likely to be more dif-

ficult. These stages are idealised in chapter 5.2 which describes the results of the preliminary study. This may be summarised as follows:

Stage 1 FORM or FUNCTION	Stage 2 FORM-FUNCTION EQUIVALENCE	Stage 3 FORM-FUNCTION NON-EQUIVALENCE
Form precedes Function --- Function precedes Form	Default use of language	Default use is overruled by Co-text/context

4.3.3 Need for further research

In the light of what has been surveyed, the need for research is based on three factors: the informants involved, the features to be investigated and the methods of assessment used.

The informants involved

It is argued in various sections of this study that the informants used in this project are mature advanced L2 learners who are already sophisticated speakers of their L1. As College students in higher education, these learners can be considered as being at an *intermediate* level in the process of learning English as a foreign language. In Ntahwakuderwa's study, only some of the subjects coming from this type of institution were included in the sample. Unlike Ntahwakuderwa, this project uses as subjects only College students because they constitute a homogeneous population.

Features and methods of assessment

Ntahwakuderwa's study provides useful pointers as to what features – on the basis of the errors identified – are difficult for the types of learner involved. Thus, taking into account the learners' experience and learning conditions, it was necessary to start the present investigation by identifying the exact areas or feature(s) of difficulty for our group of learners through a preliminary data collection. It was confirmed by the results of the preliminary study that the nature and magnitude of the difficulties presented by the verb forms were more important than previously described. The production of verb forms involve several levels of knowledge, and would require the learners to make use of different aspects of knowledge to manipulate them (Lund 1986). This assumes that learners are able to use conscious knowledge when dealing with features like verb forms.

This means that specific and adapted instruments had to be devised to assess learners' knowledge of verb forms. Methodologically, the type of informants involved and the features to be described did not make it possible to replicate a given study. Instead, the researcher made a selective evaluation of what the literature and the surveyed studies could offer to build adapted instruments of measurement for the

purpose of this study. In particular, in the design of the tasks for this study, the researcher combined Lund's (1986) notion of linguistic awareness tasks, Tarone's (1985) Verb Correction task, Kleinmann's (1977) Comprehensive test and Smith's (1981) distinction between default and non-default use of language. These views allowed the researcher to design tasks that were adapted to the informants concerned and at the same time reflected the purpose of the study. In short, the selected elicitation procedures were preferred because they required the learners to make choices and judgements about the linguistic features.

4.3.4 Summary

This chapter was concerned with a survey of previous IL studies, aspects of which were considered relevant to the present study. The studies were selected because they had investigated IL verb forms in experimental conditions and made use of live informants. Additionally, the studies had to be carried out within a multi-level approach, in particular within the form and function approach. The studies surveyed were relevant to this study in their reference to IL theory, in their description of verb forms and in their methods of assessment. It was observed, however, that the types of subject involved in this study could not be investigated without a deeper understanding of their abilities. It was necessary first to determine the exact areas of difficulty before designing more appropriate instruments of measurement. This point is developed further in the next chapter.

Chapter four references

1. B. Ntahwakuderwa 1987 *Form and Function in the Interlanguage of Zairean learners of English,* PhD Dissertation, Edinburgh University, p. 69
2. B. Ntahwakuderwa 1987 op. cit. p. 135
3. B. Ntahwakuderwa 1987 op. cit. p. 123
4. B. Ntahwakuderwa 1987 op. cit. p. 106
5. B. Ntahwakuderwa 1987 op. cit. p. 184
6. B. Ntahwakuderwa 1987 op. cit. p. 184
7. C.J. Sato 1985 *The Syntax of Conversation in Interlanguage Development,* PhD Dissertation, Los Angeles, p. 143
8. C.J. Sato 1985 op. cit. p. 2
9. R.J. Lund 1986 *The Formal accuracy of College German students with the finite Verb on a communicative production task and linguistic awareness tasks,* PhD Dissertation, University of Minnesota, p. 41
10. R.J. Lund 1896 op. cit. p. 130
11. R.J. Lund 1896 op. cit. p. 69
12. R.J. Lund 1896 op. cit. p. 154
13. R.J. Lund 1896 op. cit. p. 152
14. A. J. Hassan 1986 *English Interlanguage of Palestinian University students in Gaza Strip: An analysis of relative clauses and verb tenses,* PhD Dissertation, Ball State University, p. 55
15. H.W.J. Hung 1986 *Interlanguage and Temporal expressions: The development and use of tense-aspect and some time adverbials in Cantonese learners,* PhD Dissertation, Edinburgh University, p. 4
16. H.W.J. Hung 1986 op. cit. p. 16
17. H.W.J. Hung 1986 op. cit. p. 6
18. H.W.J. Hung 1986 op. cit. p. 214
19. H.W.J. Hung 1986 op. cit. p. 215

Chapter V

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology adopted for data collection and the rationale that motivated it. The chapter is divided into seven sections. In section one, the researcher explains the rationale and the aims of the project. In section two, a detailed description of the preliminary task is offered and the results are presented. In section three, some methodological directions for the main study are considered on the basis of the findings from the preliminary task. In section four the hypotheses formulated for the purpose of this study are presented. In section five, the procedures used for the design of the main tests are outlined, in particular the rationale and the aims for test design. In section six, a summarised report on the pilot test is presented, and a selected number of observations are considered for changes in the design of the main tests. And in section seven, the researcher reports on the administration of the main Tests.

5.1 Rationale for the study

Two main reasons justify carrying out this study. Firstly, the researcher's interest in the teaching of English in his environment, in particular the need to identify and explain some of the problems faced by student-teachers in learning English as a second/foreign language in Zaire. Secondly, the urgent need to improve the quality of teaching and learning English in Teachers' Training Colleges in Zaire. In this sense, the project constitutes an attempt to provide ways that could contribute to helping both teachers and learners of English towards an understanding of the language learning abilities required for learning English as a foreign language.

5.1.1 Aims of the study

For several years, the researcher has been involved in teaching English as a second/foreign language and has witnessed at first hand how mastering basic English skills has been a nightmare for many College students. This study therefore springs from the researcher's interest and experience in teaching English. Despite all the

effort made by teachers to offer the best teaching to College learners of English, most learners still leave the College without a real mastery of the language. This state of affairs led the researcher to wonder about some of the aspects of L2 learning, for example:

- Why do L2 learners of English have so many difficulties?
- What is wrong with their way of learning?
- How can one find out about their real language problems?
- What kind of help can be offered to similar learners in the future?

These questions and many others need, in our view, a deeper analysis which is likely to help understand the learners' problems. Thus, as a first step in the process of data collection, there was a real need to identify the types of language problems faced by the learners in order to single out the key areas for research. Rather than start with a well-established theory, the study began with a collection of preliminary data from a sample of learners from the same College. The data collection exercise provided the researcher with some important and reliable information on the learners. On the basis of the results from the preliminary study, the following broad assumptions emerged:

(i) Learners prefer to use easy, familiar items, structures or rules while avoiding more complex ones. The learners' preference for certain types of verb forms not only reflect the kind of input they are first exposed to but also reveal the amount of practice they have had with given types of verb form;
(ii) The contexts in which items or structures are used do not seem to influence the learners' performance. In particular, the learners are not always able to associate tense with time despite the presence, at times, of contextual clues; and
(iii) There exist several areas where transfer influence can be found: learners may transfer grammatical properties from NL to the TL. In the case of tense usage, for instance, L2 learners tend to transfer their knowledge of French verbs into the English verb system.

The aims of the project have been categorised as both general and specific.

1. The general aim is to investigate the extent to which learning the English verb forms by advanced L2 learners in formal education shows movement towards the TL norms.

2. The specific aims are to investigate the L2 learners' ability:

- to mark tenses in the case of lexical or inflectional verbs;
- to supply verb forms in a given context;
- to discriminate correct from incorrect verb forms and to make appropriate changes;
- to associate verb forms with context of use, taking into account the presence or absence of time reference elements; and
- to explain the different circumstances of use of verb forms.

Assuming that reference to different proficiency levels may allow us to observe diachronic changes in the use of verb forms and consequently their development, the present cross-sectional study investigates the possible developmental sequences of the learners' tense system by using data sampled synchronically. The diachronic perspective is offered by considering three different proficiency levels which are assumed to reflect the transitional constructions of verb forms in the learners' IL.

5.1.2 Data collection procedures

The data used in this study were collected through elicitation techniques and analysed within a multi-level approach, with particular reference to form-function and function-form interaction. As a whole, the data collection methodology for this study may be summarised as follows:
(i) A preliminary data collection was devised to help collect reliable information on both the informants and the features to be investigated.
(ii) A pilot test was carried out to check the instruments of measurement.
(iii) Data Collection for the main study was carried out through elicitation tasks.
These steps are described in more detail in the next three sections.

5.2 Preliminary data collection

5.2.1 Rationale for task design

The study reported below is not a pilot test. It is a data collection exercise designed to provide the researcher with some reliable information for the main experiment. The objective of this pre-study was to find out what kinds of difficulties L2 College students face while learning English. On the basis of such well-defined problems, it

became possible to decide what was worth investigating and offered an appropriate theoretical framework for the main study. In order to have a complete picture of the learners' systems, a variety of questions had to be provided even though not all the answers have been used as a source of information for the main study. The researcher was mainly concerned with the identification of those areas from which reliable information could be obtained.

The data collection exercise was mainly motivated by the type of informants involved in the study. Unlike most of the informants referred to in the major studies on SLA, the informants used in this study belong to what one may call a highly tutored group of learners (more on their background is given in the next section). That is, considering their level of instruction, it was not sufficient to rely only on the productive side of their English L2. There was also a need to take into account learners' understanding of the L2. As advanced learners, it was assumed that the learners involved in the study would be able to understand standard English although they produced a number of deviant structures (see data from the preliminary task). One would therefore expect these learners to be able to distinguish between TL rules they understand and those they use. In other words, by giving varied tasks, some on production and others on comprehension, it is possible to reveal the entire continuum of systems used by the learners.

Furthermore, the learner's comprehension proficiency can also be checked and compared either with that a NS or with his/her peers' systems. Such a comparison should start from the assumption that the learner's output can be organized in terms of what he/she finds easiest to say or to write, which may not reflect what he/she actually knows. Taken from this perspective, the present preliminary task constitutes then an attempt to bring together both production and comprehension of language, i.e., the learners' use and their understanding of the TL. Similarly, Corder (1967) suggests that linguists should study both the process of language acquisition and the various strategies learners may use while learning. Unfortunately, such integrated studies have not attracted many researchers. So far very few studies have tried to bring together these notions of language availability and language use and understanding for second language learners in formal education. This study is then an attempt to correlate these notions with the learners' levels of proficiency.

5.2.2 The Informants' background

The non-native speakers (NNS) informants involved in this preliminary study were all mature students aged from 18 upwards. They were selected from two different proficiency levels in a Teachers' Training College (I.P.N.) in Kinshasa, Zaire. The first group (i.e., intermediate) was composed of learners in their first year of training in the College. However, although these learners were beginners in the English department, they had at least four years of English knowledge gained at the average of four hours a week, or, approximately 150 hours of school English to their credit. The second group (advanced) included students who were being prepared to become teachers of English for the lower secondary level. These learners were in their third year of training in English. For the purpose of this exercise, representatives of each group were selected randomly without any specification age, aptitude, linguistic background or interest in learning English. Table 5.1 displays the number of informants involved in the preliminary study.

Table 5.1 — Informants' background

Level	Sex	Number	%
1	M	12	38.7
	F	8	25.8
3	M	7	22.6
	F	4	12.9
Total	M	19	61.3
	F	12	38.7

5.2.3 Methods and procedures for data collection

The data were collected cross-sectionally and through two main tasks: composition writing and a questionnaire. The variety that characterised the questions was designed to reveal various aspects of learners' production, understanding and experience as well as how conscious the learners were of the process of learning English. As is shown later, providing explicit explanations of their implicit knowledge, or revealing personal views about the understanding of certain aspects of the English language proved a real challenge for most of the informants, and in particular for those with limited knowledge of the TL.

In the first task, the informants were asked to write a short paragraph on some event they experienced in the past. They were asked to limit their description to 15 lines. This background paragraph was used as a basis on which to rank learners' proficiency levels as well as provide precise information on the learners' ability to deal with verb forms in general. In the second task, the informants were asked to answer a series of open-ended questions on learning English. The answers to these questions were used as source information on learners' awareness of the use of learning strategies. The purpose of the pre-study was then to provide useful information for the design of the tests for the main study.

5.2.4 A Description of the tasks for the preliminary study

The tasks used for the preliminary study included two main parts. In the first part on *learner's background*, the informants were asked to provide some basic information: name, sex, languages spoken, study level and their own ranking of their English knowledge. The main exercise in this first part consisted of writing a paragraph with the following instruction:

Write a paragraph of 10/15 lines on your personal experience. Start your text with one of these:
When I was...;
One day when I... or
When I first...

The second part of the task consisted of a series of open-ended questions which allowed the informants to report freely on their *Language Learning Habits.* The task had four subsections:
i. Learning strategies: 15 questions.
ii. Communication strategies: 10 questions.
iii. Personality/Affective habits: 10 questions.
iv. Language transfer: 5 questions.
At the end of the questionnaire, a rounding question was given to check on the importance of such a questionnaire for the informants as learners of English. The questionnaire administered can be found in Appendix 3.1

The reasons that motivated the choice of these particular tasks were threefold. Firstly, with a free writing exercise, one is likely to elicit the semi-spontaneous structures that characterise the learners' written output. A composition is certainly one of the best activities to reveal both how the internalised grammar is organised to express the intended meaning, and what kinds of difficulties learners experience in writing. And the sentence starters were calculated to encourage learners to write from their personal experience, and hence perhaps to avoid resorting to prefabricated structures. Secondly, it is often argued that learners are probably the best judges of what they do when they learn. In other words, if we want to investigate the exent to which learners share similar learning strategies, the most logical way to do is to rely on learner self-reporting. And thirdly, it is important to

discover whether learner progress can be related to changes in learning behaviour. Put differently, can one argue for learners (here tutored learners) giving preference to particular types of learning behaviour depending on their proficiency levels?

5.2.5 Preliminary study: results and discussion

In this preliminary study, learners were given semi-controlled exercises. The data obtained were assumed to reflect the actual state of the learners' IL. To do so, learners were put in a position where they had to produce language. Thus, the struggle between avoiding unknown structures and the need to produce what was required made the learners produce an IL reflecting their knowledge of English (see elicitation procedures). With elicitation tasks, one would expect little variation within a single learner in that those forms which were not acquired yet or which could not be recalled during the execution of the tasks, would be unlikely to appear in the learners' performance. This suggests that the preliminary study was basically intended to offer a global picture of the learners knowledge of certain linguistic features, as well as of their learning strategies.

On the basis of Braine's (1971) assumption that categories of more concrete reference develop before those expressing more abstract or relational ideas, and considering the fact that narrative is the best source for revealing tense and aspect relations (Kumpf 1982), the present analysis will be essentially based on the verb forms that appear in the learners' performance as reflected in their compositions. In particular, the discussion will focus on the verb forms *be* and *have* because of their aspectual value, and also because these verb forms can be used both as auxiliaries and as full verbs. In addition, these verbs are considered as being taught early to English L2 learners (see appendix 3 for further detail on the other verb forms used in compositions).

1. When I was twenty years old, I've got
   some American friends....
2. When I first went to boarding house,
   see the age I've got
3. I was glad because I'm succed in examen d'Etat.
4. Perhaps because live is become difficult.

The first obvious observation when one looks at the learners' data is that the informants were still learning the English auxiliary system. On a total of thirty-one participants, only seven , i.e., 23 % made use of the perfect tense as illustrated in examples 1 and 2. A closer examination at the data shows that only .09% of informants used both *be* and *have* in their compositions. The second observation is that typically *have + en* was not used to refer to an event/action connected with the present as in the TL but rather to refer to events that were completed in the past. In example 1, the informant's intention was probably that he met and became friends with some Americans when he was twenty, and those Americans

are still his friends. For the learner, it is possibly assumed that the use of a simple past or present would be wrong, but the use of a verb form that shows some sort of link between the past and the present would be a better choice. Interestingly enough, the same observation applies to the majority of the uses of *have + en.* What one may say in respect with such uses is that the subjects concerned do have some notion of time and they probably know what *have + en* mean, but they still do not know in which context to use it.

Applying Andersen's (1984) theoretical framework to the results, it is clear from the examples that the informants have one form *have + en* for one function event/action connected to the present. Yet, their perception of the relation form-function does not appear in appropriate contexts. Therefore context or co-text is another important notion to take into account when dealing with the form-function relation. The informants' difficulties in matching tenses with contexts were probably due to a lack of knowledge of the contextual restrictions involved.

Have + be + ing

5. `I greatly wanted what we have been doing for the people.`

This combination was used by only 0.03% of informants, which implies that this verb form is probably acquired at a later stage. However, the meaning given to the verb form is, in many ways, similar to the ones already described with reference to *have + en.* However, the example is much nearer the standard norm despite the informant's choice of *have been* instead of *had been*, which leads us to argue that these learners find it easier to communicate with the help of unmarked forms, i.e., present, rather than with marked ones, i.e., past.

Be + ing

6. `Mr ... wanted me to work or help him for`
   `he was working to the hospital.`

The use of *be + ing* offers a different picture. Those informants who made use of this form, did not use it to indicate progressive aspect. For these informants, *be + ing* does not necessarily mean a way of expressing an on-going action/event only, but also actions/events of short duration as well. In example 6, *be + ing* is used probably to express a completed action. The informant's intention is to describe what the man was doing as continuous rather than as an event that was completed in the past. One can, therefore, share Wagner-Gough's (1978) view that at this stage of learning, the acquisition of *ing* does not entail the simultaneous acquisition of its TL function as progressive aspect marker. There is then no direct relationship between form and function in this particular case.

Be and Have

7. She was very ill but she carrys to the hospital.
8. One day when I was travelling to B. by car to see my mother, she was very ill and she carrys to the hospital
9. Since I had these preoccupations I haven't be often ill.
10. When I was at secondary school, I had got in my quater some students old brothers...

The data certainly provides us with some evidence that as full verbs, both *be* and *have* carry a wide range of meanings in the informants' compositions. A total of 81% of informants used *be* in their compositions. Although *have* comes next, its uses represent only 20% of the uses from the data. According to Wolfram (1985) the following verbs are the five most frequently occurring irregular verbs in IL:
be (copula and auxiliary);
have (main and auxiliary);
do (or the negative don't);
come and
go.

Wolfram (1985) then argues that "all these are high-frequency irregular verbs, although their occurence in the corpus in some instances may be a function of the type of interview and the topics under discussion" Wolfram (1985:243)[1]. The high frequency of these two verbs *be* and *have* could be explained by the learners' choice of what they know best. They avoid what is difficult. This strategy is what Richards and Sampson (1974) call *facility and economy of effort.* In short, the data clearly show that *be* and *have* (at a lower level) are used more frequently than necessary. This observation implicitly suggests two things: first, that *be* is one of the first verbs to be learned. Second, *be* is first learned as a copula, and it is only later that it is used as auxiliary and so used aspectually. This argument may clearly constitute a real challenge to the view that aspect develops before tense (Kumpf 1982). However, before such an assumption is confirmed, one needs to look at all the data, including regular and irregular verbs.

The informants appear to keep as simple as possible the relationship between the meaning and the form used to represent it. Most examples of *be* and *have* are then consistent with Andersen's (1984) 1:1 principle in that there is a basic semantic and functional relationship that the IL users want to maintain in their performance.

5.2.6 Implications from the discussion

Most classic studies view tense as one of the most important grammatical categories (Towell 1987, Broeder, Extra, and Hout 1989). However, very few studies in the literature on SLA have emphasised the relation between learning a tense system and the different language learning stages. One possible reason is that it is not always easy to relate two or more levels (or stages) in a single study. From the analysis of the data of the preliminary investigation, three levels of difficulties in

the learners' use of verb forms have been derived:
a. the informants have morphological difficulties, i.e., they mark verb tenses in various standard and non-standard ways;
b. the informants are not always able to express meanings with appropriate verbs; and
c. the informants do not always use verb forms in appropriate contexts.

On the basis of this information, it is logical to argue that the informants' difficulties on verb forms cannot be analysed from one single point of view. Consequently, a description of tenses using only the form-function or function-form approach would not, in our opinion, lead to a complete explanation of the various phenomena involved. A form-function and function-form interaction is certainly needed as a basis of an adequate description.

In the present analysis an attempt was made to bring together and to adapt two related approaches which have often been used separately. Our choice of such an integrated approach has been motivated not only by the nature of the data themselves, but also by an increasing demand to analyse second language data from more than one point of view. Tarone (1988), McLaughlin (1987) and Sato (1985), for example, strongly recommend that both form-function and function-form be combined when dealing with L2 learners' data. According to McLaughlin, both form-function and function-form analyses are needed to understand the process of second language acquisition.

The types of errors found in the informants' data (errors in verb tenses) offer strong evidence for the existence of various stages in the acquisition of verb tenses. The variation in the way informants use tenses shows that there is a successive and continuous need for transition from one stage to another. In other words, there is in these data evidence of diachronic variation in tense marking and use. One of the processes currently used to explain the acquisition of structures consists of analysing problematic and non-problematic forms as well as the way they match or fail to match with the meaning they express or attempt to express. The claim is that learners have some knowledge of forms but are unable to match them with their exact function. Learning is then directed towards matching the two. The process is well known as the form-function approach.

On the other hand, when learners are believed to have some knowledge of the structures, the process will consist of explaining how learners come to match those functions with the appropriate forms. Similarly, the present data show that function (i.e., pastness) is not the only difficulty encountered by the informants in their effort to acquire English tenses, some informants (with already a fair knowledge of the function) need to master morphological tense markers. The latter group would then need a function-form approach to match the function with the various verb forms found in English. It is therefore clear that from the first stage the data present the researcher with two sorts of informant: those who start acquisition of tenses with some knowledge of verb forms which they progressively match with the

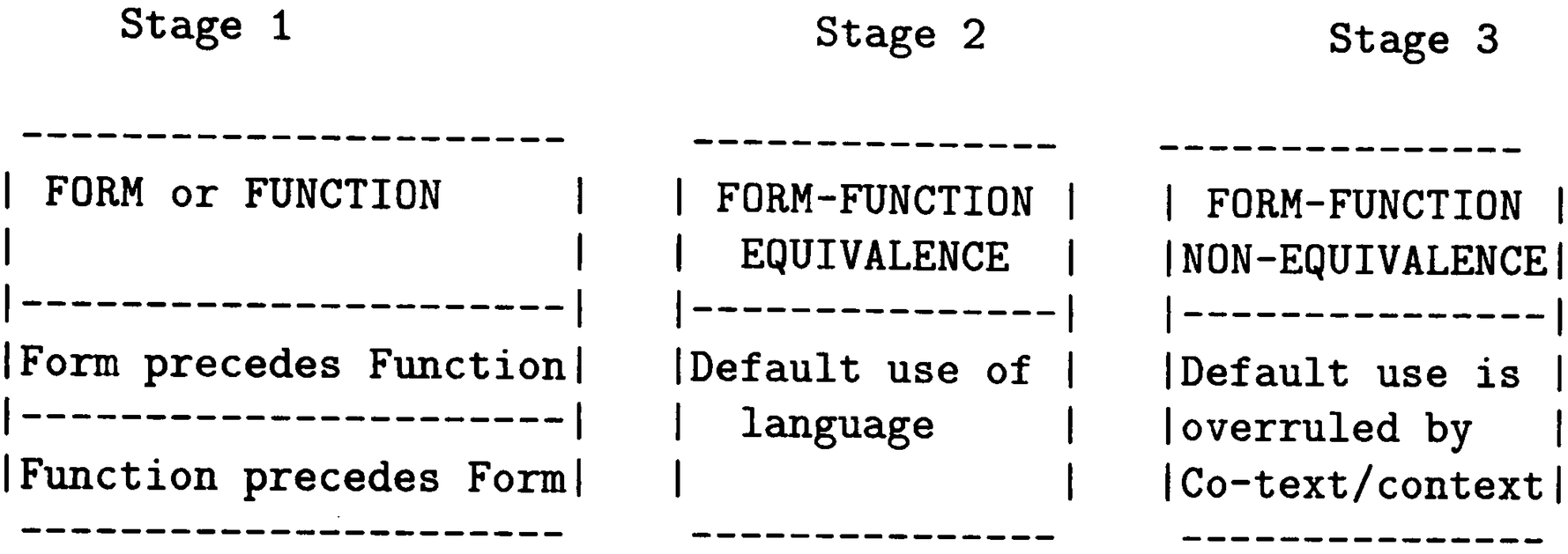
function, and those with a noticeable knowledge of the function but still lacking knowledge of the morphological verb forms to match it.

The data show that such a variation (at stage one) is likely to appear both in tense marking as well as in reference to time. But as a general basis for comparison, the informants at level one find themselves in a situation where form is learned/perceived independently from its function. The informants' effort to reach the equivalence between form and function is the next stage in the acquisition of tenses, and finally how tenses are interpreted in case of non-equivalence between form and function, such as with the influence of co-text or context, should show the higher stage of proficiency which characterises stage three. That is, the acquisition of tenses is likely to go through several stages, three of which will be the focus of investigation in the present study.

One needs to point out, however, that the stages referred to do not equate exactly to levels of education. That is, learners of the same educational level may be at different stages of learning. Similarly, learners from different levels are not automatically to be associated with different stages of learning. There will inevitably be small number of learners at the same educational level who are at different stages of learning. The first stage identified in this preliminary study includes two types of learner. Those with some knowledge of the function of verbs but who need to acquire morphological markers, and the others who have a variety of morphological markers to express the same function. The claim is that the informants' success in matching verb forms and functions constitutes for these learners a step towards TL norms in tense marking. And those learners who succeed in refining their knowledge further should realise that form and function are not always equivalent in the environment of certain syntactic elements, such as time adverbials.

These three stages, as mentioned earlier, will obviously not be of equal importance for all informants, or for a particular group of informants. Firstly, because individual informants may not face difficulties in the same way or employ the same strategies. Secondly, those informants who start learning with some knowledge of morphological markings of verb forms might find it easier to match them later with the function, so that informants starting with knowledge of function only are likely to face different types of problems. And thirdly, the gap between the different stages is not necessarily obvious for all the informants. That is, it may not be easy to say whether an informant's performance at one stage is free from the problems encountered at earlier stage(s). But, at the first stage at least, the informants seem to make use of a variety of hypotheses on tense marking, some of which will be right, while others will have to be refined as they prove unsuccessful. However, the claim is that the tendency should be towards form-function equivalence. And finally, a particular informant's effort to shift from one stage to another may also depend on the sort of learning strategies he or she uses. In short, the proposed stages can be summarised as follows:

Figure 5.1 — A three-stage model for Form-function and Function-form interaction in the acquisition of tense and time



It should be stressed that the analysis of data offered was based only on information from written compositions. And the few statistical descriptions included were mainly meant to help discuss the results, and do not provide a sound basis from which to draw conclusions. This type of data, being based only on written compositions, do not allow one to draw conclusions on the informants' precise abilities in producing verb forms. First, because the informants were not instructed to write on the same topic. And second, there was no compulsory requirement to use the past tense.

The informants' use of tense forms can be seen as a means of helping them meet communication demands. And the first evidence in support of such a system is seen through the informants' restricted knowledge of tenses and the way they use them. The data in this pre-study show that the informants (mainly from G1 level), either display limited knowledge of verb forms, and in particular of past forms, or little knowledge of the exact function for which the forms are used. Consequently, at G1 level, the informants have displayed one of the two main tendencies:

(i) A first group which includes informants who have a reasonable mastery of verb forms but have very little knowledge of function. For these learners, progression towards the TL norms depends on their ability to match verb forms to given functions. According to Ellis (1985a), in such a situation, SLA involves the sorting-out of the form-function relationship by assuming that learners begin with forms. However, beginning with forms does not imply that informants know the various verb forms found in English. Two possible explanations support the informants' use of different verb forms in their compositions, first, the informants do not have specific forms for the past tense, and second, they have little knowledge of which forms to use for specific types of verbs, (i.e., /ed/ for weak verbs and various

changes for strong verbs). They use one or the other form variably to mark the past tense, consequently making use of different and not always standard allomorphic variations.

(ii) The informants in the second group have acquired the function pastness (via syntactic elements: context, time adverbials, etc.) before the forms. These informants do not use morphological tense markers, that is, past tense verb forms do not usually occur in their compositions. However, the analysis reveals that these informants express (past) temporality through other linguistic devices. Sato (1984) and McLaughlin (1987) agree that temporal adverbials such as *yesterday*, locative adverbials such as *at work*, calendar expressions such as *January* and all kinds of implicit references play an important part in determining time orientation.

To sum up, it can be argued that basically these two groups belong to the same learning stage, although they make use of different techniques for dealing with the same notion, i.e., for some, the acquisition of forms precedes that of functions, and for others, the acquisition of functions takes place before they have mastered all the different forms. There are, therefore, two perspectives in the acquisition of tenses: the form-function precedence and function-form precedence.

5.2.7 Form-function precedence in the acquisition of tenses

Within the form-function approach, learning is supposed to begin with verb forms. One has to assume that the acquisition of the past tense is triggered by developing awareness of the appropriate past tense marking. But, unlike other structures such as negation and subject-verb inversion, verb tenses require from the start the mastery of several forms at the same time. It is, therefore, difficult to argue that learning could be based on either regular or irregular verb forms, although there may certainly be predominance of certain forms over the others due to a teaching emphasis or ordering of the items in the syllabus.

In case of regular verb form predominance, for example, one would expect an /ed/ past form to be generalised to most verbs, including the irregular ones, thus confirming Andersen's (1984) 1:1 hypothesis. All but two of the informants in this study show that they are no longer at the elementary one-to-one stage and use various forms to mark pastness. This shows that the first level learners involved in this study are at an intermediate level. However, from a language learning point of view, this does not mean that the 1:1 hypothesis has no predictive or explanatory relevance. On the contrary, the 1:1 principle still applies in the sense that informants have a restricted knowledge, and have not yet acquired all the forms required to mark the past tense. One of the obvious difficulties they face is that the English past tense has such a variety of morphological markers that most of the informants are defeated by the morphology (See informants' data in appendix 3.3). Consequently, what one really needs to know is why the informants have difficulties in using past tense forms in the first place. At this morphological level, one can think of two possible answers:

(i) Informants' restricted knowledge on morphological tense marking

The first evidence of morphological difficulties is found in the way tenses are used in a single sentence . Because of their restricted knowledge, most informants are seen to rely more on the only *known* forms, which happen to be the lexical forms of the verbs. Those forms are then used variably with the ones required. As a result, most of the informants (from group 1) produce sentences in which one finds both forms of verbs side by side. This is also called *tense shift* (Hassan 1987). A few examples (from group 1) illustrate the phenomenon:

11. When I was in secondary school my parents *love* me a lot.
12. One day when I *want* travell and I arrived to the barriere to look for a car who *can travell* to ...
13. I passed in the house my sister *tell* me the messagers for my mother and I saw my family very sad, they *think* that mother she'll *died*

These few examples illustrate how consistent learners can be in producing variable forms in the same context (e.g., 13) and, by doing so, display their true repertoire. More than half the group 1 informants are found in this *tense shift* situation. Only a limited amount of data from group 2 exhibits level one behaviour. Here are two examples:

14. One day when I was young, I thought that speaking English *is* a matter of being born in England.
15. And after I *have* listened them, I was obliged to check those words in my bilingual dictionary.

Further evidence of morphological difficulties can be seen through the generalisation of a single *known* form to most verbs, despite the presence of other forms in similar contexts. While they freely use all the verb forms available, some informants nevertheless give preference to one *type* of past tense marker which they use with most past forms. This phenomenon is well known in SLA literature as *overgeneralisation* and therefore does not need further comment. These two striking examples from G1 data illustrate the process:

16. I *arrived* there at 9.00 a.m. I didn't see a car and I *sleeped* there.
17. I *liked* to touch to many things. My father *called* me touch to us. I was very strong, I *beated* some one who was to my level.

The third important evidence of morphological difficulties is seen in the incorrect insertion of tense markers. The informants use two different tense markers in a

single verb form, such as in:

18. She went to the place where lived a wiseman and *tolds* him that, can you help me?
19. She *saws* that I become wicked daughter.

These types of error are often described as developmental because they allow us to predict the learner's progression on the basis of morphological marking. In this specific situation, one can argue that the learners have formed two hypotheses which hold good, but one of which is not appropriate to the form where it is applied.

(ii) Diversity in past tense marking

The presence of various ways of marking lexical past tense in English is another factor that makes it likely that informants will make recourse to forms other than the ones required, as predicted by the 1:1 hypothesis. In other words, the number and variety of lexical (irregular) verbs constitute a serious hindrance to the learning of the English tense system. The main aspects of the lexical tense formation found in the present data have been classified on the basis of Wolfram's (1985) study. According to this model, the *strong* (i.e., irregular) form of tense marking can be subdivided into the following categories:

- suppletive forms: e.g., *is/was, go/went*;
- internal vowel change: e.g., *come/came, sit/sat, get/got*;
- internal vowel change plus a regular suffix: e.g., *do/did, keep/kept*; and
- final consonant replacement (replacive): e.g., *have/had, make/made.*

In addition to these categories, a fifth category of *invariable verbs* has been included to complete the list. The second perspective in the acquisition of tense is based on the assumption that acquisition begins with a fair knowledge of function, as described in the next section.

5.2.8 Function-form precedence in the acquisition of tenses

The informants in the second group, as suggested earlier, are seen to start the acquisition of tenses with some knowledge of the function *temporality* (here pastness) which is marked with the help of linguistic devices, such as time adverbs. The informants have few or no morphological past tense markers, i.e., for these learners, past tense verb forms did not occur in their compositions. But, a closer look shows that the informants did have other techniques for expressing temporality (McLaughlin 1987). The argument is that the informants in this group either cannot mark the past tense because of their restricted knowledge of past tense markers, or they simply do not see the need of doing so because of the past reference provided by the context. The implication is that these learners have other ways of marking pastness. As is often the case with subject-verb inversion, it also seems that the informants do not feel the need to change the verb form to mark

pastness. It is often argued in the literature on SLA that in question formation where the question word is present, learners (mainly beginners) will often avoid the extra redundancy of subject-verb inversion. This view is said to be consistent with the 1:1 hypothesis.

In addition, the kind of context in which the informants were expected to use past tenses is likely to lead to a comparable behaviour. That is, the informants believe that the presence of time adverbials or other reference to past time, such as syntactic or contextual elements, is sufficient. For the informants then, marking the verb with tense would be redundant. For these informants then, the past form of the verb is not used to mark time reference. Among the many variables that are used to mark pastness, the context and the co-text play an important role.

Context is generally understood as the space, the time and the circumstance in which events take place or actions are performed. A context represents then one of the possiblities of occurrence of an event, an action, or a unit (Smith 1981). While the spoken language counts several of those possibilities of occurrence, the written language has to rely on limited options. Among the most important deictic features that can be used to establish context, personal pronouns and time and place adverbs are probably best known. Deictic features are orientational features related to the time and place of utterance (Davies 1984). In other words, deictic features help locate the situation in which a sentence or utterance occurs. Personal pronouns are deictic elements in that they refer to people previously mentioned in some context. Time adverbs include both durative (deictic, e.g., *for the next week,* or non-deictic e.g., *for a week*) and frequency markers (non-deictic) whose role consists of specifying the length or frequency of the event or action. In short, one can distinguish:

a. Orientational features (deictic):
- personal pronouns: e.g., *I, she, he, they,* etc.
- time adverbials: e.g., *yesterday, now, tomorrow,* etc.
- place adverbials: e.g., *here, there,* etc.
b. Frequency adverbs (non-deictic): e.g., *always, sometimes, never,* etc.

Co-text is understood as linguistic features used in the structure (Smith 1981). Although all these features are found in the present data, it is not surprising that time adverbials seem to play a much more important role in helping to locate the events described in their exact contexts, in this case the past time. That is, if one of the roles of adverbials is to influence or to give time orientation to the tense , then one may conclude that tense-time relation is not always straightforward.

To turn back to the data, it then becomes clear that the informants (see examples below) are aware of referring to past time in their descriptions. For these informants, the syntactic categories play a far more important role in referring to pastness than the morphological past form of the verbs. A few examples from the data can illustrate the informants' performance at the first level:

20. *Last week* my grandbrother *try* to explain her...
21. *One day* when I *want* travell and I arrived ...
22. *When I was in secondary school,*
    my parents *love* me a lot.

As can be seen, these examples illustrate the degree of perception of the influence of syntactic categories, i.e., co-text. This leads to assume that the discourse context in which time devices are used play a major role in such an influence.

5.2.9 Concluding observations

The first observation is that the informants described here behave typically in the same way. They are all characterised by a limited knowledge of the relation between tense marking and time reference. For one group (function-form) marking the morphology is what they still have to acquire, while the other group (form-function) marks pastness in several different ways. That is, informants from each group attach meaning to the form using different assumptions: one expresses pastness using a variety of non-standard ways, the other does not use morphological markings but makes reference to pastness through syntactic elements found in the context.

However, despite the presence of linguistic devices that can help determine the time of the context, as *facilitating* agents in the use of verb tenses, learning difficulties at the morpho-syntactic level are still apparent. Among the morpho-syntactic constraints that can be held to account for learning difficulties in the present data, one could mention the status of English verbs, the informants' lack of recognition of the numerous categories of those verbs and possibly the influence of L1. One of the consequences of such difficulties is that the learning will exhibit differences and variations.

The variations of the informants' new verb system has motivated the setting of variable rules for their type of IL. The claim is that all sorts of variations, both morphological and syntactic, occur in the data from the very beginning of learning. Past tense marking on verbs, both weak (regular/inflectional) and strong (irregular/lexical) shows that the informants have not yet acquired the necessary morphological markers. For example, the wrong use of /ed/ may be evidence of overgeneralisation, while preference for the non-past form of the verb constitutes the easiest way, that of choosing the least problematic form available. Table 5.2 illustrates the informants' behaviour.

Table 5.2 — Variation continuum for past tense forms in NNS compositions

Category	Possible Explanations
Tense marking	Difficulties include non-standard
- lexical forms	spelling and vowel/cons. changes
- inflectional forms	The informants possibly have one form for the pastness. (e.g., sleeped)
- non-past forms	The informants seem to have no knowledge of past tense markers or changes
Tense rules (confusing insertion points)	Error caused by learner's second hypothesis being applied in an inappropriate context (e.g., tolds)
Redundancy (using additional redundant form)	Learner uses two verb forms, one of which is not needed (e.g., was died)

This rather sketchy description of the informants' repertoire of verb forms constitutes only a starting point of a search for regularity in tense marking for these learners. An in-depth study of stages two and three, discussed in the main experiment, shed more light on the possible developmental stages of the learners' tense system. In order to reach such an objective, a more structured study is required.

5.3 Methodological directions for the main study

The observations from the preliminary study reveal that the exercise was a necessary step in the subsequent design of the main study: Firstly, it helped to determine the types of possible problem in tense acquisition as experienced by the informants. Secondly, it guided the design of the main study by providing an appropriate theoretical framework. And thirdly, the informants in the first group, as in most SLA studies, make use of assumptions which offer evidence of lack of competence from both subgroups of informants at stage one. This situation led the researcher to hypothesize two related approaches in dealing with tense use, form-function and function-form at stage one.

The first group uses tenses as integral parts of verbs, and consequently considers time as being embedded in or expressed by tense markers. The other group sees time as an independent notion which can occur outside the verb. That is, time and tense are related in the first case, but are two separate notions in the second case. Consequently, at stage two, tense use has to be seen as a movement towards a

match of both tendencies described at stage one: the equivalence between form and function in the use of tenses. It is at stage two that learners are expected to produce verb forms in which past tense markers are used to express pastness, present tense markers for present, and future markers for the future. This is the stage where learners become aware of the fact that each form (together with its language specific allomorphic variations) has a function. Following further progression, learners at stage three should gradually become aware that form and function are not always equivalent. That is, such *default meaning*, which characterizes stage two, can be overridden by context or co-text. But such a coherent progression of tense acquisition requires highly controlled data, what has not been the case in this preliminary study.

As a follow up, the main experiment has to fulfil a set of criteria in order to set a more solid basis for further analysis. For the purpose of the study, four main criteria were selected:
(i) One needs more controlled data and hence more carefully controlled elicitation procedures were required;
(ii) A larger amount of data was required for a better display of possible regularities and to achieve a degree of statistical significance;
(iii) Specific linguistic environments (for tense occurrence) had to be determined; and
(iv) A variety of elicitation tasks were needed to maximise *style* variation in the way the informants use tenses in the linguistic environments decided under 3 above.

The fact that these conditions were not all met in the data under study explains why it was not possible to draw any reliable conclusions by way of findings. Although not everything reported in this preliminary study has been satisfactorily explained, the study nevertheless enabled the researcher to define the problem and to design an appropriate methodology for the main experiment. On the basis of what has been observed in the preliminary data, seven Hypotheses have been formulated to investigate L2 learners' knowledge of verb form-function relationship in the acquisition of English as a second language in Zaire.

5.4 Variables and Hypotheses for the study

The term *variable* is generally understood as *something that may vary or differ* from the extended norms. Most research studies focus on variables because these enable the researcher to pinpoint distinguishing features of their individual or group of subjects. Similarly, the term *dependent* and *independent* are often used to refer to *types of variables* for research purposes. However, some research studies include further classifications. It was decided, for practical reasons, to limit the number of variables to be included in this study to two. For details on the other types of variables, one may refer to Brown (1988:11-14) who discusses *moderator, control* and *intervening* variables. Each of these plays a particular role in a given study, and can only be defined in the context of the research in question. As Brown

(1988) points out

> these five types of variables (i.e., dependent, independent, moderator, control and intervening), are distinguished primarily by the relationship that the researcher hypothesizes to exist among them. Hence, a variable that functions as a dependent variable in one study may be an independent variable in another (Brown 1988:9)[2].

There is, however, a central relationship between the independent and the dependent variables with the latter representing the overall focus of the study. That is, a study is basically designed to determine the effect of the independent on the dependent variable. Among the many variables of interest in language studies, one can mention language proficiency, motivation, self-esteem, etc. as typical dependent variables, and level, sex, nationality as typical independent variables.

In the context of this study the dependent variable is *learners' knowledge of verb forms in learning English as a second language,* while the independent variable is *the number of years of instruction or the educational level reached by the learners.* The first variable type, i.e., the dependent variable, is the one which is measured, whereas the second type of variable indicates the nature or effect of the acquired knowledge in relationship with itself as the independent variable.

This study therefore examines the degree to which the number of years spent in a Teachers' Training College affect learning verb forms and the way learners' knowledge of the verb form and function relationship improves across levels. In other words, what effect studying English in a formal setting has on the acquisition of the morphological, syntactic and semantic features of verb forms and on the development of form and function in IL. At the morphological level, the study focuses (a) on tense marking with special emphasis on tense formation rules, and (b) on the informants' ability to recognise and correct tense markers.
At the syntactic level, the study investigates the informants' knowledge of verb forms in two different contexts: those where time reference constraints are present and in those without such constraints. In addition, the relative frequency of verb forms such as *have, be* and *do* will also be considered (see also Wolfram 1985, and the Preliminary study for this project).
At the semantic level, the study focuses on the informants' ability to relate tenses and time (i.e., form to function). It is assumed that the knowledge the learner is expected to have (of verb forms and meanings) is of two types: (a) knowledge of a default meaning where there is a one-to-one relationship between tense (form) and context (function), as advocated by Andersen (1984), and (b) knowledge of cases where such a default meaning is overruled by either co-text or context, as described in Smith (1981).

Taking these views as a background, specific hypotheses have been formulated to investigate tense marking, verb correction, the ability to make associations between verb forms and contexts of use, and knowledge of metalanguage. Two types

of variables will be investigated: (a) the criterion variables which constitute the research independent variables against which the dependent variables are measured, and (b) the dependent variables which describe the learners' behaviour.

Criterion (Independent) variables

1. Levels of Instruction (G1, G2, G3)
The more time spent learning different aspects of a second language, the more of that language is learned. It is assumed that the informants' performance on the features identified will increase with each level of instruction and that a distinct stage in learning may be associated with each level of instruction.

2. Presence/Absence of time reference constraint in the immmediate context.
There will be specific relationships between precise linguistic performance and the level of informants and between precise linguistic performance and the linguistic contexts within which the informants operate.

Dependent variables

Dependent variables are set to determine how significantly different is the learner's knowledge in relation to both the level of instruction and the linguistic contexts identified in the study. A total of 7 variables based on task activities have led to 7 testable hypotheses. This number implies that many other variables or hypotheses could be set using the information from the data.

Variable 1: knowledge of formal past/non-past tense formation.

a. Knowledge of inflectional past/non-past formation.
b. Knowledge of lexical past/non-past formation.

Hypothesis 1
Following the studies of Wolfram (1985) and Sato (1985), it is expected that there will be significant differences in the knowledge of tense formation rules between learners at each level of the three proficiency levels. In particular, learners at level 1 (G1) will make more use of non-past and less use of past verb forms (even in past tense contexts) than learners at higher levels.

Variable 2: Ability to supply (appropriate) verb forms

Hypothesis 2
The learners' ability to supply verb forms in a given discourse or text will vary depending on both the learner's knowledge of required verbs as indicated by his/her proficiency level, and his/her knowlege of verb types and of the contexts in which the verb form is to be supplied.

Variable 3: Ability to recognise correctness or incorrectness

Hypothesis 3

The learner's ability to recognise correctness or incorrectness of verb forms is expected to improve across levels and would therefore reflect the learner's knowledge of grammatical and morphological verb forms.

Variable 4: Ability to make appropriate corrections

Hypothesis 4
The learner's knowledge of a language involves knowing a number of discrete structural items and being able to correct them. It is expected that formal training will be an important factor in the learner's ability to carry out appropriate corrections, i.e., the more knowledgeable/advanced the learners are, the better will be their ability to make corrections.

Variable 5: Ability to match verb forms with linguistic contexts

Hypothesis 5
Asssuming that the contexts of use have an influence on learners' ability to select verb forms, the informants' ability to choose possible verb forms to match the different linguistic contexts will vary from the *one-to-one* relationship at stage one to cases where such a default meaning is overruled by the co-text at later stages of learning.

Variable 6: Ability to make associations between tense and time

Hypothesis 6
In their attempt to associate tense and time, learners' ability will vary significantly between learners at the lower intermediate stage and learners at the subsequent stages.
This hypothesis tests the extent to which the performance of L2 learners reflects their level of instruction.

Variable 7: Metalingual knowledge of circumstances of verb form uses

Hypothesis 7
Learners' metalinguistic knowledge used to explain different circumstances of use for verb forms in given contexts will vary significantly between learners from different instructional levels, i.e., the more advanced the learners are, the more acceptable their explanations will be. In this hypothesis, the researcher wants to investigate the extent to which learners' formal training provides them with metalingual knowledge.

5.5 Task design for the main study

5.5.1 Aims of the tests

One of the aims for including testing in a study is to translate a language learning theory into measurable structures. The information provided by the structures measured is likely to represent learning stages. A test is also intended to provide

the test constructor or the researcher with a general profile of the learner's understanding and use of particular skills. In this study there is an interplay of both aims in that testing has been used not only to check learning stages but also and more specifically, to investigate the learners' use of tenses through verb forms in given contexts. In this test both tense markers and tense-time relationship are measured.

5.5.2 Procedures for test design

The test design used in this study is mainly based on elicitation procedures. As described in the literature (Corder 1973, 1981), an elicitation procedure is any procedure which causes a learner to make judgement about the grammatical acceptability of a form, or provokes him into generating a linguistic response. It is clear that judgements and responses can only be based upon the learners' IL. It follows from this definition that elicitation procedures require the learners to be able to make judgements about what they are expected to do or say. In order to get the learners to make the required judgements or give the expected responses, it is important that constraints should be placed on learners so that they are forced to make choices within a severely restricted area of their linguistic competence.

The prime objective of elicitation procedures is to reveal what learners know. However, although tests can be used to elicit information from learners, they are nevertheless different from the basic concept of elicitation. When using elicitation procedures, the researcher's knowledge of the range and nature of choices and the selection of contexts has to be based upon what he or she knows of the learner's IL. In Corder's (1981) terms, the researcher "must have some prior hunch or hypothesis about the possible nature of the learner's IL as a guide, otherwise he will simply be shooting in the dark" (Corder 1981:61-62)[3]. Furthermore, it is important to know that different elicitation procedures lead to different results or expectations. Wode (1983), for instance, argues that elicitation in L1 may apparently produce more advanced data than is evidenced spontaneously, while elicitation in L2 may lead to the use of larger variety of structures, including structures outgrown spontaneously, and types of structure not used spontaneously at all.

For the purpose of this study, five written tasks representing three main styles of the written language were administered, with composition at one end (i.e., spontaneous style), a gap filling test as a mid-style, and tense correction, multiple-choice and grammaticality judgement at the formal end. The next section offers a short description of each of the tasks used in the main study.

5.5.3 Rationale for the Tasks

The prime function of a task (or tasks) in any study is to bring to light hidden intentions. And in order to get subjects to reveal their knowledge, the tasks to be performed should activate their ability to use or create features/structures through thinking and action. In the present study, it was thought important to give the

informants the opportunity to reveal their knowledge of the target language norms, the kind of input they were exposed to and their individual abilities. The data in this study were gathered cross-sectionally, i.e., the tests were administered in a single day. As is generally the case, a large number of subjects were involved. The decision to adopt a cross-sectional approach was taken for two reasons: first, to get reliable information about verb forms from large bodies of learners, and second, to attempt to describe the process of variation over time by considering groups from different levels. The tasks were also designed to cover a range of knowledge domains in relation with verb forms in order to obtain a considerable picture of the knowledge assimilated by the learners up to the time of the tests.

Assuming that a particular instrument can measure only a particular type of behaviour, the selection and choice of instrument for our project took account of the fact that the researcher was dealing with advanced L2 learners in formal training. We argue elsewhere (Mayala 1989) that

> Unlike children, adult learners in formal Institutions are expected to behave in a way that makes them constantly aware of their own abilities, i.e., of what they can or cannot do or say, and even of their linguistic limitations. ... adult L2 learners have an advantage in that they possess a system that allows them to explain or judge the content of any piece of information submitted to them by using deductive and analytical abilities. They can also sustain mental effort, especially when they are motivated, and consequently have a critical mind that needs to be explored fully when collecting data from them (Mayala 1990:33-34)[4].

For the purpose of this study, five written tasks were administered, one of which (Composition) was set to give an overview of the general proficiency of the informants, not for a detailed analysis. The tasks represented three main styles of the written language, with Composition at one end (i.e., spontaneous style), a Gap Filling test as a mid-style and Multiple-choice, Verb Correction and Grammatical judgement on tense-time at the formal end. The tasks were designed to investigate important knowledge domains related to verbs, i.e., to establish the informants' ability:
i. to use tense markers (more specifically past tense markers)
ii. to use verb forms in contexts (with or without time reference)
iii. to establish time-tense relation (with or without time reference)

While the first knowledge domain is more concerned with the ability to mark tenses in obligatory standard English environments, the other two must be seen as testing for a mastery of an accurate range of target language forms and functions. It was therefore important to design tasks that could provide appropriate contexts for the study. Thus, for the purpose of this study, two linguistic contexts are considered:
- contexts with time reference constraint
- contexts without time reference constraint

Specifying these linguistic contexts was important in deciding on the way tasks should be designed for the study.
A more detailed description of the different tasks used in the project is given under chapter 6.1.

Composition

It is argued in the literature (Heaton, 1982) that all written work, whether free or controlled, should be provided as far as possible in a communicative context. A researcher should therefore provide not only a clear context but also a purpose for the writing. The writing task should be set in a way that ensures that the testees write about something interesting, for a given purpose and with a particular audience in mind. One of the aims of giving a composition task is to get the learners to exhibit their linguistic and cultural knowledge, as well as individual differences. However, in order to get a reasonably homogeneous picture of the group, the topic of the composition in this study was held constant for all the informants. That is, the informants were asked to describe the visit of a friend in a way that would be interesting to the boy's father. By doing so, the informants were given both a subject to write about and the reason for writing.

Similarly, the topic was controlled and provided the informants with the same and sufficient stimulus material. Without this condition, comparing the results would be an impossible task. The *father* to whom the letter is addressed plays an important role in the choice of register. He is not a friend but he needs to know everything about his son's visit. This situation forces the writer to use a more *polite style* while trying to make the report as thoughtful as possible. It was also assumed that writing on a topic in which they were themselves involved, would allow them to include other characters apart from themselves (such as friends, relatives and others) consequently bringing some variety in the style as well as in the use of verb forms.

Heaton (1982) argues that, compared to other types of tests, written composition provides an essential balance to discrete point tests by laying stress on a more communicative aspect of language use. A composition task puts very little constraint on the informants, as far as their choice of structures is concerned – a factor that is likely to provide authentic variations in the use of the features under study. Similarly, controlled composition may be useful in the sense that it helps to identify, and concentrates on, specific areas of difficulty. That is, composition involves far more than producing grammatically correct sentences: it demands creativity and originality. In this sense, the composition task was chosen to allow the informants not only to use their imagination in describing situations which involved their judgement, but also to see how they perceived their own culture and customs.

Another factor to take into account in written tests is the time allocated to the task. Heaton (1975) rightly argues that when time limits are imposed, this could increase

the sense of artificiality and unreality for the task. Therefore, testees should be encouraged to make drafts and be given sufficient time to revise their texts. In short, the informants were expected to produce a text in which the structures described above were likely to be found together. The test format was taken from Heaton (1982). Some modifications were introduced to adapt the context to the learners' environment, as shown in appendix 4.

Selective Deletion Gap Filling

The inclusion of this task in the study may be justified by the fact that (a) it requires a great deal of conscious activity and creativity on the part of the learner, and (b) it offers an opportunity to investigate how lexical information is processed. This technique can be considered as a recent development of what is commonly known as *cloze test.* In this respect, Selective Deletion Gap Filling (S.D.G.F.) includes all the advantages found in cloze tests, some of which are summarised below.

Weir (1988) refers to cloze tests as a measure of the reader's (learner's) ability to interpret the abstract information for its meaning value. That is, cloze tests measure general language proficiency, and more specifically 'grammar based expectancies'. Similarly, Alderson (1978) considers cloze tests as a procedure that can measure not only reading comprehension abilities, but also general linguistic proficiency, in particular for non-native speakers. These views suggest that the cloze test must be seen as an integrated test that can discriminate between subjects of varying degrees of language proficiency. That is, Cloze tests allow the test administrator to determine whether the learner has an adequate ability to meet linguistic demands either in general language use or in specific language skill areas. Another advantage of cloze tests is that they provide linguistic and contextual clues that can be helpful for learners who are able to use them. Thus, for Heaton (1975) "cloze tests measure the reader's ability to decode interrupted or mutilated messages by making the most acceptable substitutions from all the contextual clues available" (Heaton 1975:122)[5].

However, the method of *nth word deletion* has led to some difficulties in the interpretation of the results. Lee (1985) points out that, unless one wants to measure more or less homogeneous underlying dimensions, one is likely to get conflicting results. In other words, the criticism underlines the fact that the test randomly samples the elements in a text (Weir 1988) and therefore produces unpredictable and different measures of proficiency. What is mainly lacking in cloze tests is a unitary factor in the structures investigated which enables measurement of proficiency over a range of examples within the same general language area or level.

In recent research (Weir 1988) alternative techniques have been proposed to avoid these problems in result interpretation. Instead of deleting every nth item, a rational deletion based on common sense was suggested and seemed to produce much better results. This method is referred to as Selective Deletion Gap Filling.

According to Weir (1988) "Linguistic reasoning is used to decide on deletions and so it is easier to state what each test is intended to measure. ... This technique is better referred to as selective deletion gap filling as it is not 'cloze' in the proper sense" (Weir 1988:52)[6].

For the purpose of this study, such a method was not only necessary, but the only logical way to proceed. The subject matter of the study being the analysis of verb forms, and verbs being headwords of sentences, it seems impossible in a coherent and logical text to find verbs at every nth position. There was, then, every reason to go for a rational deletion. In this task, the informants were expected to infer the meanings of new verbs with the help of contextual clues. Carton (1971) defines 'inferring' as a process of identifying and acquiring new vocabulary by using attributes and contexts that are familiar. Such an identification of unfamiliar words presupposes that the informants understand a large number of clues provided in the text.

Assuming that meaningful contexts facilitate the learning of low frequency words, then *word inference is a process* of search for, and use of relevant frames of reference which provide a basis for prediction and organisation of information in long-term memory (Anderson 1984, Widdowson 1983). Inferring new words also depends on both the linguistic relationships among items of the text, and on how the reader conceives those relationships. Naturally, the learner's or reader's experience or knowledge of the real world also plays an important role in the process of inference. Thus, it is important that sufficient contextual clues are provided as input before expecting the learner to make a response.

The passage selected for the test was judged to be of average difficulty by the researcher, his surpervisor, by some colleagues (all College lecturers in Zaire) and by some native speakers of English and therefore suitable for the learners involved. In addition, the text describes a situation that students in Zaire are likely to have encountered, which gives the text face validity for the informants involved. The test is constructed, in principle, by deleting every second verb (excluding modals) from the passage for a total of twenty-seven blanks. The first sentence was left unchanged to provide context. The deletion was not made on a systematic basis for three reasons:

(i) because of the the presence of modals, to avoid repetition of the same verb forms in similar environments (e.g., *didn't like, didn't have, didn't find* and *didn't want*). In this particular case, only two instances were included in the deletion. The verb form *didn't* was not deleted because of the presence of the negative particle, which is a semantic rather than a morphological item. Therefore, *did* was included in the count because it carries tense;
(ii) because it was essential to include in the test most of the irregular verb forms found in the text, such as *got, took, left, went* etc., which constituted an important part of the study of morphological tense marking; and
(iii) because of the presence of invariable verbs (e.g., *let*) for which not much has

been said in the literature. It is assumed that such verbs could give valuable information on tense marking with invariable verbs.

The passage used for the test was taken from Chavez-Oller et al (1985)[7] and it was chosen for three reasons. Firstly, because it was used as a cloze test in a study on the sensitivity of cloze items to constraints across sentences, i.e., on the influence of linguistic context on the use of a certain number of linguistic items such as adverbs, verbs, prepositions, nouns, etc... Secondly, because the passage reflects what is likely to happen to most teenagers when they first leave their homes to go and study in another town (the face validity element). And thirdly, because such a story can be easily reconstructed. In order to make it sound more authentic, the names of people and places were adapted to the learners' environment. The text used can be found in Appendix 4.1. To sum up, the design of this task shows that there was a real need to be flexible but logical. It was inappropriate to employ the *nth word deletion method* as it was impractical in this particular situation.

Verb Correction

This test is a result of combinations and adaptations of various examples from different source materials[8]. Some structures were replicated while others were adapted to the need of the present study. The task was mainly concerned with testing some morphological aspects of tenses and checking the learners' ability to discriminate correct from incorrect verb forms. This part of the test battery bears an obvious relation to what was identified in the preliminary study where learners exhibited various kinds of morphological difficulties in verb tense marking. Thus, in the light of the information provided by the first data collection exercise, it was thought necessary to study in a more principled way most of the morphological errors made by the informants in the preliminary study. Analysis of these error types, i.e., overgeneralisation, redundancy, developmental and tense-shift, thus led to the design of the subsequent tests for the main study.

The test is based on two assumptions, (a) that learners make far more lexical than grammatical errors, and (b) that lexical errors are more disrupting for native speakers than are grammatical ones. If such assumptions are true then it is essential to consider learners' ability to recognise and deal with verb form errors. It was assumed that the results from such considerations could offer further evidence on both learners' effort to eradicate errors and on the overall movement of the IL towards the TL.

The aim of the test was therefore to investigate the informants' ability to recognise incorrect verb forms and to correct them. Alongside the incorrect forms, some correct verb forms were included in the test to discriminate more exactly the informants' level of awareness and knowledge of problematic verb forms. In one of the best examples of the study of style-shifting, Tarone (1985) claims that second language learners show systematic variability in some morphological and

grammatical forms, a variability related to task. Thus, by giving the learners various verb forms to correct, one implies that verb forms are used in specific contexts and according to certain rules. It is then possible to check where regularity might have been a problem for the learners involved. The test used for *Verb Correction* is given in appendix 4.2.

The Multiple-choice questions

The second part of the formal test was a multiple-choice task. The task measured the informants' ability to select acceptable verb forms by matching them with given functions. Although this study is not concerned with what is known in the literature as the semantics of verbs, the selection of possible meanings of verb forms cannot be excluded in a study dealing with tense difficulties. Less advanced learners are expected to be more limited in their choice than more advanced ones. If more advanced learners can interpret the function of a wider range of verb forms in a given context, this may be used as evidence that those learners have gone beyond what Smith (1981) terms *default meaning.*

The traditional format of a multiple-choice test requires the selection of one answer from a number of given options. The test writer is responsible for deciding on the correct answer for each item of the test. The marking is therefore straightforward, simple and rapid. It is consequently essential to give a pre-testing session to help remove ambiguities or badly-set information. Flaws in the questions or simply a lack of comprehension of the text or question can lead to results which may not be a true reflection of what the learners know. Some answers may have been simply guessed. Furthermore, how can one be sure that there is only one unequivocally correct answer, or that the responses will be homogeneous for most learners? (Weir 1988).

These views led the researcher to take a bold initiative in the design of the present task. It was clear that the term multiple-choice was inadequate in the context of this investigation where the researcher was expecting to obtain data that could discriminate three levels of learners. Therefore, two types of items were mixed: those with single answer possibilities and those in which two or more choices were possible. The decision finds its justification from most views expressed against the traditional multiple-choice tests. Weir (1988) summarises those views, arguing that

> there is sometimes more than one right answer to some questions particularly at the inferential level. What the test constructor has inferred as the correct answer might not be what other readers infer, or necessarily be explicit in the text" (Weir 1988:47)[9].

What emerges from this view is that restricting the task to *one correct answer* in order to measure the informants' ability to use verb forms might provide only

partial information on learners' ability to associate verb forms and contexts of use. Caroll and Hall (1985) argue that one has to rely less on *scores* based on the counting of separate items and more on the *judgements* made on the basis of verbal description of performance. In this task, the researcher is especially interested in studying both *which* verb form(s) is (are) possible in a particular context, and also *how many possible* verb forms could be used to express given functions. The task is then set to test the informants' potential verb form performance in relation to the functions they can fulfil in specific contexts.

Grammaticality judgement on tense-time relationship

The last task of the series focuses on the informants' ability to relate tense to time. This relation is often viewed as obvious in the situation described in every-day conversations which typically refer to straightforward contexts. Leech (1971) argues, for example, that when the simple present is used for future time, it represents the future as a fact. That is, the present tense attributes to the future the same degree of certainty that we normally accord to present or past events (Leech 1971). This test was then designed to test the learners' ability to associate tense and time (a) in cases where there is a direct relationship between verb forms and time, i.e., in prototypical associations, and (b) in cases where verb forms are overruled by context or co-text, i.e., in non-prototypical associations. Assuming that prototypical types of association between tense and time are more common in every day conversations, a larger number of items in this test were designed to test non-prototypical associations.

Compared to what is offered in the literature, these tasks represent an attempt to move away from the routine test system justified on ground of practicality. The reseacher shares Caroll and Hall's view that

> every effort should be made to ensure accurate and valid testing and this means devoting sufficient time and resources to the matter.... We are often told that doing a detailed test specification 'takes too long', that it is more convenient to put together a quick test without going through the specification process. We are told that making special test is too troublesome ... Our answer to these objections to full testing is that, if the fuller treatment leads to better decisions about our candidates, it is professional imperative to give .... a well worked out alternative which can be seen to provide a worthy answer to the test problem (Caroll and Hall, 1985:73-74)[10].

That is, if one really wants to reach specific objectives, it is imperative to take trouble in designing proper tests for the skills one wants to investigate. For example, the design of a task that would reflect the way the informants perceive the relation between tense and time was not easy because (a) there are no such tests

in the literature and (b) one cannot be certain as to how to make explicit the difference in the informants' perception of what might be the link between tense and time (see task in appendix 4.4).
On the basis of these views, it was essential that some of the tasks, especially formal ones, be piloted by native speakers. The next section gives a brief report of the pilot test organised for three tasks.

5.6 The pilot test

It is argued elsewhere (Mayala 1990) that a researcher needs to conduct a pilot test (a) to ensure that questions are free from ambiguity and thus appropriate for the purpose of the study, and (b) to obtain a full understanding of exactly how native speakers would interpret the questions or structures. As Kilby (1984) further points out, piloting tests has the advantage of getting from the native speakers an accurate account of the structures of their language. It is assumed that NS can make good use of their intuition when describing or explaining structures from their own language. A pilot test is also an opportunity for the researcher to get NSs' views on the suitability of texts, formats and the selection of items so that one can make any necessary changes on the basis of the feedback received.

5.6.1 The informants

Considering the nature of structures to be used in the study, it was judged necessary that the pilot test be given to both native and non-native speakers of English. The MA in Applied Linguistics students at Durham University had both the experience and the required knowledge to judge the kinds of tasks that were going to be used in the project. They had experience not only of the English language, but also the required professional knowledge because all were teachers of English as a second or foreign language. They were briefed by the researcher on the kinds of learners involved in the study as well as on the aim of the study. The researcher stressed the fact that their comments and observations as experienced teachers of English not only were valuable for the study but would also be acknowledged. A total of 28 MA students, including 9 native speakers, voluntarily took part in the tests and gave their views and comments on the tests presented to them. Table 5.3 provides the complete picture of the informants involved.

5.6.2 Views and comments on the pilot test

Although one cannot report on all the suggestions made by the MA students who kindly agreed to offer their views, it is worth noting that as a whole important changes were included in the design of the tasks for the main study as a result of what was suggested. For instance, as a result of their comments on which task was *easy* and which *difficult*, and by pointing out some 'unnatural examples' and 'ambiguity' of the instructions, the MA informants allowed the researcher to make important, necessary changes for subsequent testing. Some of these comments and

Table 5.3 — Informants' background

Category	Sex	Number	%
NSs	M	4	14.3
	F	5	17.9
NNSs	M	7	25.0
	F	12	42.8
Total	M	11	39.3
	F	17	60.7

suggestions are summarised in the next section.

On Verb Correction.

In the pilot version the task had only two examples in the instructions. On the basis of suggestions, it became evident that a third example was necessary to help illustrate all the different operations required. Comments such as "The examples do not clarify what one has to do especially on p. 1" or "Instructions: In part one, I was unsure whether or not I had to delete the mistake, because although it tells me to do that, there is no deletion line in the example" emphasise the need for clarity in the instructions to avoid any kind of confusion.

Not all the examples used in this project, however, represent everyday English. Some examples were deliberately chosen for being grammatically problematic to both native and non-native speakers of English. Examples such as *If Mary came tomorrow, we could have a party,* or *John tells me you are having an affair with my wife* are perfectly *grammatical* but not necessarily common in everyday speech. As a result of this pilot test, a certain number of items were dropped, while others underwent modifications. The instructions were entirely revised.

On Multiple-choice questions

This task was the least controversial. Most informants found it in line with their expectations. However, it was pointed out to us that one example in the instructions was not sufficient. It was suggested that another example featuring a *one answer model* was essential to avoid giving the informants the impression that two or more answers were required for each item.

On Grammaticality and time-tense relationship

The first observation made on the instructions stressed the fact that the answers to the examples were typewritten and as such did not highlight the crucial point that

they should be handwritten by the informants. The second observation focused on the impact of 'grammaticality' on the rest of the test. In the view of one of the informants, the MA students were possibly more open-minded about grammaticality judgements (i.e., aware that some forms may be grammatical in dialects). This observation is certainly true but did not help a lot in the direction of modification simply because the task was not concerned with judging the grammaticality of the structures. The informants were asked to make a simple association between tense forms and their time references.

The second obervation was more concerned with the nature of the task. One of the informants wondered whether the test was not more appropriate as a teaching exercise, arguing that a student who had not been taught these techniques might not be able to cope. Of particular interest is the fact that some observations raised the question of *how* such notions as tense and time could be investigated. It is often taken for granted that by learning/teaching tenses the notion of time is also implied. One needs to recall that the kinds of difficulty revealed in the preliminary study show clearly that *tense* and *time* are perceived differently by the English L2 learners. This test was designed to determine the exact degree of difficulty the task posed for NS and NNS speakers of English who were to take part to the main test.

In short, the purpose of the pilot test was to improve the validity of the test items to be included in the main tests. On one hand, the informants pointed out a number of problems in the instructions and on the other hand, it allowed to reveal that not everything was inadequate or wrong. As one of the informants wrote: " Very good test. Fairly straightforward. Part three (Tense-time) was the hardest. Instructions not clear enough". These comments may constitute a fair summary of what was apparent in the design of the first version of the tests for the study.

5.7 The main study: Test administration

5.7.1 The population studied

Two types of informant were involved in the present study, native and non-native speakers of English.

Native speakers

All the native speakers (NS) informants were either serving or former teachers. The serving teachers were selected from three different schools in Durham City (England):

6 teachers from St Godric's Infant school,
8 teachers from Gilesgate Junior school,
4 teachers from St Leonard's Comprehensive school.

The other teachers (3 in total) were all former teachers of languages. The choice of

teachers as native speakers was motived by the assumption that they were likely not only to know the language but also to be able to verbalise it.

Non-native speakers

The population (NNS informants) for this study were College students, all learning English as a second language in a French speaking environment. The informants were all advanced L2 learners of English from a homogeneous student population, selected from a single Teachers' Training College in Zaire: *Institut Pédagogique National.* The College was selected on the basis of three main criteria:
(i) it is one of the largest Teachers' Training Colleges in the country. It is therefore important as a training institution on account of the number of students enrolled, the number of qualified teachers and its experience (history, material making, outside teaching supervision);
(ii) its geographical location: the College is in the capital where all social and cultural classes are fairly represented; and
(iii) its long history in the field of teaching as a whole, and in teaching English in particular.

Table 5.4 — Informants' background

Category	Level	Sex	Number	%
NNs	1	M	22	15.7
		F	18	12.8
	2	M	28	19.9
		F	12	8.6
	3	M	27	19.2
		F	12	8.6
	Sub-total	M	77	54.9
		F	42	29.9
NSs		M	11	7.8
		F	10	7.1
Total		M	88	62.9
		F	52	37.1

5.7.2 Sampling techniques

The sample for this study was drawn from a College student population in the capital city of Zaire. The potential population for this study is therefore *all the undergraduate students in the English Department at the Institut Pédagogique National.* Forty students from each study level (i.e., first year or G1, second year or G2 and third year or G3) were selected randomly to represent the entire student population. It is well established that to obtain a random sample, all members in the population from which a sample is to be drawn must be given an equal chance to be selected (Selkirk 1978, Smith 1981). This is important in two ways: first it permits the researcher to generalise the results to the rest of the population, and second, it helps the researcher make inferences about the characteristic features of the population.

Simple random sampling

One of the main characteristics of a sample is its representativeness. To be representative, the population selected should include the different abilities and the various social classes found in it. In order to include these parameters in our study, two types of sampling, i.e., simple random and stratified samplings were applied. The first step towards representativeness is reached by random sampling. A random sampling is a method that consists of selecting people or objects by giving each member of the population an equal chance of being selected. One of the ways of doing this is to record the name of each member of the population on a separate slip of paper. The slips can then be drawn at random from a container and the numbers or names are noted while they are being drawn. In this study random sampling was used because it was simpler and practical. This first aspect of selection was then completed with a stratified sampling.

Stratified random sampling

The method consists of dividing the entire population into strata. In our case, the population was divided on the basis of the levels of study, i.e., G1, G2 and G3 (G stands for *Graduat*, the equivalent of *undergraduate level* in a British university). These are pre-existing academic groups whose characteristics were already clearly defined by the Institution. However, this stratified sampling could not be logically based on a proportionate stratified sampling technique simply because the different group populations were largely unequal as shown below. We therefore decided to select a fixed number of informants according to simple random sampling just described. Here are the exact figures of the sample.

		Group population	Selected
Group 1	(1st Graduat or G1)	162	40
Group 2	(2nd Graduat or G2)	140	40
Group 3	(3rd Graduat or G3)	112	40 (39)

TOTAL	120 (119)

N.B. Among the 40 informants selected from G3, one did not turn up on the day of the Tests and could not be replaced.

5.7.3 Administering the tests

The dry test

The test reliability being already piloted with a group of MA students at Durham University (including native speakers of English), there was no need to give a second pilot test. Instead, the different local working conditions and possible difficulties suggested that it would be appropriate to run a dry test. Fifteen informants (five to represent each level) were selected to take part, but in the event only thirteen presented themselves. The trial test itself was organised on the basis of an alternative. That is, half of the informants were asked to start with the composition, while the other half were asked to start with the more formal element (i.e., Gap Filling, Multiple-choice, Verb Correction and Time-tense). It was observed that the first group (starting with composition) took more time than expected compared with the other group.

In fact, it became clear from our informal discussion with all the informants after the test that starting with the formal items helped them not only to understand the structure of the test, but also made them feel more relaxed so that they could more easily plan the rest of their time. The time allowed for the whole test was 2h20. A third of the informants completed the tests within the time limit, including two (one from G2 and another from G3) who finished half an hour before the time limit. However, we noticed that a limited number of vocabulary items from Composition and Gap Filling tasks needed to be explained. Those words included *relatives, eager, casual* for the composition text and *cavities, filled, slacks* for the Gap Filling task. Thus, considering the language level of the informants, a decision was taken to explain those vocabulary items in advance to help the informants have the exact meaning of the extracts.

In short, a number of things were revealed from the dry test. First, it was noticed that the instructions were in genereal clear and well illustrated. Second, that no item required changes. And finally, the trial test helped to decide on the alternative for the main test, i.e., to start with more formal tests.

The main tests

The tests were administered three days after the dry test to allow us go through the dry test copies for any difficulties or misinterpretation of the instructions. After being reassured that the informants who took part in the dry tests worked within our expectations, it was then decided to carry out the main tests. The informants who took part in the dry test were told not to come and not to reveal anything about the test until the main test had been administered. On the day of

the main test, the size of the group (120) placed some logistical demands on the resources of the premises. When finally the researcher and some of his colleagues managed to get all the informants settled in three different rooms (according to their study levels), the researcher visited each room and explained the instructions. The researcher also took the opportunity to provide additional explanations, where necessary through examples, of some vocabulary items.

5.8 Summary

This chapter has been concerned with the different steps followed in data collection. The first step was to obtain useful information on the informants as well as on their learning behaviour. The preliminary study allowed the researcher not only to identify the language behaviour to be investigated, but also guided him in the choice of tasks and approach for the main study. Although the researcher had some knowledge of the many kinds of language problem the learners had, the best way to collect reliable information was to get the learners themselves reveal it to us. This is what motivated the design of a data collection exercise in a number of language areas. It became clear from the results of this preliminary study that the subjects had many language learning problems of the kind typically observed with most L2 learners. It was in particular observed that the subjects' various difficulties with verb forms were basically of the same nature, at least at level one. Using Andersen's (1984) *One-to-One Principle* and Smith's (1981) notion of *default meaning* as theoretical framework, it was argued that the relation tense-time and consequently form-function as revealed through the informants' performance in the preliminary task is far more complex than was hitherto thought. That is, tense forms and time (i.e., function) are not always related in a straightforward way. The informants' results show that there are cases where tense and time have a direct relationship and in other cases where there is no such relationship. The relationship between tense and time becomes even more complex when one considers the fact that verb forms cannot be described as separate entities, but as dependent on several other linguistic features used in the structure.

The information from the preliminary study made possible the design of tests for the main study. Three different task styles were designed for the study, with composition as the least controlled, Selective Deletion Gap Filling as a mid-style and three tasks considered as highly controlled. The rationale for those tasks was given in section 4 of this chapter. In order to check the test items and formats, i.e., their validity and practicability, a pilot test was carried out with 28 MA students at Durham University, all teachers of English.

The chapter also summarises these testees' reactions to the pilot test. The pilot test was administered not only to test the effectiveness and the practicability of the formal element of the Tests, but also, to determine a standard of scoring for the items. Piloting the tests was necessary since the tools used for the project were mainly experimental and designed specifically for this study. That is, the items

used in the Tests are not an exact replication of existing tests, but of tests that have been modified and adapted, and in many cases they are therefore original to this study.

Chapter five references

1. W. Wolfram 1985 Variability in tense marking: A case for the obvious, *Language Learning,* 35/2, p. 243.

2. J.D. Brown 1988 *Understanding Research in second language learning,* CUP, Cambridge, p. 9

3. S.P. Corder, 1981 *Error Analysis and Interlanguage,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 61-62.

4. N.K. Mayala 1989 *The need for a characterisation of Elicitations procedures in collecting data from adult L2 learners,* in: Sheperd D. and Mayala, N.K (eds), Durham Research Papers in Applied Linguistics, School of English, pp. 33-34.

5. B. Heaton 1975 *Writing English Language Tests,* Longman: London, p. 122.

6. C. Weir 1988 *Communicative Language Testing,* Exeter: Exeter University Press, p. 52.

7. M.A. Chavez-Oller, T. Chihara, K.A. Weaver and J.W. Oller 1985 When are cloze items sensitive to constraints across sentences, *Language Learning,* 35/2, pp.202-203.

8. The items used for this Test were adapted from Tarone (1985), Kleinmann (1977) and Smith (1981).

9. C. Weir 1988 op. cit. p.47

10. J.B. Carroll and P.J. Hall 1985 *Make your own Tests,* Oxford: Pergamon Press, pp. 73-4.

COLOUR-CODED REFERENCES TO TESTS

In order to facilitate the link between the different Tests and the Hypotheses formulated to test the data, a colour-coded reference is given below. Every Hypothesis is marked with a given colour which is also marked besides the corresponding Test from which the data are drawn.

- **Hypothesis 1: Learners' knowledge of formal past tense marking**
- **Hypothesis 2: Learners' ability to supply (appropriate) verb forms**

Hypothesis 3: Learners' ability to recognize correctness/incorrectness

- **Hypothesis 4: Learners' ability to make appropriate corrections**
- **Hypothesis 5: Learners' ability to match verb forms with linguistic contexts**
- **Hypothesis 6: Learners' ability to make associations between tense and time**
- **Hypothesis 7: Learners' metalingual knowledge of circumstances of verb form use**

See TESTS ENCLOSED

Chapter VI

DESCRIPTION AND PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

This chapter is divided into three sections. Section one presents a description of each task. Section two describes and presents the quantitative data. Two types of data are described in this section: the learners' overall performance as indicated through the percentages of responses, and the learners' knowledge as indicated by the informants' correct/acceptable responses. The data are presented in four different ways: (i) through percentages of responses; (ii) through frequency distributions of scores; (iii) with reference to score dispersion; (iv) through bar and line graphs. Section three explains and justifies the rationale behind the different statistical measures used to analyse the data.

6.1 Description of the Tasks

6.1.1 Rationale for the Description

The purpose of this section is to establish some basic criteria for data analysis. To do so, it was necessary to describe and specify in detail - task by task - what the informants were expected to do for every task. The description is based on the assumption that verb forms constitute basic grammatical units which can carry a wide range of morphological, syntactic and semantic information. In order to explain such a variety of information, there was a need to take into account not only the nature of the different verb forms, (i.e., verb type and tense marking), and the functions, (i.e., time orientation and aspectual meaning), but also the relationship between these forms and functions.

When dealing, for instance, with past tense of regular verbs in English, it would not be sufficient to say that the past tense is formed by adding -ed. Such a description gives only graphemic information. The -ed past morpheme, for instance, has three different phonetic realisations depending on the environment in which it occurs. Similarly, the various forms that a given verb can take, or its actual use and understanding in given structures depend on one's knowledge of both the linguistic

context as well as the circumstances of use. In other words, there is a variety of relevant information that the verb conveys in a given context. Sperber and Wilson (1986) argue that a human cognitive effect is achieved when the individual focuses his/her attention on what seems to him/her to be the most relevant information available. They believe that "the principle of relevance is enough on its own to account for the interaction of linguistic meaning and contextual factors in utterance interpretation" (Sperber and Wilson 1986:vii)[1].

According to this view, an individual's total cognitive environment consists of not only all the facts he/she is aware of, but also all the facts that he/she is capable of becoming aware of in his/her physical environment. The individual's actual awareness of facts, i.e., the knowledge that he/she has acquired, of course contributes to his/her ability to become aware of further facts. Thus cognitive environment means the set of all facts which are manifest to an individual. Taking up this view, Grundy (1989) further argues that utterances typically contain new information which will only appear relevant when the context and/or the hearer's - or the reader's - representation of the world, i.e., non-new information, enable appropriate inferences to be drawn as to what the speaker - or writer - intended to convey. This view is not only true for utterances, but also for single words, in the present case verb forms and the morphemes that constitute them. Thus the meaning of, for example, -ed will vary according to the context in which it occurs.

It can be agreed that there exists a range of knowledge associated with any given structure or form: morpho-phonemic, syntactic and semantic knowledge. These different types of knowledge cannot possibly be described at a single level of linguistic enquiry. It was on the basis of this view that the informants were expected to be able both to produce and understand meanings conveyed by particular verb forms in particular contexts. In other words, the informants were expected to make use of their linguistic as well as their world knowledge in processing given verb forms, which implies both the use and understanding of the various sorts of linguistic information contained in the verb system. In the same way, the different tasks in this study were designed on the assumption that learning verb forms involves making and testing various hypotheses about the English verb system.

The question was then to know what could be the best way of obtaining a fairly adequate picture of the informants' knowledge of verb forms taking into account

the morphological, syntactic and semantic levels of the verb system with which they were familiar. In order to determine the extent of learners' knowledge of verb forms, we needed to find out whether or not the learners were able (1) to recognise given verb forms, and (2) to produce and understand their relevant meanings or functions. A retrieval of the knowledge that requires recognition, comprehension, and production could be possible only through elicitation procedures. The latter proved to be an essential tool for data collection in this particular study. There was then a need to refer to some basic elicitation requirements (Mayala 1989). Generally speaking

> elicitation procedures are used to find out something specific about the learner's language, not just to get him talk freely. To do this, constraints must be placed on the learner so that he is forced to make choices in a severely restricted area of his phonological, lexical, or syntactic competence (Corder 1981:61)[2].

The argument is that, with controlled elicitation, learners are constrained to produce only what is required, causing them to exhibit an exact picture of their knowledge, including errors. But, with spontaneous elicitation, there is no particular pressure on the learners who may simply avoid using any structure or forms they are not sure of. It was in accordance with this view that the tasks used in the present study were mainly based on controlled written tasks. Those tasks were meant to test the extent of the informants' knowledge by getting them to commit themselves to making decisions or judgements about the possibilities involved in the use and understanding of verb forms. To reach such an objective, it was believed that a written elicitation would be more successful than relying on the spontaneous spoken form of the language.

At the same time, the existence of various levels of information conveyed by verb forms (morphological, syntactic and semantic) was another reason that motivated the design of a variety of test formats for the study. The intention was to ensure that the data base for the study should come from a variety of IL styles in order to achieve as valid, as reliable and as exhaustive a description of the learners' transitional competences as possible. Accordingly, the items used in the different tasks were selected primarily as cases in which tense would be required based on the rules of standard English tense use and marking, and in particular the past tense.

Consequently, the tests used in this study were designed to examine both the informants' ability to discriminate standard from non-standard verb forms, to produce required verb forms and to interpret verb functions. These three requirements have been used as main criteria in the description of items and later in the analysis of the data. One may consequently suggest that those criteria reflect the three most important linguistic features (form, form-function association and form and meaning) that are likely to characterise the informants' performance through four linguistic activities designed to test their ability:

- to supply verb forms in a given text,
- to recognise and correct verb forms,
- to make associations between verb forms with their functions, and
- to justify the relationship between tense and time taking into account the different circumstances of use.

These features not only bring together the different reasons that have motivated the choice of the structures, but they also justify the design of the five different tasks described below. The five tasks are described in the following order: (i) Composition, (ii) Selective Deletion Gap Filling, (iii) Verb Correction, (iv) Multiple-Choice, and (v) Tense-time relationship.

6.1.2 Tasks description

Composition

On the basis of a series of past events, the informants were asked to write a one and a half page narrative on the topic provided. The task was set to get the informants to provide the researcher with an overall picture of the verb tense difficulties they were encountering. It was assumed that the informants have a certain level of functional competence, but would face various kinds of difficulties at the performance level. As was previously described in the preliminary study, the composition task was included to get a general picture of what the informants were able to perform, that is, their ability in understanding and using verb forms morphologically, syntactically and semantically.

In order to obtain data in which informants expressed their knowledge of verb forms in a systematic way, they were given a controlled topic. It was assumed that

asking them to write a narrative was probably the best way to reveal the extent of knowledge the informants had of verb forms at the time of the test. Although in elicitation tasks one can show that learners have or lack specific kinds of knowledge, in a composition task where the emphasis is on the composing process and the functional use of language, learners can avoid errors that they might show under different kinds of elicitation. This view is in agreement with Corder's (1981) claim that learners exhibit error-avoidance behaviour in less controlled tasks.

In this study the informants were asked to write a narrative about a series of events which were clearly described in the instructions. In this way the topic was controlled and provided the informants with the same and sufficient stimulus material. In the discussion of this task later in the chapter, the emphasis will be on gathering a general picture of the informants' functional use of the language rather than on statistical counts of verb forms.

Test 1: Selective Deletion Gap-Filling

In this task the informants were asked to fill in twenty-seven blanks with verb forms. The task tests the informants' ability to combine morphological, syntactic and semantic knowledge of verb forms. The difference between this task and the composition task is that the text for Gap-filling provided the informants with all sorts of clues necessary for an appropriate selection of verb forms. Following the technique already described in the test design, the test is constructed - in principle - by deleting every second verb (excluding imperatives and modals) from the passage for a total of twenty-seven blanks. The first sentence was left unchanged to provide context. The deletion was not made on a rigidly systematic basis, first because of the presence of modals, and second to avoid repetition of the same auxiliary verb forms, in similar environments.

Another reason justifying the use of a rational deletion method was the need to include in the study most of the irregular verb forms found in the text, such as *got, took, left*, since these constitute an important area of morphological tense marking. Furthermore, the ability to decide which verb form should be used in a given context depends very much on the presence of contextual features because the latter affect the syntactic functioning of verbs. Contextual features are to be understood in this study as features which specify the interpretation of the

meanings of tense and aspectual marking of verbs in given contexts. For the purpose of our investigation only three of the numerous linguistic features have been selected. They are (a) type of verb, (b) tense, and (c) presence/absence of time indicator.

a. By type of verb, is meant the generally admitted subdivisions such as regular verbs (with -ed past formation) and irregular verbs. Three verbs *have, do* and *be* have been given special attention in the study because of their significant role in everyday communication (Palmer 1988, Wolfram 1985).

b. Tense is understood as a category related to verb to describe the relationship between the time of event or state of affairs and the coding time or time of utterance. In Crystal's (1980:352)[3] terms, tense is considered as "a category used in the grammatical description of verbs,.... referring primarily to the way the grammar marks the time at which the action denoted by the verb took place". This notion is analysed in this study either as *past* or *non-past.*

c. Reference to time can allow the reader to determine the time orientation on the basis of syntactic features present in the text. Various time indicators such as time adverbs, calendric expressions, certain deictic features and sometimes certain cohesive devices such as anaphoric personal pronouns (e.g., *he, she*) provide the reader with clues as to time orientation.

All three types of features found in the task are listed in tables 6.1, 6.2 and 6.7, and the text used for Test 1 is given in appendix 4.1. The last category (see table 6.7) - time reference context, was included so that the informants had to decide on the relationship between verb forms and contexts of use. The overall time and tense setting can be deduced on the basis of three elements: (a) most of the verbs not deleted are still in the past, (b) the constrast initiated by the introductory sentence, and (c) the use in the text of reported speech examples shows that the rest of the text is set in the past.

Table 6.1 — Verb Types and Tense Forms in Test 1

No item	Inflectional verbs		Lexical verbs	
	+/- Tense	+/- morphological tense markers	+/- Tense	+/- morphological tense markers
1	+ past	+ tense marker		
2	+ past	- tense marker		
4	+ past	+ tense marker		
5	- past	+ tense marker		
6			+ past	+ tense marker
7			+ past	+ tense marker
9			+ past	+ tense marker
10			- past	+ tense marker
11			- past	- tense marker
12	+ past	+ tense marker		
13	+ past	+ tense marker		
14			+ past	+ tense marker
15			+ past	+ tense marker
16	+ past	+ tense marker		
18	+ past	+ tense marker		
19			- past	- tense marker
20			+ past	+ tense marker
21			+ past	+ tense marker
22			+ past	invariable
23			+ past	+ tense marker
24			+ past	+ tense marker
25	+ past	+ tense marker		
26	+ past	+ tense marker		

No item	Auxiliary verbs		Modal verbs	
	+/- Tense	+/- morphological tense markers	+/- Tense	+/- morphological tense markers
3			+ past	+ tense marker
8	- past	+ tense marker		
17	- past	+ tense marker		
27	+ past	+ tense marker		

Table 6.2 — Distribution of Verb forms in Test 1.

Verb Form	Total	Items
Inflectional verbs	9	
1.Infl. (-ed)	6	1 (started)
2.Other infl.		
-a. infinitive	1	2 (want)
-b. past participle	1	4 (tested)
-c. non-past	1	5 (hates)
Lexical	17	
1. Suppletive	3	23 (was)
2. Int.Vowel ch.	3	14 (took)
3. Int.Vowel ch.+suf.	3	9 (said)
4. Replacive	2	6 (had)
5. Other lexical		
-a. -Ing form	1	3 (having)
-c. Infinitive	2	11 (find)
-d. Non-past	3	8 (are)
Invariable	1	22 (let)

Note: Int.= internal; ch.= change suf.= suffix

Test 2: Verb Correction

In this task, a total of seventeen non-standard verb forms were randomly mixed with three verb forms judged acceptable by the researcher, his supervisor and the informants/judges (native speakers of English). The informants were instructed to leave unchanged the acceptable verb forms, but to make any necessary changes for the others. This task was designed specifically, but not exclusively, to test the informants' level of awareness in the recognition of problematic as well as non-problematic morphological verb forms. The forms tested for included the third person singular present tense, the regular (or inflectional) past tense (-ed) formation, the irregular (or lexical) past tense formation and the present/past perfect forms. It should be noted that the recognition of tense marking tests formal knowledge of certain morphological properties of verb tenses to a much greater extent than it tests the functional understanding of verb forms. The analysis of the data from the present task is therefore based on two main criteria: (a) recognition of need for correction and (b) ability to correct where required.

Recognition of need for correction

This criterion implies two things. On the one hand, the informants were expected to be able to recognize given verb forms as either correct or incorrect, and on the other hand, they were expected to correct any incorrect ones in a standard way. The correct items had been judged correct (or at least acceptable) by the researcher, his supervisor and the informants/judges (native speakers of English) involved in the pilot test. The informants were instructed to leave items unchanged whenever they recognized them as correct, but in the other cases where correction was needed, to make any necessary changes.

Ability to correct where required

Requiring informants to correct verb forms considered incorrect by themselves gives rise to two possibilities: either (a) the informants fail to recognize the correctness of items judged correct by the researcher and make unnecessary changes, or (b) attempt to correct incorrect - or inappropriate - verb forms. In the first case, the informants' changes are considered inappropriate and described as negative behaviour, although in some cases they might have made acceptable changes (e.g., *burned* for *burnt*). In the second case, the informants had first to recognise the

incorrectness of the verb forms (see criterion 1 above), and then make the necessary correction. It is at this stage that the informants' level of proficiency is likely to play a crucial role. In other words, the task offers an opportunity to discriminate the informants who recognise the incorrectness and make the right correction from those who, although they recognise the incorrectness, cannot make the required correction.

To sum up, the task is designed to be performed in two steps: step one consists of recognising the correctness or incorrectness of the items, and step two consists of making any necessary changes to the incorrect items. It must be pointed out that the different verb forms used (i.e., third person singular present tense, present and past perfect tense and past tense) were randomly mixed in the task. It was therefore important for the informants first to recognise those that were incorrect before any futher action could be taken. The seventeen items that required changes are displayed in table 6.3 and the Test is given in appendix 4.2.

Table 6.3 — Distribution of Items requiring changes in Test 2

Change required	N/items	Distribution
Lexical past tense	6	3,6,11,12,16,20.
Perfect tense	4	8,14,15,18.
Verb forms to delete	4	4,9,10,17.
Third person -s	3	1,5,13.

Note: This table does not include the items judged acceptable by the researcher, i.e., items 2, 7 and 19.

Test 3: Multiple-Choice

Several aims may be associated with this task type depending on the objectives the researcher has in mind for his or her specific study. In the present study, and as already explained in the task design, this task was not set in the traditional format of a single answer per item. The multiple choice task was designed to examine the way L2 learners make inferences on the basis of possibilities available for given contexts. More specifically, the task tested the informants' ability to associate a variety of verb forms with functions taking into account the different circumstances of use.

The task was made up of a total of fifteen items where acceptable single answer items were mixed with acceptable multiple answer ones. Single answers were required in items 2, 3, 10 and 15. The other eleven all offered two or more meaningful possibilities from a total of four suggested choices. Verb forms of different types were mixed randomly in the test. One needs to note that, although an attempt has been made by the researcher to specify the purpose of each task, it seems impossible to deal with all possible verb forms and functions in one study.

The present study has limited itself to a description of regular and irregular verb forms with two of the many functions they may express, i.e., time orientation and aspectual meanings. In addition, there was no specific limitation as to the range of verbs to be included not only for the sake of variety, but also to prevent the informants recognising repeated verb forms and perhaps revising them in previously completed items as a consequence. Also, while verb forms can be unambiguously described, functions involve several other factors not always agreed upon. We know, for example, that time orientation even in a given context is not always straightforward, and depends a great deal on the circumstances of use. In some cases reference time features are explicit, but in others one has to infer the time referred to. In other words, more than one feature is needed to decide on the temporal orientation expressed in a structure. For the purpose of this study two variables have been judged important in selecting verb forms according to various circumstances: (a) the level of association between form and function, and (b) the nature of any co-text.

Level of association

More than any other task, the multiple choice shows quite unambiguously the different relationships that may exist between form and function. In order to reflect such differences in form-function relationships, the task is based on two types of constuctions: the single answer model and the multiple answer model. The researcher therefore expected the informants to make prototypical associations (i.e., one form for one function) for single answer items, and to be able to recognise the non-prototypical associations (i.e., several forms for one function) in the multiple answer items. The question was therefore to determine whether the level of instruction would affect the informants' performance.

One of the first assumptions is that the informants' knowledge may not always allow them to discover all the subtle meanings carried by verb forms in given contexts. In other words, some structures were difficult to provide contexts for and others less so. But, how can we tell which structures are difficult or easy for the informants? It is argued in the present study that part of the answer to this question can be found in the decription of the second variable. If the average percentage of correct answers with, for example, co-text of a particular type or containing a particular feature or structure is higher, then items with such co-text can be considered easier than items without it. One could then argue that the presence of co-text of a particular type contributes to an understanding of the

relationship between form and function. This comment consequently leads us to explain the nature of co-text.

The nature of Co-text

As explained above, this variable is closely related to the first one in that the type of association made by the informants depends on the way they understand the functions of verb forms both in the linguistic context where the co-text provides clues and in contexts where co-text does not provide such clues and where non-linguistic or broader contextual knowledge is required. Such an understanding depends very much on the informants' linguistic awareness of the structures or forms and the contexts in which they are appropriate. Linguistic awareness is understood as "what learners know or think they know about a language, as reflected in various kinds of performance, such as judgements of grammaticality, appropriateness or ease of comprehension, identification of errors, and correction of errors" (Lund 1986:7)[4].

This view means that learners' performance is conditioned by their understanding of other linguistic features that are present in the co-text. In the present study, special attention is given to co-text, but also - as an additional feature - to world knowledge because of its influence in enabling the informants to associate verb forms with their functions. It sounds logical therefore to argue that the presence or absence of co-text will play a crucial role in the decision to relate tense to time and to other aspectual meanings. The researcher has therefore grouped the multiple choice items under three categories depending on the nature of co-text occurring in the structure. The 15 items in Test 3 may be considered to fall into three categories:

a - those where the co-text contains a time reference indicator which constrains the choice of possible answer.
b - those where the co-text contains a time reference indicator which does not affect the choice of the possible answer. That is, if the time reference indicator in the co-text were omitted, the choice of possible answer would not be affected.
c - those where the co-text contains no time reference indicator.

However, some items also fall into both categories (a) and (b) in that the informants may have felt the constraint expressed by co-text in the choice of some answers in one item, but not in other choices. Thus, in our attempt to determine the effect of time indicating co-text on the informants' choices of possible answers, the co-text had to satisfy two criteria:
(i) A temporal reference such as an adverbial or a verb phrase in a conjoined sentence had to be present - as in category (a) and category (b) type items above, and
(ii) The temporal reference had to constrain the choice of possible answer - as in category (a) type items. The reason for two criteria is that the test was trying to determine the extent, if any, to which informants would be helped or hindered

when co-text rather than the general context -or wider knowledge of the world- played a part in constraining the choice of possible time referring expressions (See further description of co-text in appendix 6).

Working within these criteria, the informants' choice of possible answers was constrained by co-text in items 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, and 14, and remained unconstrained by co-text in items 1, 4, 7, 9, 11, 13 and 15 (where co-text did contain temporal reference) and 12 where no temporal reference was present in the co-text. In short, the items were grouped as folows:
a. Co-text with time reference or a verb phrase in a conjoined clause or sentence constraining the choice of answers: 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 14.
b. Co-text with no constraining time reference: 1, 4, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15. In short, Test 3 items can be schematised as shown in table 6.4.

Table 6.4 — Distribution of features in test 3

Feature	Specification	item
1. Level of association	a. single answer items b. multiple answer items	2, 3, 10, 15. the rest
2. nature of co-text	a. Co-text with time reference constraint b. Co-text without time reference constraint c. Co-text with no time reference	2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 14. 1, 4, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15. 12.

Test 4: Tense-time relationship

The activity required for this task consisted of (1) deciding for each sentence its corresponding time orientation, and (2) explaining or justifying their decisions. In other words, the task was designed to examine the many ways used by the informants to relate tense to time. Working from the assumption that tense does not always reflect the time prototypically associated with its form, the informants were asked first to specify time orientation and then to justify or explain the possible relationships between tense and time.

To do so, items with prototypical and non-prototypical tense-time association were mixed together. In item 8, for example, the tense of the verb *advised* is past and refers to a past event. That is, the relation tense-time is direct or prototypical. But, item 1 presents a rather different situation. The tense of verb is present but

the time referred to is the future, i.e., the relation tense-time is not direct, it is non-prototypical. A summary of the items used in the task is given in table 6.5.

Table 6.5 — Types of Associations between tense and time in Test 4

Type of Association	Tense	Time	Item
1. Prototypical ass.	a. Present	Present	10
	b. Past	Past	8
2. Non-Prototypical Association	a. Present	Future	1, 5, 7
	b. Present	Past	3, 9
	c. Past	Future	2, 4
	d. Past	Present	6

From table 6.5 it can be seen that only 8 and 10 can be considered as having prototypical associations between tense and time, the others are non-prototypical. Thus, by providing more items with non-prototypical associations between tense and time, the researcher would be able to investigate the informants' ability to interpret time orientations as suggested by the context of use and at the same time the informants' stage in the acquisition of form-function. It was assumed that the non-prototypical type of association (or non-default use of tense forms, following Smith 1981) would be more problematic for most learners, especially at lower levels than the prototypical type of association (or default use of language). Since the informants represented different levels of instruction, one would expect higher level informants, i.e., G3 informants to score higher than lower level (G1) informants. Similarly, the jugements provided by each group of informants on the circumstances of use for verb forms in Test 4 was likely to show significant differences between the different groups involved.

6.1.3 Summary

In order to determine the learner's knowledge of a given form or structure, one certainly needs to find out whether or not the learner can (1) recognise the form or structure, (2) produce it, and (3) understand its relationships with other forms or structures. This view justified our decision to set criteria for the description of the features in the present study. Those features are schematised in tables 6.6, and 6.7 where the overall distribution of contexts with and without time references is provided.

The first set of tasks involved the informants in a series of morphological manipulations in which their judgements of acceptability were required. The second set,

Table 6.6 — Description of linguistic features for the Study

Feature	Task	Expected behaviour
FORM	Test 2	recognition, correction
FORM/MEANING	Test 1	tense marking/accuracy
FORM-FUNCTION	Test 3	recognition/matching
ASSOCIATION	Test 4	comprehension/judgement

Table 6.7 — Distribution of linguistic contexts by tasks

Task	Context Type	Items
Test 1	T. R. C.	1, 3, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 21, 23, 25, 26, 27
	No T. R. C.	2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24
Test 3	T. R. C.	2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 14
	No T. R. C.	1, 4, 7, 11, 12, 13, 15
Test 4	T. R. C.	1, 5, 7
	No T. R. C.	2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10

Note: There are two types of linguistic contexts: time reference contexts (T.R.C.) and contexts without time reference (No T.R.C.).

however, required from the informants, in addition to morphological knowledge, some functional knowledge to enable them to make the required associations. The third set gave the informants an opportunity to exhibit an overall picture of their knowledge.

In the next two sections, the analysis of the informants' performance is offered, through a quantitative description and analysis of the data.

6.2 Statistical description of the data

6.2.1 Introduction

In recent years, research studies in linguistics have increasingly found the use of statistics a necessary means of analysing data resulting from language learning

behaviours. A first purpose of using statistic procedures to compute results in a research study is to show that the results obtained are not due to chance, but they represent the learners' actual achievement/performance. The second reason for using quantitative information is to provide the researcher with a useful framework for the classification and description of abstract data, usually in the form of sets of numbers. Such a classification enables complex data to be analysed by the eye. Among the many ways to represent data statistically, the use of tables and graphs is problably a preferred technique. According to Brown (1988), Moore (1979), and Norusis (1986), a table locates the position of every individual or group of individuals in the sample in relation to every other individual or group by displaying the researcher's specified characteristics. In addition to tables, graphs are also used as ways to display summaries of results. Graphs "usually provide some form of descriptive statistics, that is, numerical representations of exactly how each group performed on the internal scale measures" (Brown 1988:65-66)[5].

For the purpose of analysis, two types of measurement scale were used to present the results: (a) the nominal measurement scale, which is purely classificatory with labels such as *sex* and *languages*, and (b) the ordinal measurement scale which was used to represent sequences of information, such as achievement scores from different levels. The nominal measurement scale is concerned with discrete values where there is no particular order or progression. It is a collection of labels necessary for the physical description of the sample population under study. The ordinal measurement scale, however, offers more information, such as progression from one end of education level to the other, and displays the general trends of results.

The nominal measurement scale is used in this study to display the informants' background information, i.e., level of instruction, sex and national languages, while the ordinal measurement scale is used for multiple representations of the results such as frequency score distributions and mean scores, standard deviations, level of significance and correlations. Two types of graphs were used to represent the results, the bar graphs and linegraphs. Three statistical measures, namely the ANOVA (Analysis of Variance), the Student's t-test and Pearson Correlation were also referred to compute and describe the results.

In short, both tables and graphs were used to offer a physical description of the data, while the statistical measures were employed in the interpretation of the results. The next subsection therefore concentrates on the scoring procedures used to compute the data and the third subsection on the description and analysis of the results through numerical and graphic descriptions.

6.2.2 Scoring procedures and data description

This subsection is concerned with the ways the results were obtained from the informants' data. Various computations were carried out to produce the required

results. In particular, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSSX) system proved to be very useful in computing the percentages of responses, the frequency of scores and the mean scores. The GIMNS system was used to produce graphs, while TeX permitted the drawing of the various tables. Two types of information were needed to cover both aspects of the informants' performance, quantifiable and non-quantifiable information. Non-quantifiable information has be understood as learners' overall picture of their performance, and the quantifiable information was based on the informants' achievement in the different tasks. The difference between these two types of information is described briefly.

(A) Informants' overall performance

The results of overall performance are expressed only in percentages and they include various kind of responses, i.e., both *accurate* and *other response types*, reflecting some of the major tendencies in the informants' performance. It is believed that on the basis of such information, one may be able to determine not only the informants' knowledge on given verb forms, but also other types of learning behaviour for the different tasks. In this sense, percentages were a more convenient way to consider varied types of behaviour in relation to both the informants' abilities and limitations. Although one should consider only *correct* answers for valid scores, one cannot rule out, for these tasks, the influence on the informants' performance of variables such as the level of instruction and individual learning strategies. Considering the fact that the informants' behaviour is not always predictable and would vary depending on the tasks, the specific motivation for including verb form responses in the tables of percentages are summarised as follows:

Test 1

There were 27 blanks to be filled in with verb forms. The choice of the verb was left open to the informants. However, not all the answers provided by the informants are included in the tables of percentages. Some verb forms, such as two-word verb forms, although acceptable in the sense that they were *correct* or *possible answers* were excluded on the grounds that *only one verb form was required* for each blank. This was important for classification and comparison reasons. It was believed that accepting both one and two-word verb form answers would require two types of criteria for classification, and eventually different interpretations of the results.

For instance, verb forms such as *were coming* from G1-8 in item 15, and *had started* G2-91 were excluded, not because they were necessarily inaccurate or unacceptable, but because the category was not tested for and consequently was not computed in the statistics for this study. It should be stated that there were only a few such cases, i.e., 12 cases out of 3213 responses.
Verb forms that were invented, such as *pretting* used by G1-2 and G1-3, were also excluded from the count. Spelling mistakes, such as *expeting (expecting)* as in item 3 by G1-8 were ignored, and the verb type and the tense marking were coded. Table 6.8 gives the percentages of responses for Test 1.

Table 6.8 — Percentages of the responses for Test 1

		Levels			
Item	Verb form	G1	G2	G3	NS
1	infl. past	64.7	72.2	50.0	20.0
	lex. past	23.5	27.8	46.7	80.0
2	infinitive	48.4	73.5	51.4	100
3	infl.+ ing	27.3	33.3	38.9	35.0
	lex. + ing	18.2	3.3	11.1	40.0
	have + ing	-	2.5	5.1	20
4	past part.	69.7	84.0	85.7	100
5	infl. past	39.4	46.7	34.2	95.0
6	have past	3.3	19.0	14.3	57.1
	infl. past	36.7	33.3	50.0	23.8
	invariable				9.5
7	past part.	28.6	84.6	47.6	90.5
8	be -past	95.0	100	81.6	100
9	lex. past	73.1	84.8	86.1	85.7
10	have -past	29.0	13.2	28.6	90.5
11	infinitive	87.5	89.7	94.9	100
12	infl. past	12.1	5.4	17.1	76.2
	infl. -past	48.5	62.2	54.3	4.8
13	infl. past	26.5	63.9	70.3	100
14	lex. past	39.1	41.9	71.4	100
	invariable	56.5	51.6	21.4	-
15	lex. past	64.3	37.8	38.9	80.0
16	infl. past	32.3	70.0	82.4	100

Note: infl.= inflectional verb form; lex.= lexical verb form.

		Levels			
Item	Verb form	G1	G2	G3	NS
17	do -past	69.0	86.5	92.3	100
18	infl. past	70.0	83.8	83.8	61.9
	lex. past	10.0	10.8	8.1	38.1
19	infinitive	53.3	50.0	48.4	95.0
20	do past	69.0	90.0	100	81
21	lex. past	86.7	84.8	85.3	90.0
22	invariable	12.5	36.4	36.8	81.0
	infl. past	32.4	44.7	42.1	14.3
23	be past	75.0	88.6	91.2	100
24	lex. past	71.4	87.5	96.4	100
25	infl. past	71.4	75.0	46.2	52.4
	lex. past	14.3	25.0	53.8	47.6
26	lex. past	76.7	67.6	83.8	100
27	be past	57.1	91.7	88.2	100

The verb forms included in table 6.8 had to satisfy each of the following conditions:

a. Verb forms had to be either those actually used in the original text or very closely related choices. Although the ideal would be to have the identical forms, the coding was based on acceptable verb forms and appropriate tense marking. In the first item of the task, for example, the verb form used in the original text was *started*, i.e., a regular verb form in the past tense. It is not surprising, however, that some informants used *began* instead, i.e., an irregular verb form in the past tense and this alternative answer was considered acceptable. A total of 4 cases were identified with obvious alternatives, i.e., items 1, 9, 18 and 25.

b. Verb forms had to be selected by at least 20% of native speakers. Although one cannot possibly draw conclusions about learners' behaviour on the basis of such a small percentage, the acceptability of these forms to a significant minority of NS was considered to justify their selection by non-native speakers. It may be argued therefore that the selection of a given verb form by NS may justify its choice by the NNS informants. It is then possible to suggest that the higher the percentage of a given form by the NS the more acceptable the verb form is likely to be.

c. Verb forms had to be selected by at least 50% of the informants of one particular group, or by at least 40% each when two or more groups were involved, since the researcher's concern is to explain what might have motivated such choices by the

informants under consideration.

In short, the conditions for including verb forms in the table can be summarised as follows:
(i) supplying (inserting) a verb form identical to that found in the original text.
(ii) supplying an alternative verb form close to the meaning of the verb form in the original text.
(iii) the number of NS informants who made the choice, i.e., a minimum of 20% for a given item.
(iv) the number of NNS informants who made the choice, i.e., a minimum of 50% informants for a given proficiency level.

Test 2

The task consisted of twenty items which were based on two types of activities: recognising as correct or incorrect the various forms of tense marking and then correcting where appropriate. The items with errors were mixed randomly with three items judged correct by the researcher. The percentages in table 6.9 show all the data collected from the informants including both accurate and non-accurate answers. These include answers where:

- adequate changes and recognition of correct verb forms occurred,
- inadequate changes were made (e.g., items 6 and 18),
- no changes to the items the researcher considered *incorrect* were made (e.g., items 14, 15 and 18 which yield problematic results that require further attention),
- informants corrected items already judged *correct* by the researcher. (The three correct items (2, 7, 19) display a high percentage of changes which need to be explained).

In short, Test 2 percentages show which tense markings were familiar to these learners and which ones were not. Data were included when they resulted from any of the following:
- affecting adequate changes.
- affecting inadequate changes where change was required.
- affecting no change on incorrect items.
- affecting no change on already correct items.
- making changes to correct items.

Table 6.9 — Percentages of responses for Test 2

		Levels			
Item	Activity	G1	G2	G3	NS
1	Acc. change	87.5	82.5	92.3	100
	Unac. change	7.5	7.5	-	-
	No change	5.0	10.0	7.7	-
2	No change	37.5	67.5	69.2	71.4
	Unac. change	47.5	5.0	5.1	-
	Acc. change	15.0	27.5	25.6	28.6
3	Acc.. change	60.0	97.5	97.4	100
	Unac. change	30.0	2.5	2.6	-
	No change	10.0	-	-	-
4	Acc. change	42.5	52.5	41.0	100
	Unac. change	30.0	20.0	25.6	-
	No change	27.5	27.5	33.3	-
5	Acc. change	17.5	62.5	87.2	100
	Unac. change	42.5	7.5	5.1	-
	No change	40.0	30.0	7.7	-
6	Acc. change	20.0	32.5	48.7	100
	Unac. change	75.0	42.5	38.5	-
	No change	5.0	25.0	12.8	-
7	No change	12.5	22.5	7.7	9.5
	Unac. change	75.0	30.0	17.9	-
	Acc. change	12.5	47.5	74.4	90.0

Note: acc.= acceptable; unac.= unacceptable.

		Levels			
Item	Activity	G1	G2	G3	NS
8	Acc. change	2.5	5.0	10.3	100
	Unac. change	47.5	22.5	20.5	-
	No change	50.0	72.5	69.2	-
9	Acc. change	32.5	62.5	79.5	100
	Unac. change	40.0	10.0	10.3	-
	No change	27.5	27.5	10.3	-
10	Acc. change	67.5	87.5	74.4	100
	Unac. change	17.5	2.5	25.6	-
	No change	15.0	10.0	-	-
11	Acc. change	70.0	72.5	92.3	100
	Unac. change	20.0	20.0	7.7	-
	No change	10.0	7.5	-	-
12	Acc. change	75.0	70.0	84.6	100
	Unac. change	17.5	2.5	2.6	-
	No change	7.5	27.5	12.8	-
13	Acc. change	42.5	75.0	89.7	100
	Unac. change	27.5	2.5	2.6	-
	No change	30.0	22.5	7.7	-
14	Acc. change	55.0	82.5	82.1	61.9
	Unac. change	15.0	2.5	2.6	-
	No change	30.0	15.0	15.4	38.1

Note: acc.= acceptable; unac.= unacceptable.

		Levels			
Item	Activity	G1	G2	G3	NS
15	Acc. change	7.5	2.5	20.5	23.8
	Unac. change	50.0	20.0	12.8	-
	No change	42.5	77.5	66.7	76.2
16	Acc. change	25.0	37.5	48.7	100
	Unac. change	45.0	15.0	23.1	-
	No change	30.0	47.5	28.2	-
17	Acc. change	10.0	5.0	20.5	100
	Unac. change	50.0	35.0	23.1	-
	No change	40.0	60.0	56.4	-
18	Acc. change	7.5	20.0	20.5	81.0
	Unac. change	57.5	25.0	23.1	-
	No change	35.0	55.0	56.4	19.0
19	No change	20.0	50.0	66.7	85.7
	Unac. change	35.0	27.5	5.1	-
	Acc. change	45.0	22.5	28.2	14.3
20	Acc. change	25.0	42.5	61.5	100
	Unac. change	55.0	27.5	15.4	-
	No change	20.0	30.0	23.1	-

Note: acc.= acceptable; unac.= unacceptable.

Test 3

In dealing with this task, the informants were asked to *tick* any choice they thought acceptable for the given contexts. The percentages in table 6.10 were computed on the basis of all the choices made by the informants, i.e., both acceptable and unacceptable choices. The reason for including all those choices was to attempt to obtain an exact picture of the informants' repertoire with reference to ability to discriminate possible from non-possible choices and the extent to which instruction affects such an ability across the different levels.

The percentages show that in 67% of cases, all three NNS groups made choices (with 50% or more) which agreed with those made by the majority of NS. This can be seen in items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, and 14. However, in 27% of cases, G2 and G3 scored 50% or more on choices that agreed with NSs' responses, namely in items 8, 11, 12, and 15. In 13% of cases, G3 was the only group to score more than 50% (in items 6 and 13). These scores indicate, that those choices were favoured by the informants and could consequently be considered as common to these learners. There is, however, no doubt that NS informants' responses were more consistent, implying a sense of stability in their decisions, whereas NNS informants' responses were clearly more varied, implying a degree of uncertainty in their decisions. In short, the percentages of responses for this task were specifically useful in three ways:

(i) they helped to determine those verb forms that were favoured for a given context, suggesting which verb forms were likely to be more familiar for these informants;
(ii) they showed where one rather than several choices were preferred by most of the informants. This suggests either that learners had sufficient knowledge to select the required answer, as in cases where learners' choices coincide with those of NS informants, as in item 3, or that learners exhibit a limited repertoire, as in item 6 or 13; and
(ii) they showed where learners were likely to transfer verb forms from their L1. The example used to illustrate language transfer is taken from these results, namely from item 3.
The percentages of responses for Test 3 are given in table 6.10

Table 6.10 — Percentages of responses for Test 3

		Groups			
Item	choice	G1	G2	G3	NS
1	A	84.6	90.0	94.9	90.5
	B	33.3	25.0	15.4	-
	C	23.1	35.0	38.5	100
	D	5.1	-	-	-
2	A	30.8	17.5	5.1	4.8
	B	5.1	2.5	-	-
	C	71.8	85.0	100	95.2
	D	2.6	2.5	-	4.8
3	A	37.8	12.5	5.1	-
	B	62.2	90.0	94.9	100
	C	5.4	-	-	-
	D	2.7	-	2.6	-
4	A	10.3	7.5	-	-
	B	38.5	47.5	30.8	81.0
	C	-	7.5	23.1	-
	D	84.6	82.5	100	100
5	A	25.6	7.5	5.3	-
	B	71.8	82.5	92.1	100
	C	12.8	27.5	18.4	38.1
	D	5.1	12.5	-	-
6	A	12.5	17.5	15.4	19.0
	B	17.5	22.5	17.9	4.8
	C	52.5	45.0	38.5	57.1
	D	42.5	47.5	76.9	100
7	A	-	-	-	-
	B	26.1	22.5	12.8	57.1
	C	84.2	82.5	92.3	85.7
	D	10.5	7.5	2.6	-

		Groups			
Item	choice	G1	G2	G3	NS
8	A	38.9	79.5	78.9	95.2
	B	19.4	2.6	5.3	-
	C	38.9	12.8	15.8	-
	D	27.8	33.3	34.2	38.1
9	A	91.9	90.0	94.9	100
	B	18.9	32.5	35.9	61.9
	C	5.4	2.5	7.7	4.8
	D	8.1	2.5	-	-
10	A	5.1	-	2.6	-
	B	2.6	2.5	-	-
	C	61.5	82.5	94.9	100
	D	53.8	42.5	33.3	19.0
11	A	17.9	10.0	5.1	-
	B	23.1	5.0	10.3	9.5
	C	35.9	57.5	82.1	100
	D	43.6	50.0	46.2	28.6
12	A	5.1	-	2.6	-
	B	56.4	50.0	61.5	71.4
	C	2.6	-	7.7	66.7
	D	48.7	82.5	82.1	95.2
13	A	43.6	51.3	23.1	14.3
	B	7.7	7.7	7.7	-
	C	30.8	10.3	2.6	-
	D	17.9	46.2	74.4	100
14	A	51.3	72.5	61.5	14.3
	B	10.3	2.5	2.6	4.8
	C	38.5	37.5	46.2	85.7
	D	23.1	10.0	7.7	81.0
15	A	48.7	52.5	64.1	100
	B	28.2	30.0	43.6	4.8
	C	12.8	7.5	5.1	4.8
	D	33.3	17.5	5.1	-

Test 4

The informants were asked to associate verb forms and the time expressed in the context. Taking the underlined verb form as reference, the informants were required to decide for each item the time orientation indicated by the verb form (past, present or future time) and to provide explanation on the circumstances of use of the verb forms. In item 1, for instance, the verb form *is giving* indicates an action/event that refers to future because of the presence of the co-text *week*. Table 6.11 therefore displays three types of information: (i) where the informants were able to make only the association between verb forms and time reference, (ii) where the informants were able to provide only adequate explanation, and (iii) where the informants were able to do both, that is, to make associations between verb forms and time references and to provide adequate explanations of the circumstances of use.

These percentages, as for the other Tests, represent the informants' overall understanding of the relationship between tense and time. The way learners associate tense and time shows, for instance, that item 8 produced the highest percentages confirming the assumption that prototypical associations would be easier and more familiar for the informants involved. The next highest percentages were recorded with item 1 which could be related to learners' experience and previous knowledge of the L2. But, as a whole, the results clearly display learners' serious difficulties compared to the responses for Tests 1, 2 or 3. Table 6.11 gives the percentages of the informants' responses for Test 4.

A closer look at table 6.11 reveals that in most cases learners were unable to identify or to explain the nature of the relationship between tense and the circumstances of use. When set alongside informants' achievement levels, this kind of information provides a more adequate picture of the knowledge of the learners concerned than has been available hitherto.

Table 6.11 — Percentages of responses for Test 4

Item	Activity type	Groups			
		G1	G2	G3	NS
1	Association only	7.5	2.5	-	33.3
	Explanation only	22.5	15	15.4	-
	Association + Explan.	35	52.5	69.2	66.7
2	Association only	-	-	-	23.8
	Explanation only	5	15	23.1	4.8
	Association + Explan.	2.5	-	-	66.7
3	Association only	-	-	-	19
	Explanation only	5	10	5.1	14.3
	Association + Explan.	-	5	2.6	57.1
4	Association only	-	-	-	33.3
	Explanation only	10	15	15.4	4.8
	Association + Explan.	-	-	2.6	61.9
5	Association only	10	5	-	28.6
	Explanation only	12.5	7.5	23.1	-
	Association + Explan.	20	22.5	23.1	66.7
6	Association only	2.5	-	-	33.3
	Explanation only	5	10	10.3	14.3
	Association + Explan.	-	7.5	5.1	47.6
7	Association only	15	2.5	2.6	28.6
	Explanation only	15	7.5	5.1	4.8
	Association + Explan.	10	42.5	43.6	57.1
8	Association only	17.5	7.5	5.1	38.1
	Explanation only	7.5	-	10.3	-
	Association + Explan.	47.5	70	64.1	57.1
9	Association only	2.5	-	-	28.6
	Explanation only	12.5	7.5	7.7	14.3
	Association + Explan.	7.5	12.5	17.9	52.4
10	Association only	30	10	-	28.6
	Explanation only	5	30	33.3	-
	Association + Explan.	2.5	7.5	17.9	66.7

The second step in the description of the data is then to consider the scores obtained by the informants on accurate/acceptable responses.

(B) Informants' scores on acceptable responses

The frequency distributions shown in tables 6.12, 6.13, 6.14 and 6.15 represent the actual scores obtained by the informants on accurate responses for the four tasks used in the study. The results included in these tables were computed on the basis of *correct* and *acceptable answers* produced by the informants. They therefore do not include the general behaviour described earlier in percentages of responses.

In this study, the informants' scores were obtained through three main steps: (i) coding all the items for each task by giving a label to each variable, (ii) recoding the variables and giving values to every accurate/acceptable response, and (iii) computing the data on the SPSSX system on the basis of variables grouped according to their nature. A blank space was left for every missing data. The complete chart of codes and labels is given in appendix 7.

Test 1

There was a total of 27 items to which a value was given. The scoring was based on the verb form appearing in the original text and on the basis of the majority of responses produced by the NS informants. As explained in the description of percentages, there were obvious alternative answers as in items 1, 9, 18 and 25. In the original text, the verb form used for position 1 (item 1) was *started*, the alternative allowed is *began*, for item 9 *claimed* was accepted as alternative to *said*, for item 18 two alternatives were possible *replied* or *answered* at the place of *said*, and finally for item 25 there were three alternatives *came*, *got* or *arrived* instead of *pulled* as found in the original text.

There was a total of 27 values for 27 items for this task. That is, each correct/acceptable answer was awarded one mark. The first column represents the total value obtained by one or more informants for correct/acceptable responses. The next four columns include the number of informants – by Group – who obtained that value. The scores are distributed in order of merit, from low to high values. For instance, only one informant (from G1) scored '7' which is the lowest value in the score distribution. Under the value '21', there 3 informants from G1, 5 informants from G2 and 3 from G3. All the native informants scored '26' or more. Tables 6.12, 6.13, 6.14 and 6.15 are set out in the same way.

Test 2

For this task, the researcher's focus was on the formal morphological marking of verbs, i.e., there was a need to take into account the standard forms when scoring. The verb forms described as *correct* by the researcher were checked during the pilot test by a group of postgraduate students including NSs of English. As a

Table 6.12 — Frequency distributions of scores for Test 1

Value	Groups			
	G1	G2	G3	NS
7	1			
11	1			
12		1		
13	2	2		
14	5			
15	3		1	
16	5	1		
17	2	4		
18	5	4		
19	4	2	2	
20	1	1	2	
21	3	5	3	
22	2	5	1	
23	5	2	7	
24	1	7	13	
25		3	4	
26		3	3	6
27			3	15

consequence, those verb forms may not be the *most acceptable* forms, but, they were nevertheless judged *correct* by NSs. Table 6.13 presents the overall scores for Test 2.

Test 3

Test 3 was designed to test the informants' ability to relate verb forms to the different contexts of use. The informants were given 15 items each with four different answers to choose from. In three cases, i.e., items 3, 10 and 15 the informants were expected to select only one single answer as acceptable, while in the rest of items, two or more answers were expected. Each of the items therefore provided

Table 6.13 — Frequency distributions of scores for Test 2

Value	Groups			
	G1	G2	G3	NS
2	2			
3	1			
4	3			
5	3	2	1	
6	5			
7	5	2	1	
8	6	4		
9	1	2		
10	3	6	3	
11	4	7	1	
12	5	2	8	
13	2	6	8	
14		2	6	
15		3	2	
16		3	7	
17		1	1	1
18			1	10
19				6
20				4

the informants with a context in which one or two or more of the suggested verb forms were possible according to the informants' contextual and world knowledge of the structure. The results for this task were scored according to discrete test procedures as illustrated for item 3 in the example below.

```
Item 3
My sister ------- 26 years old when she got married.
```

For item 3, the informants were expected to choose only one answer. Only the informants having made the choice '0100' were awarded maximum score (4). All the other answers had one mark deducted from their total score whenever an unacceptable choice was selected. This technique allows one to deduct values where unacceptable choices were made, while not affecting the overall scoring.

possible	choice	score
1.	0001	2
2.	0010	2
3.	0100	4
4.	1000	2
5.	1100	3
6.	0110	3
7.	0011	1
8.	0111	2
9.	1111	1
10.	1110	2

The results for Test 3 are given in table 6.14.

Table 6.14 — Frequency distributions of scores for Test 3

Value	Groups			
	G1	G2	G3	NS
21	1			
22	2			
26	1			
27	3			
29	1			
30	2	2	1	
31	1	1		
32	2	2	1	
33	3	1		
34	2	2		
35	3		2	
36	4	2	2	
37	3	4		
38	2	5		
39	3	4	7	
40	2	2	6	1
41	3	3	1	1
42		2	4	
43	2	1	1	

Value	Groups			
	G1	G2	G3	NS
44		1	4	
45		4	5	1
46		1	3	1
47		2	1	5
48			1	5
49		1		2
50				1
51				2
52				1
53				1

Test 4

The informants were asked to perform two activities: (a) to match the tense of the underlined verb form with its time reference, and (b) to provide an explanation of the circumstances where such a structure could be used. Each of the explanations provided by the NNS informants was judged by at least four NS judges and postgraduate students studying for an MA degree in the School of English at Durham University (1989-90). The judging group included 40 people, 27 of whom were native speakers of English. They were each given a copy of all the informants' explanations for one item only in typewritten form, i.e., one member of the judging group received all the 119 cases of an attempted explanation for item 1, another member all the 119 cases for item 2, and so on.

The judges were asked to mark them either with 'A' for appropriate or 'I' for inappropriate. They had to base their judgements on *model explanations* provided by the researcher, (see appendix 9). The *model explanation* being only a guide, one could not rule out reference to other possible interpretations of the explanations according to the speaker's knowledge of the language and personal experience. Table 6.15 summarises only the results of the informants' ability to associate tense to time, those for NNS's evaluations of circumstances of the use of verb forms are considered later in the discussion of results (chap. 7.1.7).

The inclusion of judgements in the scores was considered in two steps: first, all judgements made by NS were selected, then where there was an insufficient number of NSs' judgements, the set was completed with NNSs' judgements. Out of four judgements made for each item, the researcher made sure that at least two were made by a NS. Where three or all four judgements concurred, i.e., were judged 'A'

or 'I', the cases were either considered as appropriate in the first case or rejected in the second case. In cases where there was no such clear agreement, i.e., when only two judgements concurred, an authoritative judgement was made by Mr P. Grundy[6].

Table 6.15 — Frequency distributions of scores for Test 4

Value	Groups			
	G1	G2	G3	NS
0	3			
1	1		1	
2	3	2	2	
3	5	5		
4	2	2		
5	5	2	2	
6	2	3	2	
7	1	2	3	
8	3	3	6	
9	6	3	1	4
10	1	1	4	2
11	2	5	4	
12	3	1		1
13		1	2	
14	1	5	5	
15	2		2	
16		1	2	
17		2	1	
19		1		
20		1		
21			1	
22			1	1
25				1
28				1
29				9
30				2

6.2.3 Statistical techniques for data description

Three statistical procedures were referred to compute and describe the data. The rationale for the use of each of them is briefly outlined. The information provided in the various tables of frequencies were used to compute a range of values for statistical analyses, and the following statistical procedures were used to analysis the data:

- The Analysis of variance (ANOVA),
- The Student's *t*-test, and
- Pearson's Correlation Coefficients.

The Analysis of Variance

The analysis of variance allows one to compare variables from one or several groups of subjects. As Brown (1988) describes it, the ANOVA can be used

> to make mean comparisons where there is one interval-scale dependent variable... The striking advantage of the one-way analysis of variance is that it can be applied when there are more than two groups in the independent variable. So, the means of three, four, or more groups on a dependent variable can be tested simultaneously for significant differences (Brown, 1988:176)[7].

The main advantage of a mean score is to provide the researcher with the single best guess for a sample population value, and is also the basis from which other values may be calculated. The mean is probably the most commonly reported indicator of central tendency generally considered as the arithmetic average of the scores. In addition to the mean, there are two other common values which all make up central tendency indicators. The mode is the score that occurs the most frequently in a set of scores, although in some cases, there may be two or more modes in one set of scores. The median is the middle point in a distribution. All these values are given in table 6.16.

Another type of information one gets from running the ANOVA include the standard deviation (SD) the standard error (SE), the confidence limits (CL) and the level of probability. In particular, a S.D. is understood as "a sort of average of the differences of all scores from the mean. These differences are also called 'deviations' from the mean – hence the name standard deviation. It is a good indicator of dispersion. The smaller the standard deviation, the greater the precision" (Moore 1979:171)[8]. For the sake of illustration, Test 1 was selected and its values are displayed in table 6.17. The results in table 6.17 also give the extent to which *confidence limits* for Test 1 can be estimated. The results show that the G1 population mean score for Test 1 should be between 16.40 and 18.84, that of G2 between 19.65 and 22.04, that of G3 is between 22.54 and 24.12, and finally that of NS informants between 26.50 and 26.92.

The results in table 6.17 therefore indicate that one can be confident that with

Table 6.16 — Central tendency indicators for four Tests

Task	Mean				Mode				Median			
	G1	G2	G3	NS	G1	G2	G3	NS	G1	G2	G3	NS
TEST 1	17.62	20.85	23.33	26.71	16	24	24	27	18	21	24	27
TEST 2	7.90	11.27	13.23	18.66	8	11	13	18	8	11	13	18
TEST 3	34.12	39.12	41.10	47.90	36	38	39	48	35	39	41.5	48
TEST 4	6.60	9.22	10.43	22.09	9	11	8	29	6	9	10	29

Table 6.17 — Confidence limits, Standard Deviation and Standard Error for Test 1

Level	Confidence limit		S.D.	S.E.
	Min.	Max.		
G1	16.40	18.84	3.82	.60
G2	19.65	22.04	3.72	.58
G3	22.54	24.12	2.44	.39
NS	26.50	26.92	.46	.10

repeated sampling, 95% of the time the sample mean scores will lie between these margins whenever similar conditions of sample selection and test administration may be followed. Thus, the fact that there is no overlap between confidence limits for these groups confirms the view that samples used in this study were drawn from different groups of population. In the light of this evidence, the researcher can safely refer to *different instruction Levels* to look at *progress* in the use and knowledge of verb forms.

The Student's t-test

The second statistical procedure referred to in the analysis of data is known as the Student's t-test. A t-test allows one to compute the level of significance between pairs of group mean scores. It is used in this study to determine the differences between groups. The procedure was chosen because it can detect the diffference between pairs of groups regardless of the direction of the difference (Norusis, 1988).

Another advantage of a significance test, like t-test, is that it allows to look at the probability of the same Test giving similar results in a repeated sample from the same population. Table 6.18 shows the results of a t-test computed for four groups, i.e., G1, G2, G3 and NS informants. Groups are compared in pairs to determine whether there is any progression from G1 to G2 and from G2 to G3, and whether there is any significant difference between G1-3 and NS informants.

Table 6.18 — Results of Student's t-test comparing different groups with respect to their mean scores on four Tests

Variable	Group	No cases	Mean	S.D.	S.E.	T value	p
Test 1	G1	40	17.62	3.82	.60		
	G2	40	20.85	3.72	.58	-3.82	.000***
Test 2	G1	40	7.90	3.10	.49		
	G2	40	11.27	3.01	.47	-4.94	.000***
Test 3	G1	40	34.12	5.72	.90		
	G2	40	39.12	4.91	.77	-4.19	.000***
Test 4	G1	40	6.60	4.21	.66		
	G2	40	9.22	4.97	.78	-2.55	.01**
Test 1	G2	40	20.85	3.72	.58		
	G3	39	23.33	2.44	.39	-3.51	.001**
Test 2	G2	40	11.27	3.01	.47		
	G3	39	13.17	2.59	.41	-3.12	.003**
Test 3	G2	40	39.12	4.96	.77		
	G3	39	41.10	4.10	.65	-1.94	.005**
Test 4	G2	40	9.22	4.97	.78		
	G3	39	10.43	4.79	.44	-1.10	.27
Test 1	G1-3	119	20.57	4.10	.37		
	NS	21	26.71	0.46	.10	15.75	.000***
Test 2	G1-3	119	10.76	3.62	.33		
	NS	21	18.66	.85	.18	20.67	.000***
Test 3	G1-3	119	38.09	5.74	.52		
	NS	21	47.90	3.23	.70	11.14	.000***
Test 4	G1-3	119	8.73	4.90	.44		
	NS	21	22.09	9.15	1.99	6.52	.000***

Level of significance *** $p<.001$ ** $p<.01$ * $p<.05$

Pearson correlation coefficient

Hatch and Farhaday (1982) argue that when variables in a correlation analysis are measured on an ordinal scale, as it is the case in this study, the appropriate statistic technique to use is the Pearson correlation coefficient. The technique is used to determine the relationship that may exist between different variables in a study. An understanding of the magnitude of the correlation can indicate the way the different sets of scores are related and the degree of their relationship. Table 6.19 shows those relationships between the different Tests.

Table 6.19 — Pearson Correlation Coefficient computed between NNS informants

	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4
Test 1	1.00	.72	.46	.38
Test 2		1.00	.54	.54
Test 3			1.00	.44
Test 4				1.00

Level of significance * p<.05

This matrix of correlations betweeen the different tasks shows that all the Tests correlate positively and significantly at the p<.05 level. The correlations vary between r= .72 and r= .38. However, there are different strengths of correlation. The strongest correlation is between Test 1 and Test 2, i.e., *r=.72*, and the weakest between Test 1 and Test 4, i.e., *r=.38*. This means that Test 1 and Test 2 have very consistent results and are the two most similar in the results they produce.

Statistically, one may argue that the informants behave similarly in those Tests. Test 3 has a rather weak correlation with the other Tests, and Test 4 is less correlated still. A close look at the various possible correlations shows that Test 2 correlates significantly with all the other Tests, and as such is statistically ranked as the most central Test and as best representing all the four Tests. It may therefore be considered as the most important of all.

6.2.4 Graphic representations of the data

This aspect of data description is concerned with graphic representations of the results. Three types of graphs are used for the description of data. The first type of graph, Score dispersion, is used to display score range, i.e., its minimum, median and its maximum on a single line. The second graph, i.e., *bar graphs,* is used to compare group results by displaying both the scores and the number (or frequency) of informants having obtained specific scores. The third is *linegraph* which represents the means of the different groups. The graph is seen to represent the NNS informants' progression towards the TL.

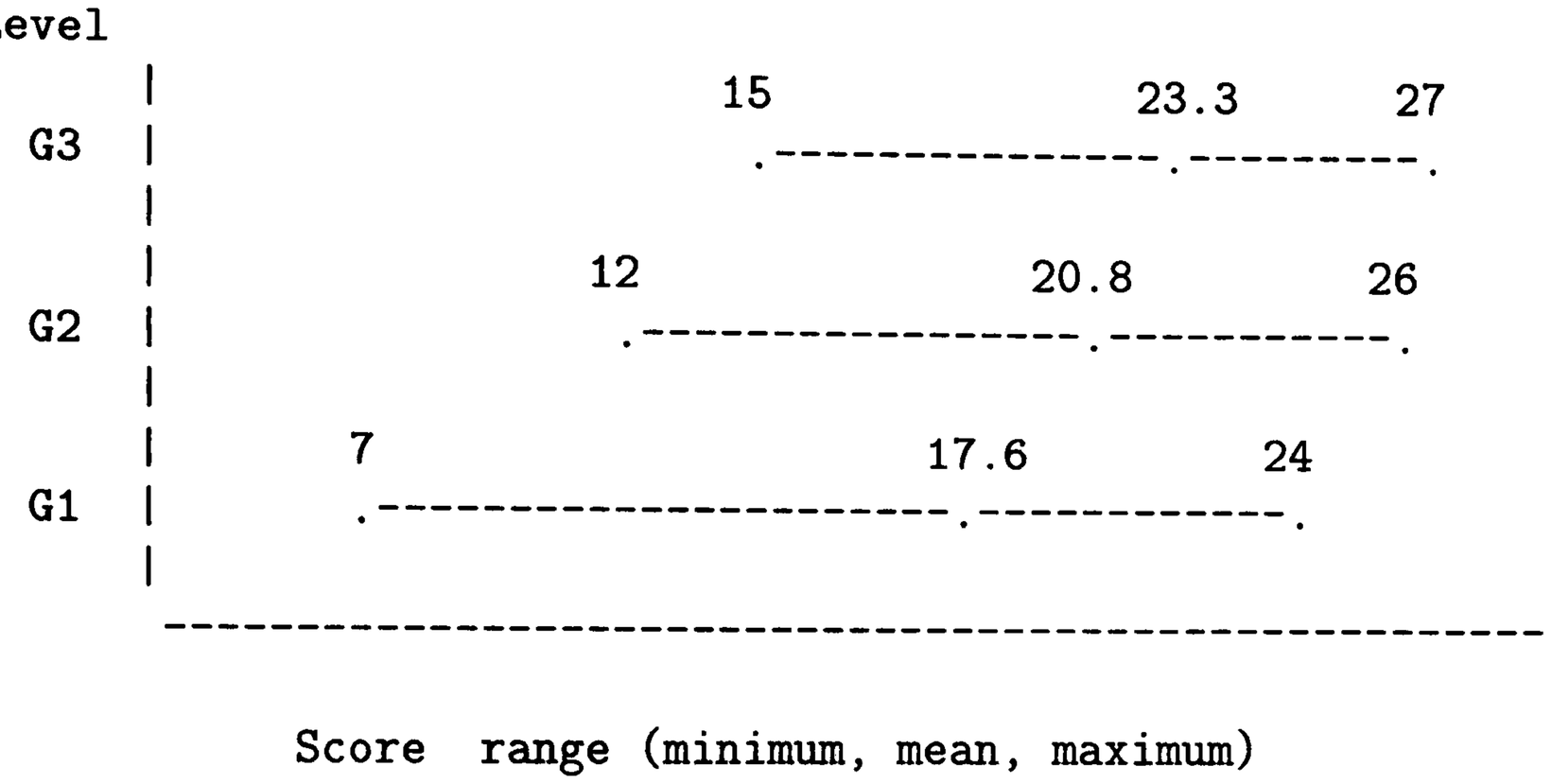
Score Dispersion

Brown (1988:69)[9] argues that dispersion is a way of showing "how individual scores disperse, or are spread out around the central tendency. Dispersion is commonly estimated by the range and standard deviation". In its simplest graphic representation, dispersion scores are given on a horizontal line with the beginning of the line showing the lowest score, the mean score somewhere along the line, and the highest score at the other end of the line. There are two main advantages in using such a display: first, to determine the range of dispersion of scores within a group, i.e., the longer the line the wider the dispersion; and second, to give an indication on group variation. It is worth noting, however, that the most important feature in a score dispersion graph is the mean score. The scores appearing at the minimum or maximum positions may be misleading in that they may represent only a few extreme cases, i.e., cases of very poor or very able learners.

Figure 6.1 represents the score dispersion for test 1 (the graphic representations of score dispersion for Tests 2, 3 and 4 are given in appendix 12). Figure 6.1 shows both the lowest and the highest scores for the three groups and the mean scores for each group. The mean scores for these groups for Test 1 show important differences within and between groups. The differences in the range of scores on the left hand side (i.e., minimum) for instance, reveal that G1 informants represent the weakest group, although it is clear in the frequency distributions that some G1 informants have in a few cases scored better than some G2 or G3 informants. Although the number cannot be specified on the graph, it is however obvious that there were informants from higher levels who also recorded low scores.

Test 1 is a typical example of such a situation in that the information already provided by frequency distributions shows that these cases represent only a minor-

Figure 6.1 — Graphic representation of dispersion for Test 1



ity of the informants. And as such, those extreme scores have not influenced the overall group performances which are clearly distinct between the different groups. More significant is the fact that the mean score differences between G2 and G3 show a narrower difference than between G1 and G2. The differences described in group mean scores imply that group proficiency levels and experience are significantly different, i.e., the differences offer further evidence that each of the groups was drawn from a different population, as was confirmed earlier in the description of the notion of *confidence limit* in the ANOVA.

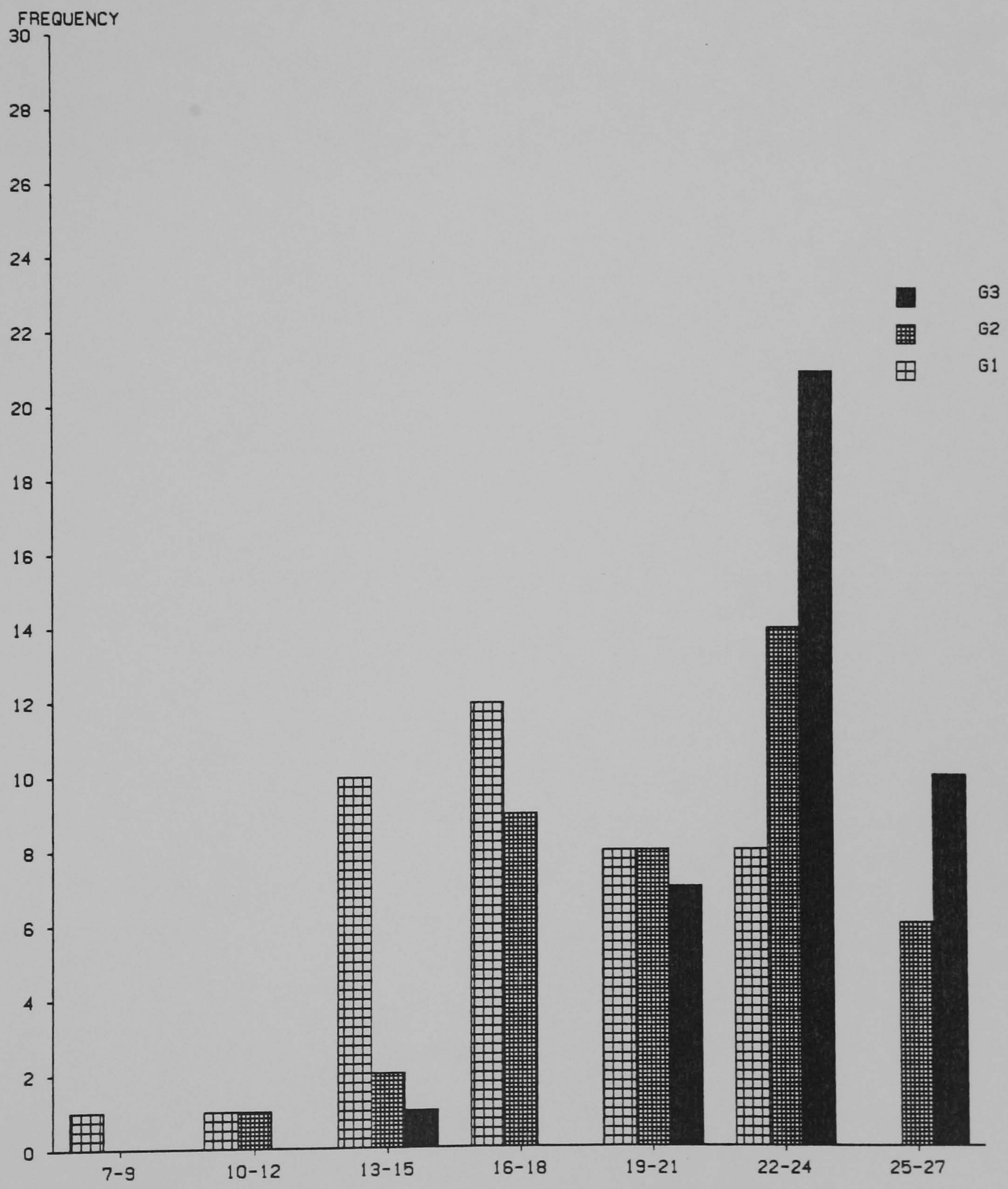
Bar graph

To draw figure 6.2 every set of three adjacent values in the frequency distribution of each Test was counted as a unit. For instance, the 27 values for Test 1 would represent 9 units of three scores each if the informants' lowest score was 1. However, in the present situation, no informant scored between 1 and 6, the lowest score was 7. This means that the count started with 7 and not with 1. There were therefore 7 units of three adjacent values each. It was on the basis of these 7 units that every group was considered, and the graph is a reflection of such a division.

Figure 6.2 represents different distributions of scores according to the groups and shows the proportion of each group population in the sample falling into various ranges of intelligence. Reading from the lowest (left) to the highest (right) scores, the figure shows most of the G1 informants on the left of the 16-18 baseline suggesting that the group was mostly made of less proficient learners; G2 informants nearly spread in both directions of the centre and G3 informants are mostly on

the right of the centre of the graph. However, each group produced a distribution curve that shows the results obtained by every individual group (see also appendix 12 for Tests 2, 3 and 4). To summarise, a histogram, as the one in figure 6.2 offers three important types of information, namely:
(i) how often the different values occur,
(ii) how much spread or variability there is among the values, and
(iii) which values are the most typical of the data.

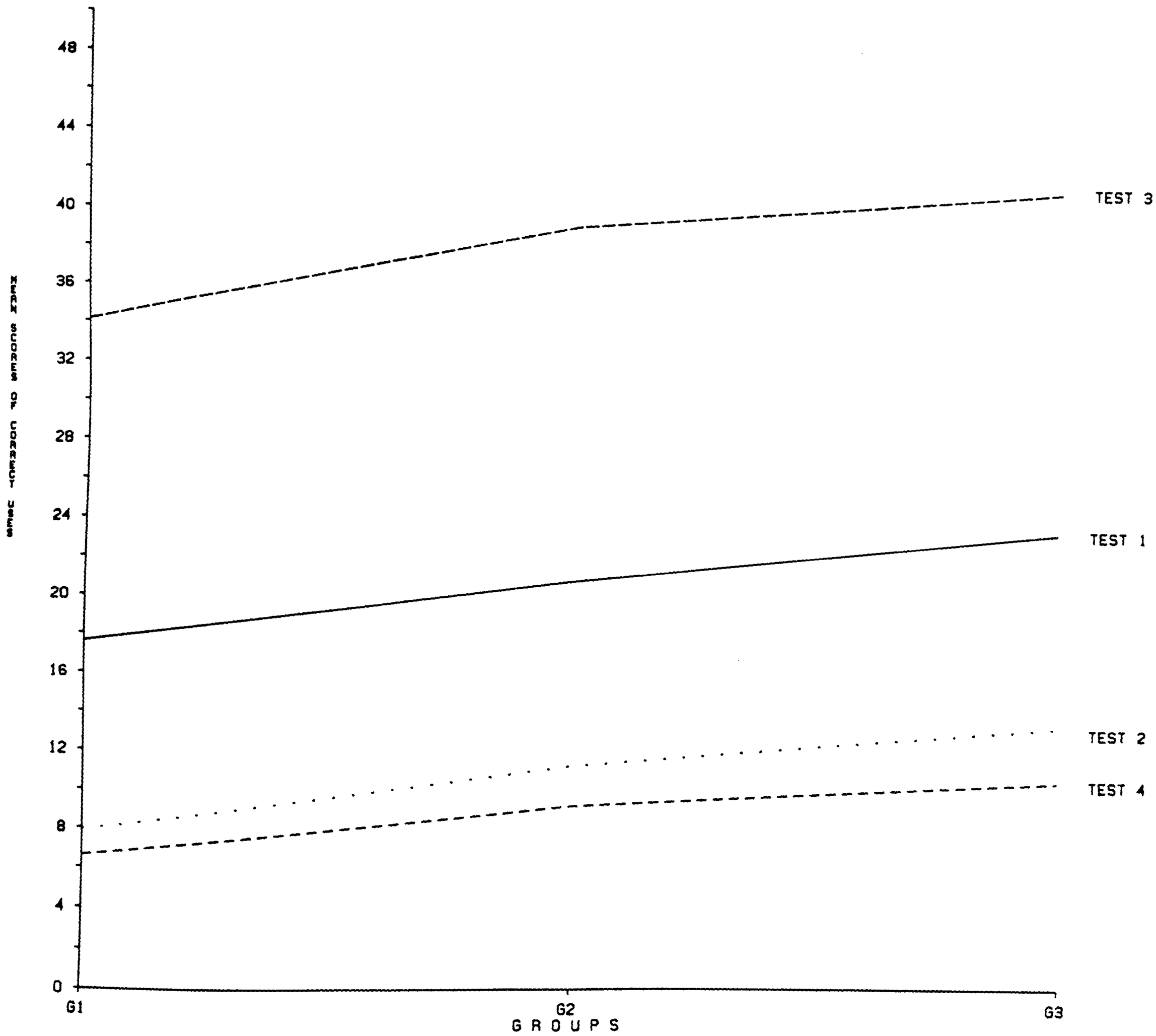
Figure 6.2: The Frequency of scores for Test 1



Linegraph

The mean values described in table 6.16 represent the average scores obtained by the informants for each of the tasks (out of 27 scores for Test 1, 20 scores for Test 2, 53 scores for Test 3 and 30 scores for Test 4). Figure 6.3 shows group means for accurate responses in four Tests. Each task line on the graph represents a different tendency in the NNS informants' performance of every task. As decribed earlier (see ANOVA), all these Tests have mean scores which are significant at the $p<.05$ level. Although it is early to make any prediction about the results, it seems from the graph that more learning has taken place between G1 and G2 for all the Tests, than between G2 and G3. It is possible that the analysis and interpretation of data, in the next chapter, may shed more light on this assumption.

Figure 6.3 — Group means computed between Tests



Chapter six references

1. D. Sperber and D. Wilson 1986 *Relevance: Communication and Cognition,* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p.vii

2. S.P. Corder 1981 *Error Analysis and Interlanguage,* Oxford: Oford University Press, p. 61

3. D. Crystal 1980 *A First Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.352

4. J.R. Lund 1986 *The formal accuracy of College German students with the finite verb on a communicative production task and linguistic awareness tasks,* PhD Dissertation, University of Minnesota, p. 7

5. J.D. Brown 1988 *Understanding Research in Second Language Learning,* C.U.P., Cambridge, pp. 65-66.

6. Our surperviser, Mr P. Grundy kindly accepted to make the final judgement on all doubtful cases. We sincerely appreciate such an additional contribution to the regular supervision of the thesis.

7. J.D. Brown 1988 op. cit. p. 176

8. D.S. Moore 1979 *Statistics: Concepts and Controversies,* San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Company, p.171.

9. J.D. Brown 1988 op. cit. p. 69

Chapter VII

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter focuses on the results of the investigation and it comprises three sections. Section one presents the Hypothesis testing using data from the different Tests. The results are discussed and where appropriate compared with the findings of previous studies. Section two considers findings additional to those for which specific hypotheses were formulated. Section three summarises the overall results of the study drawing on both quantitative and qualitative analyses. But, before the results are presented, the Hypotheses formulated in chapter 5 are reprinted as a background to the discussion.

7.1 Hypotheses for the study

Hypothesis 1

Following the studies of Wolfram (1985) and Sato (1985), it is expected that there will be significant differences in the knowledge of tense formation rules between learners at each level of the three proficiency levels.

Hypothesis 2

The learners' ability to supply verb forms in a given discourse or text will vary depending on both the learner's knowledge of required verbs as indicated by his/her proficiency level, and his/her knowlege of verb types and of the contexts in which the verb form is to be supplied.

Hypothesis 3

The learner's ability to recognise correctness or incorrectness of verb forms is expected to improve across levels and would therefore reflect the learner's knowledge of grammatical and morphological verb forms.

Hypothesis 4

The learner's knowledge of a language involves knowing a number of discrete structural items and being able to correct them. It is expected that formal training will be an important factor in the learner's ability to carry out appropriate corrections,

i.e., the more knowledgeable/advanced the learners are, the better will be their ability to make corrections.

Hypothesis 5

Asssuming that the contexts of use have an influence on learners' ability to select verb forms, the informants' ability to choose possible verb forms to match the different linguistic contexts will vary from the one-to-one relationship at stage one to cases where such a default meaning is overruled by the co-text at later stages of learning.

Hypothesis 6

In their attempt to associate tense and time, learners' ability will vary significantly between learners at the lower intermediate stage and learners at the subsequent stages.

Hypothesis 7

Learners' metalinguistic knowledge used to explain different circumstances of use for verb forms in given contexts will vary significantly between learners from different instructional levels, i.e., the more advanced the learners are, the more acceptable their explanations will be.

The analysis of these hypotheses attempts to demonstrate that second language learning by advanced learners in a formal setting is both a problem-solving process and a means of checking the regularities of previously established hypotheses about language structures. In this sense, second language learning at an advanced level means not only taking an active part in the learning task, but also giving the learners the opportunity to use their own knowledge through thinking and action. The tasks used in this study were designed to test the informants' knowledge and ability through four different linguistic activities: supplying verb forms, correcting unacceptable tense forms, matching verb forms with linguistic contexts and making associations between verb forms and their time references. It is assumed that as their experience increases, the informants in the study will become more and more competent in dealing with verb forms. It is on the basis of this expectation that (a) the seven hypotheses are interpreted and (b) the overall results are discussed.

7.1.1 Hypothesis 1: The informants' knowledge of formal tense formation

Following the studies of Wolfram (1985) and Sato (1985), it is expected that there will be significant differences in the knowledge of tense formation rules for lexical and inflectional verb forms between learners at each of three proficiency levels. In particular, learners at level 1 (G1) will make more use of non-past and less use of past verb forms (even in past tense contexts) than learners at higher levels.

This hypothesis was formulated to evaluate the informants' formal knowledge of morphological tense marking and was to be tested using data obtained from Test 1. Three domains are investigated:
(i) past versus non-past tense marking,
(ii) lexical versus inflectional past tense marking, and
(iii) presence or absence of tense markers.
The informants' knowledge in these domains of tense marking was evaluated on the basis of the data collected. A Student's t-test was performed to determine the differences between groups and the significance of the results. Three levels of significance are referred to in the discussion of the results, '***' for $p<.001$, '**' for $p<.01$ and '*' for $p<.05$. The first symbol represents a very high level of significance, the second a high level of significance and the third a significant difference. When comparing the results, the NS mean scores were used as a criterion variable, i.e., as the ideal scores.
The results computed for the first two variables, i.e., non-past and past tense marking are given in table 7.1.

Reading table 7.1 from left to right, the different columns represent: the variable investigated, the group concerned, the number of informants involved, the average results or mean score obtained by the group for the variable described, the percentages of the mean scores obtained by the group with respect to the NS mean scores which represent a 100% success, the standard deviation, i.e., the extent to which the individuals in the groups vary from the group mean, the standard error, i.e., the proportion of error possibility with reference to the population sample, the T value, i.e., the value obtained by computing the mean scores and the standard deviation, and the p probability from which the level of significance is derived.

The data included in the category non-past consist of possible responses which were not necessarily co-incident with NSs' choices. The responses (see also table 6.8) therefore also include non-past verb forms where past forms were expected. This explains the important variations displayed by the informants at different levels. The inclusion of non-past verb forms may be justified by the fact that in

Table 7.1 — Results of Student's t-test comparing pairs of Groups on non-past and past tense marking

Variables	Group	Cases	Mean	%	S.D.	S.E.	T Value	p
	G1	40	5.02	162	2.27	.35		
Occurrences	G2	40	4.50	145	1.46	.23	1.23	0.22
of [- past]	G2	40	4.50	145	1.46	.23		
tense marking	G3	39	4.15	134	1.53	.24	1.03	0.30
	G1-3	119	4.56		1.81	.16		
	NS	21	3.09	100	.30	.06	-8.20	0.000***
Occurrences	G1	40	9.20	54.5	4.10	.64		
of [+ past]	G2	40	11.80	70	3.37	.53	-3.09	0.003**
tense marking	G2	40	11.80	70	3.37	.53		
	G3	39	14.07	83.5	2.31	.36	-3.51	0.001***
	G1-3	119	11.67		3.88	.35		
	NS	21	16.85	100	.79	.17	13.11	0.000***

Level of significance *** p<.001 ** p<.01 * p<.05

many cases either a non-past or a past verb form was possible. The results for non-past tense marking indicate a decreasing frequency from G1 to G3. G1 informants have higher scores than G2 or G3 informants. That is, the results reveal that G1 informants made more use of non-past verb forms than did informants at level 2 (G2) and level 3 (G3). And the results also show that all three groups (G1, G2 and G3) produced more non-past verb forms than NS informants. Statistically, the results show no significant differences between the three different groups.

The results for non-past tense marking indicate that there is a strong tendency for these informants to use non-past verb forms in certain contexts where a native speaker would have used a past form. This view has been given a great deal of support in the literature. For instance, sentences such as *Last year he take the boat* or *Yesterday he is tired* are commonly found regardless of the L1 background of the speaker (Wolfram 1985, Dulay and Burt 1974, Bailey, Madden and Krashen 1974). For Lund (1986), such behaviour is typical of classroom learners, who prefer easy, familiar forms, and confine their communication to present tense. These views further confirm one of the observations made in the preliminary study to this project: for many learners, especially those at the G1 level, the presence of time adverbials or other time indicators such as those found in the task is sufficient

indicator of time, and marking the verb therefore becomes redundant. It also supports the view that the present is the unmarked form in English.

The results of past tense marking as a whole show a more significant movement to the TL norms, i.e., they are significant between G1 and G2 ($p<.01$) and between G2 and G3 ($p<.001$). It is worth pointing out that the results of past tense marking are a combination of inflectional and lexical tense marking, and as such they reflect the overall performance on past tense marking for the informants involved. The results clearly follow the expected trend across levels and towards the TL norms. In this respect, past tense marking is a clear case where there are significant differences both between G1 and G2 and between G2 and G3. The movement from G1 to G3 in the direction of NS norms can be seen through the constant increase in mean scores between G1/G2 and G2/G3.

However, in comparison with the NS 100% criterion, the results are far from native-like, especially for G1 informants (54.5%). This means that in almost half of the cases, the informants had to resort to other ways of marking pastness. Their limited knowledge of past tense forms left them with few alternatives, either to leave a blank, thus showing failure to supply any answer or to make use of what Lund (1986) calls *easy and familiar verb forms in the present tense.* The informants' reference to non-past verb forms in a past time context confirms the view that "tenses remain a thorn in the flesh of learners throughout their learning experience" (Towell 1987:169)[1].

These results (on both non-past and past tense marking) offer some evidence to support the claim that advanced learners in formal training probably have no preference for any particular verb type (lexical or inflectional) but tend to produce whatever verb forms which are most available and most familiar to them. As for tense marking, this study confirms the findings of previous studies (Lund 1986, Wolfram 1985) that non-past tense marking, because it is the most basic, easy and familiar, is preferred to past tense marking even in past time contexts. Similarly, Hassan (1987) observed that his subjects *shifted* from past to present, and back to past without observing any grammatical rules for the sequence of tenses. He concluded from this that tense marking in English is systematically variable for L2 learners. The second domain investigated within this hypothesis is the distinction between inflectional and lexical past tense marking.

Table 7.2 is set out identically to table 7.1. The results as a whole show that there is evidence of progression for both variables, as can be seen in the progressive approximation to NS norms which occur between G1 and G2, and between G2 and G3. The results in table 7.2 show that between G1 and G2 both inflectional and lexical past tense markings show significant movement in the direction of NS norms, but between G2 and G3 only lexical tense marking shows progression at a significant level. That is, between G2 and G3 tense marking of lexical verbs is greater than that of inflectional verbs. There is, in other words, a rapid improvement for lexical tense marking between G2 and G3 but not for inflectional tense

Table 7.2 — Results of Student's t-test comparing pairs of groups on inflectional and lexical past tense marking

Variables	Group	Cases	Mean	%	S.D.	S.E.	T value	p
	G1	40	3.30	60.3	2.25	.35		
Occurrences	G2	40	4.20	76.7	1.78	.28	-1.98	0.05*
of inflectional	G2	40	4.20	76.7	1.78	.28		
tense marking	G3	39	4.61	84.2	1.63	.26	-1.08	0.28
	G1-3	119	4.03		1.97	.18		
	NS	21	5.47	100	1.53	.33	3.79	0.001**
Occurrences of	G1	40	5.90	51.8	3.04	.48		
lexical past	G2	40	7.60	66.7	2.57	.40	-2.70	0.009**
tense marking	G2	40	7.60	66.7	2.57	.40		
	G3	39	9.46	83.1	2.05	.32	-3.56	0.001***
	G1-3	119	7.63		2.95	.27		
	NS	21	11.38	100	1.59	.34	8.48	0.000***

Level of significance *** p<.001 ** p<.01 * p<.05

marking. However, at the base level (G1), the results for lexical tense marking show the informants to be less native-like than in the case of inflectional tense marking.

These results do not offer sufficient evidence to support the view that second language learners favour lexical past tense marking at the early stage (Wolfram 1985, Sato 1985). Wolfram's (1985) study shows the following findings.

No/subjects	Time period	Irreg. unm.	Reg. unmarking
8	1-3 years	50.2 %	94.7 %
8	4-7 years	18.8 %	68.5 %

Incidence of unmarked tense for irregular and regular verb forms. (Summary based on Wolfram 1985:233)[2].

In view of these results, Wolfram argues that regardless of the time spent in an English speaking country, his subjects marked irregular (or lexical) before regular (inflectional) verb forms. Sato (1985) argues that

> inflectional past marking in English is not acquired by speakers of south-east Asian languages, such as Thanh and Tai, for at least a year and some months after arrival in the second language setting. However, adverbial markers and lexical past are acquired much earlier (Sato 1985:143)[3].

The informants in this study, on the contrary, show little difference in their ability to mark past tense for both inflectional and lexical verbs. They do not specifically favour any verb types, in particular at the G3 level. This means that the results of this study do not confirm the view that L2 learners favour lexical past tense marking.

The last domain within Hypothesis 1 is the distinction between *tense marked* and invariable verb forms.

Table 7.3 — Results of Student's t-test comparing pairs of groups on non-finite (tense marked) and invariable verb forms

Variables	Group	Cases	Mean	%	S.D.	S.E.	T value	p
Occurrences of non-finite tense marked verb forms	G1	40	.87	44.6	.75	.11		
	G2	40	1.37	70.2	.95	.15	-2.60	0.01**
	G2	40	1.37	70.2	.95	.15		
	G3	39	1.61	82.5	.98	.15	-1.10	0.27
	G1-3	119	1.28		.94	.08		
	NS	21	1.95	100	.38	.08	5.52	0.000***
Occurrences of invariable verb forms	G1	40	2.25	59.8	1.12	.17		
	G2	40	2.87	76.3	.91	.14	-2.73	0.008**
	G2	40	2.87	76.3	.91	.14		
	G3	39	2.97	78.9	1.11	.17	-0.43	0.66
	G1-3	119	2.69		1.09			
	NS	21	3.76	100	.53	.11	6.89	0.000***

Level of significance *** $p<.001$ ** $p<.01$ * $p<.05$

The values in table 7.3 should be read in the same way as those found in tables 7.1 and 7.2. The first variable in this table (occurrences of non-finite, tense marked forms) includes only participles. The second variable (occurrences of invariable forms) includes those verbs whose forms do not vary with tense (e.g., *let, put*, etc.). Thus, this table combines two categories that would not naturally be grouped together. For these reasons, the present classification has to be viewed from a learners' performance point of view, i.e., whether tense marking is required or not, and not from a linguistic standpoint.

The results show similar behaviour in relation to each of the two variables. There is a significant difference between G1 and G2, but not between G2 and G3. It is observed that the variable non-finite (tense marked) produced the least target-like results at G1 so far, but with a considerable improvement at G2, and only a modest change taking place between G2 and G3. In the the category *invariable verb forms* the results show, as for the first variable, a significant increase only between G1 and G2 ($p<.01$), but level off after G2. One of the possible explanations for slowing down in the acquisition process of this category is the fact that the verb forms in this group do not carry morphological tense markers.

That is, if one takes the view that all verb forms have the feature *tense*, and that in particular cases (infinitives and invariable verb forms) it is not marked morphologically, it is possible that some learners operate with the assumption that tense is always marked morphologically. If this is the case, then where the assumption does not apply, as in the case of infinitive and invariable verb forms, the learners' tendency would be to avoid such forms. This may explain why the progression in the direction of NS norms does not continue as might be expected between G2 and G3. The results therefore show that progression is more rapid to a certain level than thereafter, suggesting that the most difficult stage in SLA is that of prior approximation to TL norms.

Summarising the discussion, it would seem that the difference in settings, (i.e., a natural setting for Wolfram's and Sato's studies and an eductional one for this study and for Hassan's), and the difference in data collection measures, (i.e., spontaneous data for Wolfram's and Sato's, and elicited data for Hassan's and this study) may offer a possible explanation for the differences observed in learners' behaviour. The types of informant involved may also provide further explanation for the differences recorded in the informants' way of dealing with verb forms, i.e., these learners do not give any preference to lexical or inflectional verb forms. In the light of the data obtained in this study, the hypothesis that *there will be significant differences in the knowledge of tense formation rules between learners at each proficiency level, and in particular that learners at the beginning level will make more use of non-past verb forms (even in past time contexts)* is confirmed.

7.1.2 Hypothesis 2: The informants' knowledge of acceptable verb forms

The learners' ability to supply verb forms in a given discourse will vary depending on the learners' knowledge as indicated by their proficiency levels, on their knowledge of verb types, and on the contexts in which the verb form is to be supplied.

The Hypothesis was formulated to investigate the informants' functional knowledge of accurate/acceptable uses of verb forms in Test 1. The analysis carried out earlier for Hypothesis 1 was the first step towards the discussion of the present Hypothesis. One needs to recollect that the results for Hypothesis 1 were obtained by considering three factors: (i) ability to supply verb forms to their contexts;
(ii) verb type, i.e., whether lexical or inflectional,and,
(iii) tense marked, i.e., whether past or non-past.

Points (ii) and (iii) have been discussed under Hypothesis 1. This Hypothesis focuses more closely on point (i) and examines, in particular, the verb forms *have, be* and *do*. These verb forms have been selected for analysis for three reasons: (a) although they are introduced early in second language learning, they frequently remain problematical for a considerable time; (b) because these three common lexical verbs (Wolfram 1985) represent the full range of verb categories in English (i.e., auxiliaries and full verbs); and (c) because these verb forms are said to be more idiosyncratic than the other verbs (Palmer 1988). For these reasons, only these representative verb forms were used to test the Hypothesis since one would expect them to show the informants' genuine grammatical knowledge of tense forms. One cannot, however, rule out disagreement, even among native speakers, in the production of *lexical*[4] and idiomatic uses of these verb forms. This is seen in the case of *have* in the example discussed below, which illustrates how knowledge of verb forms may sometimes be much less problematic than *lexical* or idiomatic considerations.

Six items are used to test the Hypothesis, and both the results and the actual verb forms produced by the informants are provided. Items 6 and 10 illustrate the variable production of *have* (past and non-past), items 8 and 27 the variable production of *be*, and items 17 and 20 the variable production of *do*. The six items to be analysed have been categorised as follows:

Auxiliaries:	are	[- past]	Item 8
	was	[+ past]	Item 27
	do	[- past]	Item 17
Pro-verb:	did	[+ past]	Item 20
Lexical verb:	has	[- past]	Item 10
Idiomatic use:	had	[+ past]	Item 6

The informants' results for these verb forms is given in tables 7.4, 7.5 and 7.6.

Table 7.4 — Results of Student's t-test comparing pairs of groups for *be*

Verb form	Group	Cases	Mean	S.D.	S.E.	T value	p
be [- past]	G1	40	.47	.50	.08		
	G2	40	.85	.36	.05	-3.81	0.000***
	G2	40	.85	.36	.05		
	G3	39	.79	.40	.06	0.63	0.5
	G1-3	119	.70	.45	.04		
	NS	21	1.00	.00	.00	7.01	0.000***
be [+ past]	G1	40	.40	.49	.07		
	G2	40	.82	.38	.06	-4.28	0.000***
	G2	40	.82	.38	.06		
	G3	39	.76	.42	.06	0.61	0.54
	G1-3	119	.66	.47	.04		
	NS	21	1.00	.00	.00	7.73	0.000***

Level of significance *** $p<.001$ ** $p<.01$ * $p<.05$

The first column of the table lists the verb forms described (*have, do* and *be*) and specifies their tenses (past or non-past). The second and third columns give the groups and the number of informants involved. The average or mean scores obtained by the informants are given in column four. Columns five and six show the standard deviation and the standard error respectively. The T value is given in column seven. The last column lists the different levels of probability that allow us to determine the significance of the results.

Be:
In both cases [+past] and [-past] the results show similar progression, i.e., the movement towards the TL norms for *be* shows greater improvement between G1 and G2 than between G2 and G3. The results between G1 and G2 for [-past] are highly significant ($p<.001$), but those between G2 and G3 are not significant. Similarly, the results for [+ past] show a very significant difference between G1 and G2 ($p<.001$), while no significant difference is found in the results between G2 and G3. In both cases, i.e., in *be* [- past] and *be* [+ past], the NS and NNS results show highly significant differences ($p<.001$).

Do:

Table 7.5 — Results of a Student's t-test comparing pairs of groups for *do*

Verb form	Group	Cases	Mean	S.D.	S.E.	T value	p
do [- past]	G1	40	.50	.50	.08		
	G2	40	.80	.40	.06	-2.93	0.005**
	G2	40	.80	.40	.06		
	G3	39	.92	.27	.04	-1.59	0.11
	G1-3	119	.73	.44	.04		
	NS	21	1.00	.00	.00	6.45	0.000***
do [+ past]	G1	40	.50	.50	.08		
	G2	40	.67	.47	.07	-1.60	0.11
	G2	40	.67	.47	.07		
	G3	39	.89	.30	.04	-2.48	0.01**
	G1-3	119	.68	.46	.04		
	NS	21	.95	.21	.04	4.12	0.000***

Level of significance *** p<.001 ** p<.01 * p<.05

The data reveal a significant difference (p<.01) in the results between G1 and G2 for *do* [- past], but between G2 and G3 the difference did not attain a level of significance. In the case of *do* [+ past], although the results show a continuous movement in the direction of NS norms, they nevertheless show no significant difference between G1 and G2. Between G2 and G3, however, the difference reached the (p<.01) level of significance. The results between the G1-3 groups and the NS group show a highly significant difference for both *do* [- past] and *do* [+ past] (p<.001)

Have:
The results for *have* do not follow a continuous progression across levels. No group results are statistically different among the non-native informants. However, the results between the NS group and the NNS groups are significantly higher for both *have* [- past] and *have* [+ past] at the p<.001 level.

To illustrate further these differences, it was decided to consider more closely the actual production of *be, do* and *have.* The following items are reprinted from Test 1 to show the contexts in which each of these verbs was to be supplied:

Table 7.6 — Results of a Student's t-test comparing pairs of groups for *have*

Verb form	Group	Cases	Mean	S.D.	S.E.	T value	p
have [- past]	G1	40	.22	.42	.06		
	G2	40	.12	.33	.05	1.17	0.24
	G2	40	.12	.33	.05		
	G3	39	.25	.44	.07	-1.49	0.14
	G1-3	119	.20	.40	.03		
	NS	21	.90	.30	.06	9.33	0.000***
have [+ past]	G1	40	.02	.15	.02		
	G2	40	.10	.30	.04	-1.38	0.17
	G2	40	.10	.30	.04		
	G3	39	.10	.30	.04	-0.04	0.97
	G1-3	119	.07	.26	.02		
	NS	21	.66	.48	.10	5.46	0.000***

Level of significance *** $p<.001$ ** $p<.01$ * $p<.05$

```
Item 8   are  (aux):
‘‘You (...) still growing, son" he said.
Item 27  was  (aux):
By the time it pulled out, he (...) already
contemplating his new life away from home.
Item 17   do  (aux):
‘‘What (...) you want me to do that for?"
Item 20  did  (proverb):
He didn’t want to visit all those people but
he (...) it anyway because of his mother’s insistence.
Item 10  has  (lexical use):
Sedec (...) such a large selection that
I am sure you will find something you like there.
Item 6   had  (idiomatic use):
Then, at his mother’s suggestion, he (...)
his father’s tailor measure him for a suit.
```

Table 7.7 — Informants' actual responses for *be* non-past

Acceptable responses for item 8

GROUP	VERB FORMS	TOTAL	%
	are		
NS	21	21	100
G3	31	31	79.5
G2	34	34	85
G1	19	19	47.5

IL alternative responses for item 8

GROUP	VERB FORMS		TOTAL	%
	must	was/were		
G3	1	1	2	5.1
G2	1	-	1	2.5
G1	5	1	6	15

G1 other choices include: can, can't, could, had, like, may, stay, wait, will, would.
G2 other choices include: can, do not, let, know.

Table 7.8 — Informants' actual responses for *be* past

Acceptable responses for item 27

GROUP	V E R B F O R M S	TOTAL	%
	was		
NS	21	21	100
G3	30	30	76.9
G2	33	33	82.5
G1	16	16	40

IL alternative responses for item 27

GROUP	V E R B F O R M S				TOTAL	%
	went	is	began/started	got		
G3	3	2	1	1	7	18
G2	-	1	2	-	3	7.5
G1	2	1	3	-	6	15

G1 other choices include: brings, continues, goes, imagines, like, lacked, seems, remembered, thinks, thought,...

G2 other choices include: forget, guessed, saw.

Table 7.9 — Informants' actual responses for *do* non-past

Acceptable responses for item 17

GROUP	V E R B F O R M S	TOTAL	%
	do		
NS	21	21	100
G3	36	36	92.3
G2	32	32	80
G1	20	20	50

IL alternative responses for item 17

GROUP	V E R B F O R M S		TOTAL	%
	did	would		
G3	2	1	3	7.7
G2	4	2	6	15
G1	8	-	8	20

G1 other choices include: are(3), have(2), can, need,...
G2 other choices include:can, makes.

Table 7.10 — Informants' actual responses for *do* past

Acceptable responses for item 20

GROUP	V E R B F O R M S		TOTAL	%
	did	agreed		
NS	20	1	21	100
G3	35	1	36	92.3
G2	27	-	27	67.5
G1	20	2	22	55

IL alternative responses for item 20

GROUP	V E R B F O R M S			TOTAL	%
	accepted	do/does	likes		
G3	1	2	1	4	10.3
G2	2	2	-	4	10
G1	2	2	-	4	10

G1 other choices include: had, goes, saw, visited, want/wanted, thought.
G2 other choices include: fulfilled, has, prefer, say.

Table 7.11 — Informants' actual responses for *have* non-past

Acceptable responses for item 10

GROUP	V E R B F O R M S				TOTAL	%
	has	have	keep	offer		
NS	14	5	1	1	21	100
G3	10	1	-	-	11	28.2
G2	8	-	-	1	9	22.5
G1	9	-	-	-	9	22.5

IL alternative responses for item 10

GROUP	V E R B F O R M S					TOTAL	%
	is	sell(s)	make	provides	had		
G3	16	4	1	1	3	25	64.1
G2	13	16	-	-	1	30	75
G1	8	11	-	-	1	20	50

G1 other choices: are, take, will be; bought, got, said, was, were.
G2 other choices: find.

Table 7.12 — Informants' actual responses for *have* past

Acceptable responses for item 6

GROUP	V E R B	F O R M S	TOTAL	%
	had	let		
NS	12	2	14	66
G3	4	1	5	12.8
G2	4		4	10
G1	1	-	1	2.5

NS other choices: asked(3), allowed(2), got(2)

IL alternative responses for item 6

GROUP	V E R B	F O R M S					TOTAL	%
	took	told	made	went	wanted	gets	makes		
G3	8	4	3	2	1	1	1	20	51.2
G2	1	-	4	-	2	-	-	7	17.5
G1	3	3	-	-	-	-	-	6	15

G1 other choices: asks(2), advise, brings, choose, goes, looks, say, see, tell, looked for, found, thought,...
G2 other choices: looks(3), tell(2), call; accepted, left, met, preferred, knew, required.

In the following tables 7.7, 7.8, 7.9, 7.10, 7.11 and 7.12 the informants' actual responses are displayed. Each table is organised as follows:
(i) Under the heading *Groups* are listed some or all of the groups involved in the study,
(ii) Under *Verb Forms* are listed a limited number of verb forms produced by the informants,
(iii) Under every verb form is listed the number of informants who actually produced it, and
(iv) Under *Total* and *%* are given the total number of informants who produced the identified verb forms for each group expressed both numerically and as a percentage.

Additionally, two types of tables are offered, one displaying *accurate/acceptable* verb forms, i.e., with the required verb forms and other possible responses, a second displaying *IL verb forms*, i.e., verb forms produced by the NNS and by no NS informants. In tables with *acceptable* responses, the NS informants' responses are used as the criterion variable in relation to which the NNS informants' responses are evaluated. For this reason the NS group is placed above the other groups and the verb forms produced by the NS informants are referred to for comparison. Verb forms which are not provided by the sampled NS population are omitted because they are not represented in the data collected from NS informants, not because they are necessarily unacceptable (indeed such verb forms sometimes occur in NNS supplied data).

Tables with IL alternative responses are made up such a way as to show the extent to which G1 and G2 contribute the same alternative responses as G3. There are two reasons for doing this. Firstly, to limit the number of verb forms to be included in the tables by selecting only those verb forms that coincide across the three groups. Secondly, to show the extent to which G2 and in particular G1 informants' alternative responses are further away from the NS norms than G3 responses.

By *IL responses*, is meant those alternative responses which differ from the NS informants' choices and which are therefore specific to the NNS informants involved. One cannot, however, be absolutely certain of the degree to which the choices made by G3 informants are representative, and as a result it must be stressed that this classification is, to a degree, tentative. There are other practical difficulties in differentiating what is or is not an acceptable verb form. In this particular case, one needs to take into account the informants' understanding of the circumstances of use (or broader context of use), their cultural knowledge, their learning environment, any differences in learning mechanisms and also the pressure to communicate without having attained the degree of proficiency required to cope with what is asked of them (Raupach 1987).

The responses in the different tables show the extent to which the NNS informants' choices of verb forms are comparable or different from those made by the NS infor-

mants. While the NS informants' results show a near 100% agreement in selecting acceptable choices, with the exception of have [+ past] (to be discussed below), the NNS informants' responses are characterised not only by limited knowledge, but also by a wider variation in the quantity and quality of verb forms produced. Although in general an individual's repertoire will exhibit greater variability when she or he is proficient, variability exhibited by a group of learners in this kind of exercise (Gap-Filling) is evidence of limited knowledge rather than of proficiency. These results are interesting in the sense that a varied repertoire for completing a single slot, as exhibited by G1 and G2 and to a certain extent G3 informants, is a sign of lack of proficiency. The 100% agreement among NS informants in supplying *be* and *do* illustrate the argument.

Compared to lexical or inflectional tense marking, however, the informants' results for *be* and *do* are more consistent, but they become less consistent with *has* and *had* because *has* (item 10) tests lexical knowledge of *have*, whilst *had* (item 6) is used in a highly idiomatic sense. In such cases, one is likely to get unpredictable results because it is knowledge of lexis that is assessed and lexical items are, by definition, exceptional rather than general. It is therefore not surprising that there is variation even among the native speakers (see table 7.12 for NS other choices). There are two possible reasons that may explain the NS informants' failure to provide the required responses for item 6: (i) failure to realise that there was no *to* before *measure (Item 6: Then, at his mother's suggestion, he (...) his father's tailor measure him for a suit)* which could license *asked, allowed* and *got*; and (ii) this method of assessment does not include feedback from the informants which might have helped them to check their responses.

The NNS informants' responses, as expected, show a much wider variation for these verb forms. In addition, the informants' responses unambiguously reveal not only the degree of variation, but also a difference in the perception of meaning associated with the required verb forms. For instance, the NNS informants' preference for *Sedec is*, and for *Sedec sells* just as one would say *Harrods is/are/sells/sell* instead of *has* or *have* (item 10) cannot be explained by simply referring to the TL norms since all the forms are grammatical in the TL. One needs to take into account other factors such as teaching influence, the learning environment and, possibly, the cultural differences which might naturally lead a NS of English to use *Sedec has* and a Zairean learner to use *Harrods/Sedec sells.*

Taken from a learning point of view, the analysis has provided evidence in support of a non-linear progression towards the TL norms, although only *do* shows a continuous progression from G1 to G3.
Compared with previous analyses in this area, the findings of this Hypothesis provide evidence that tense marking and supply of the verb forms *be, do* and *have* show variations, not only with individual verbs, but also across proficiency levels. These findings support further our comments made on these verbs in the preliminary study (see chap. 5.2.5) and they also confirm the view (Palmer 1988) that

be, do and *have* are more idiosyncratic than the other verbs. Their results show a much greater variation than those for lexical and inflectional verb forms.

However, although the responses in the different tables offer only a limited picture of the informants' repertoire, they do show the extent to which the verb forms described are available for use. As may be seen, not all the choices provided by the informants are acceptable, either in the sense that they could be chosen by native speakers or on the grounds of grammatical correctness or lexical appropriacy. There are also cases of non-possible choices. The reduction in the frequency of non-possible choices for NNS informants from G1 to G3 provides evidence not only of more learning and experience, but also of greater awareness of the restrictions imposed by the circumstances of use. This is seen in the decreasing use of unacceptable and the increasing use of acceptable verb forms, as shown in table 7.10, for instance. The informants' responses therefore suggest that the further the informants progress the more acceptable their responses are.

Summarising the discussion, the analysis of data relevant to hypothesis 2 has revealed three important facts:
(i) that the quantity and quality of learning is widely different among the informants;
(ii) that there is an overall movement in the direction of TL choices, from G1 limited knowledge and experience to a more efficient quality of learning at G2 and G3 levels; and
(iii) that the majority of NNS informants supply verb forms which are not necessarily those used by native speakers in the same contexts.

Viewing these facts in a more general framework, it may be argued that some learner supplied verb forms are closer to NS norms than others. That is, there are cases where a non-standard variety would not be acceptable, as in the case of *was* for *are*, and in other cases where it would be, as in the case of *Sedec is/sells* for *Sedec has/have.* Where learners use varieties of their own, there are several possible explanations, including the following:
(a) learners are still learning and cannot be expected to perform beyond their knowledge of the TL, as in cases where the NNS informants' responses are further from the NS expected answers;
(b) teaching emphasis or local cultural norms can lead to results which may be different from but not necessarily less grammatical than the TL norms, as in the use of *Sedec is/sells*; and
(c) an increase in learning awareness can cause the use of a different approach to learning, as in the progressive replacement of *Sedec is/sells* by *Sedec has/have.*

These observations confirm the view that instruction can affect not only the quantity and quality of learning, but also the direction of learning. The data in the present study offer some indication to support this view. There is also evidence that IL (knowledge of verb forms) is not necessarily the result of L1 influence alone, but also of several other factors including learning experience, teaching emphasis,

circumstances of use, and possibly, cultural background.
With these views, the Hypothesis that *the learners' ability to supply verb forms in a given discourse will vary depending on the learners' knowledge of required verb forms as indicated by their proficiency levels and of their knowledge of the contexts in which the verb forms are to be supplied* is proved.

7.1.3 Hypothesis 3: The informants' ability to recognise correctness or incorrectness

The informants' ability to recognise the correctness or incorrectness of verb forms is expected to improve across levels and would therefore reflect the informants' knowledge of grammatical and morphological verb forms.

In Test 2 the informants were expected (i) to make changes to incorrect verb forms and, (ii) to leave unchanged any correct verb forms. The recognition of correctness or incorrectness of verb forms was the first task. Recognition of errors, according to Lund (1986) and Arnaud (1989), is an important learning skill which is closely related to the learners' awareness of their own abilities. The second task was to make any necessary corrections. Failure to satisfy the first condition was likely to lead to inappropriate behaviour on the part of the informants (although such failure cannot be attributed solely to a lack of competence, other factors such as misunderstanding of the context of use, carelessness or teaching influence could lead to the same result). The analysis of data for this hypothesis concentrates on the informants' ability to recognise those items that were judged *correct* by the researcher. One needs to recollect that the items investigated were also judged *correct* by the NSs involved in the pilot study.

Table 7.13 displays the informants' responses to the three correct items. The informants who recognised the items as correct made no changes but those who could not recognise the items as correct were bound to make changes to the verb forms. As their responses demonstrate, most but not all the attempts to make changes were unsuccessful.

The first column of table 7.13 lists the three items judged correct, the second the groups involved, and the next four columns list the percentages in four categories. The information contained in the percentages has to be understood as follows:
-No change: the percentages of informants who recognised or appeared to recognise the correctness of the verb forms and as a result made no changes;
-Unacceptable changes: the percentages of informants who, in addition to the fact that they did not recognise the items as correct, made unacceptable changes. This latter category is represented as a proportion of all responses and as a proportion of all changes; and - acceptable changes: where a correct item was substituted for an item that was already correct.

The responses in table 7.13 therefore represent three strategies based on three types of decision arrived at by the informants in their judgements of correctness:
(a) no changes are made because the verb forms are recognised as *correct*,

Table 7.13 — Percentages of responses to correct item in Test 2

Item	Group	No change	Unacceptable changes		Acceptable changes
			As proportion of all responses	As proportion of all changes	
2	G1	37.5	47.5	76	15.0
	G2	67.5	5.0	15	27.5
	G3	69.2	5.1	26	25.6
	NS	71.4	-	20	28.6
7	G1	12.5	75.0	86	12.5
	G2	22.5	30.0	39	47.5
	G3	7.7	17.9	22	74.8
	NS	9.5	-	-	90.5
19	G1	20.0	35.0	44	45.0
	G2	50.0	27.5	55	22.5
	G3	66.7	5.1	15	28.2
	NS	85.7	-	-	14.3

(b) alternative (acceptable) changes are made, and
(c) unacceptable changes are made.
In both (b) and (c) the informants are assumed to have failed to recognise the correctness of the verb forms. Although the first strategy is the type of behaviour expected, each of the three strategies deserves a closer look.

```
Item 2: The little boy  burned his finger while
        playing with a candle.
```

The *no change* response for item 2 shows consistent results from G1 to G3 (G1 37.5%, G2 67.5% and G3 69.2%), i.e., the higher one moves across the instruction levels, the more informants are able to recognise the verb form as correct. There is, however, little progression between G2 and G3. At the same time, the percentages of *unacceptable changes* show an important decrease from G1 (47.5 %) to G2 (5 %) and remains unchanged at G3 (5.1 %). The responses to item 2 show that at

a lower level (i.e., G1) the context may be misleading since *playing* is present and *burned* is past. So, it is possible that for these learners (G1) *burned* is considered incorrect because it does not share the same tense form as *playing*, but that at G2 level such a naivety is corrected. This, then, may explain the rapid improvement for this particular item at G2 level. The *acceptable responses* are comparably low for all the groups but with minor variations between them.

In general, the results for item 2 also reveal that the majority of G1 informants failed to recognise the verb form as correct and, nearly half of them (47.5%) made unsuccessful changes. At G2 and G3 levels, the informants performed comparably. Two thirds of the informants from each of these two groups (G2 67.5%, G3 69.2%) recognised the verb form as correct. Among those G2 and G3 informants who failed to recognise the correctness of the verb form, the majority made successful alternative changes (G2 27.5% and G3 25.6%). These results support the assumption that the informants' ability to recognise correct or acceptable verb forms improves across levels.

Item 7: If Mary came tomorrow, we could have a party.

In Smith's (1981) view, the meaning of the tense form *came* is said to be overruled by the co-text and it is in such examples that it was hoped to see G2 and particularly G3 informants scoring better than G1 informants. The results, however, offer a different picture. The percentages for *no change* responses are very low compared with item 2 above and particularly lower at G3 level, (G1 12.5%, G2 22.5% and G3 7.7%). In other words, the majority of informants in each category, including NSs, considered this verb form as incorrect and therefore attempted changes although most of the NNSs' attempts were unsuccessful. The percentages of *unacceptable changes* consistently decrease across levels (G1 75%, G2 30%, G3 17.9%), which demonstrates the kind of movement and the rate of movement towards the TL norms already seen. An increasing number of those who failed to recognise the correctness of the verb forms were still able to make acceptable alternative changes. This is seen through the increase of percentages of acceptable changes from G1 to G3, (G1 12.5%, G2 47.5% and G3 74.8%).

The results also show that, while the percentages of unsuccessful changes decrease, those of acceptable changes (as a proportion of all changes) gradually increase across levels. One may assume that as they learn more, the informants from higher levels become more aware of what is or is not acceptable. The high percentages of alternative changes, however, makes one wonder whether the informants' failure to recognise the correctness of the verb form was caused only by the conviction that the verb form was incorrect, especially, where the NS informants are also concerned. The NS informants, in this particular case, might have viewed the verb form *came* in terms of judgement of norms as seen in a more common use of the form in spoken language where appropriacy rather than possibility might be the

norm.

It is argued in various part of this project (e.g., in the preliminary study), that in cases of non-direct relationship between verb form and time -as is the case in item 7, it is likely that only sophisticated learners/speakers would be able to recognise the correctness of verb forms. However, 90.5% of NS informants did not recognise item 7 as correct. This situation raises again the point discussed earlier (chap. 3.1.2) on formal grammar in spoken language and leads one to wonder whether the notion *correct* should be linked to formal language, and that of *acceptable* to a more communicative language. A possible explanation of the data is that the elicitation context in which the item was tested is not natural. If this is the case, the same might be said to apply to item 19 which, although of the same character in the sense that the meanings in both items were overridden by co-text, produced more target-like results. This point is discussed further when the notions of co-text and context are considered under hypothesis 5. However, when asked to justify their responses, one NS informant claimed that the tense was *unnatural*, for another the structure was *odd* adding *I wouldn't use it.*

Item 19
Next Christmas falls on a Monday.

As with item 2, the *no changes* responses for this verb form also represent an increasing awareness among the informants across the levels that the verb form is correct (20% at G1, 50% at G2 and 66.7% at G3). Similarly, the percentages of unacceptable changes show a decrease across levels and the percentages of acceptable changes, expressed as a proportion of all changes also increase. G1 informants' failure to recognise the use of the present tense *falls* to describe a future event confirms the view often referred to in this study that to express meanings the informants, especially those at G1 level, rely very much on the one-to-one relationship between a verb form and its function, i.e., on the notion of one form for one function. The future event *Next Christmas* for these informants triggers a future tense form. As a result, those who attempted to make changes almost exclusively changed *falls* to *will fall.* It is therefore clear that the same type of reasoning used for item 7, where the verb form *came* was replaced either by *comes* or *will come*, applies in the present case.

To summarise the discussion, the informants' changes on cases judged correct may be considered, on the one hand, as a failure to recognise correctness and, on the other hand, as a challenge to their repertoire to reveal what they know or do not know about tense marking. The percentages for *no change* responses show a steady increase for items 2 and 19 but fluctuate for item 7. In the latter case, progression occcurs only between G1 and G2 and not between G2 and G3. Two observations emerge from the data: firstly, there is less difficulty for most of these

informants in recognising as correct a verb form in a structure where there is no time reference element as in item 2 and, secondly, the informants' behaviour becomes more complex where a structure contains a time reference element, i.e., where verb forms and time orientation are not in a direct relationship, as in items 7 and 19.

The results indicate that the co-text (in Smith's terms) *tomorrow* in item 7 and *Next Christmas* in item 19 leads most of the informants -especially those at G1 level- to make changes in order to match the verb forms (form) with the time (function) they express. It may then be argued, drawing on Smith's view, that these informants recognise the correctness of a verb form only when they can establish a direct relationship between the verb form and the time orientation. That is, they rely very much on their knowledge of morphological tense markers which has proved, in the present case, not to be sufficient to determine whether the verb form in a given structure is or is not correct. It may be concluded that the ability to to recognise correctness of verb forms has to be linked to one's knowledge of the meaning of the entire structure rather than to that of tense markers.

It may also be argued that more informants at the G1 level work within the *one form-one function* hypothesis, whereas an increasing number of informants at G2 and G3 levels have gone beyond this level of association because they are able to realise that the relationship between the verb forms and contexts can be overruled by contextual elements. In short, the data for this hypothesis suggest that the informants' ability to recognise correctness improves with subsequent levels of instruction, confirming Lund's (1986) and Arnaud's (1989) view that recognition is an important learning skill that is closely related to learners' awareness of their abilities.

Similarly, Bartsch (1987) further argues that recognition of correctness justifies the validity of standards. In her view, "correctness notions are necessary in order to secure recognizability and interpretability of linguistic expressions" (Bartsch 1987:xii)[5]. Relating these views to the results, and disregarded item 7 where NS informants produced unacceptable results, the Hypothesis that *the informants' ability to recognise the correctness or incorrectness of verb forms will improve across levels and will reflect the the informants' knowledge of grammatical and morphological verb forms* is proved.
The next hypothesis focuses on the step that follows the recognition of incorrectness.

7.1.4 Hypothesis 4: The informants' ability to make appropriate corrections

It is expected that formal training will be an important factor in discriminating between learners in their ability to make appropriate corrections, i.e., the more knowledgeable/advanced the learners are, the better will be their ability to make corrections.

The informants' decision to make changes to items which they believed to be *incorrect* may be considered as an important step in the process of correction. It is reasonable to assume that the higher the informants are in the stratum of the education system, the better their ability to make corrections will be. Four types of activity were designed to test the informants' ability to correct various errors associated with tense marking. Those errors were identified in free compositions provided by the informants in the preliminary task to this project (see table 5.2 and appendices 3.3 and 3.4), and they include:

- errors of overgeneralization of the *-ed* tense marker (as in e.g., *I didn't see a car and I sleeped there*);
- failure to recognise the insertion point for a tense marker (as in e.g.., *She saws that I become a wicked daughter*);
- the use of non-past verb forms in an unambiguous past time context (e.g., *Last week my grandbrother try to explain to her the state which I am*);
- errors with lexical past tense formation (as in e.g., *I passed in the house, my sister tell me the news*), and
- errors of redundancy (e.g., *The staff leader of our school was agree to choose me*).

Each of these five types of errors is replicated in at least one of the four categories tested for in Test 2, i.e., marking lexical past tense (item 3 *sends — sent*), marking the third person -s (item 5 *try — tries*), changing verb forms into present/past perfect tense (item 8 *lives — has lived*) and deleting whole or part of a verb form (item 4 *costed — cost*, item 9 *has met — met*).
Table 7.14 summarises the results for the types of correction required in Test 2.

Table 7.14 — Results of a Student's t-test comparing pairs of groups on verb correction

Task required	Group	Cases	Mean	S.D.	S.E.	T value	p
marking lexical	G1	40	2.75	1.37	.21		
past tense	G2	40	3.52	1.26	.19	-2.63	0.01*
	G2	40	3.52	1.26	.19		
(No of items:6)	G3	39	4.33	1.15	.18	-2.97	0.004**
	G1-3	119	3.52	1.41	.13		
	NS	21	6.00	.00	.00	19.07	0.000***
Using 3rd person	G1	40	1.47	.81	.12		
singular -s	G2	40	2.20	1.06	.16	-3.41	0.000***
	G2	40	2.20	1.06	.16		
(No of items:3)	G3	39	2.69	.65	.10	-2.48	0.01*
	G1-3	40	2.11	.99	.09		
	NS	21	3.00	.00	.00	9.69	0.000***
Changing into	G1	40	.72	.75	.11		
pres./past	G2	40	1.10	.67	.10	-2.35	0.02*
perfect tense	G2	40	1.10	.67	.10		
(No of items:4)	G3	39	1.33	.80	.12	-1.40	0.16
	G1-3	119	1.05	.77	.07		
	NS	21	2.61	.86	.18	7.77	0.000***
Deleting part or	G1	40	1.52	.98	.15		
whole verb form	G2	40	2.07	.76	.12	-2.79	0.007**
	G2	40	2.07	.76	.12		
(No of items: 4)	G3	39	2.15	.98	.15	-0.40	0.69
	G1-3	119	1.91	.95	.08		
	NS	21	4.00	.00	.00	23.86	0.000***

Level of significance *** p<.001 ** p<.01 * p<.05

This table can be read just as the others previously described in this section, i.e., column 1 contains the activity required, columns 2 and 3 the groups and the number of informants involved, column 4 the average mean scores obtained by the informants, column 5 the standard deviation, column 6 the standard error, column 7 the T value and the last column the p probability for the significance of results. Each of the activities listed in column 1 is analysed separately and the results are discussed in relation to all the items under that activity.

Marking lexical past tense

The informants' results for this activity show that G2 (3.52) is significantly different from G1 (2.75) at p<.01, and that G3 (4.33) is also different from G2 at p<.01. The difference between NS (6.00) and NNS informants' results (3.52) is highly significant (p<.001). In the light of these results, one can say that correcting lexical past tense for these informants shows significant changes not only between G1 and G2, but also between G2 and G3. The difference in learning experience seems to have a significant effect on the informants' ability to produce past tense forms.

Third person singular present tense.

There are significant differences in the results between G1 (1.47) and G2 (2.20) at p<.001. The difference between G2 (2.20) and G3 (2.69) is significant at p<.01. As is the case with lexical tense marking, the results between NS informants (3.00) and NNS informants (2.11) show a high level of significance (p<.001). The results indicate that the informants' ability to mark the third person singular -s improves consistently in the direction of the NS norms.

Present/past perfect tense.

The results of marking the present or past perfect tense produced less consistent results than the other two activities already described. Although the results show significant differences (p<.05) between G1 (.72) and G2 (1.10), the results for G2 and G3 (1.33) are almost identical. The NS informants' results (2.61) are, however, significantly different (p<.001). As a whole, the results indicate an improvement in the informants' ability to mark present/past perfect tense in the direction of TL norms between G1 and G2.

Deleting part of/whole verb form

The results of this activity show a significant difference between G1 (1.52) and G2 (2.07) at p<.01, but not between G2 and G3 (2.15). The NS group results (4.00) are, however, significantly different from the three NNS groups (1.91) at p<.001. The results indicate then that the informants' increasing ability to delete part of/whole verb form produced significant results only between G1 and G2, but not between G2 and G3. G3 informants are, therefore, not appreciably different from G2 informants in their attempts to correct errors requiring deletion of a redundant form.

In an attempt to provide further evidence of the informants' ability to make corrections, it was decided to look at some cases where NS informants' responses were in complete agreement. Table 7.15 gives the informants' responses for four items selected for correction.

Table 7.15 — Percentages of responses for correction of selected items in Test 2 where NS changes were in every case identical

Items	Change required	Average % of responses			
		G1	G2	G3	NS
	Marking lex. past tense				
sends → sent	1. Accep. change	60	97.5	97.4	100
	2. Unaccep. change	30	2.5	2.6	-
	3. No change	10	-	-	-
	Marking 3rd pers. sing.				
try → tries	1. Accep. changes	17.5	62.5	87.2	100
	2. Unaccep. changes	42.5	7.5	5.1	-
	3. No change	40	30	7.7	-
	Marking pres. perfect				
lives → has lived	1. Accep. changes	2.5	5	10.3	100
	2. Unaccep. changes	47.5	22.5	20.5	-
	3. No change	50	72.5	69.2	-
	Deleting part of verb form				
costed → cost	1. Accep. changes	42.5	52.5	41	100
	2. Unaccep. changes	30	20	25.6	-
	3. No change	27.5	27.5	333	-

The number of items for each task and examples to illustrate the expected answers are given in the first column. The second column describes the different strategies employed. The next four columns display the informants' average percentages for each set of items grouped according to the task. It is important to note that the items described were selected on the basis of NS responses, i.e., where the NS informants' responses showed perfect or near perfect agreement.

The results and percentages show important differences between groups although the general trend is towards the TL norms. The results for *acceptable changes* give

some support for progression from G1 to G3, except for *costed* → *cost* where G3 informants did not perform better than G2 informants. Similarly, the results for *lives* → *has lived* are very poor. There is also clear indication that the informants at higher levels make fewer incorrect changes and more correct changes, as seen in the column of *inadequate changes*. A decrease in the percentage of *unacceptable changes* and an increase in the informants' ability to make correct changes can be seen as evidence that learning has taken place. In addition, the progressive replacement of incorrect by correct verb forms can be seen as further evidence of improvement in the informants' ability not only to recognise the *incorrectness* of verb forms but also to make appropriate corrections. However, as seen through their responses, there are important variations in the way the informants deal with the different tasks.

Similarly, Lund (1986) and Tarone (1979) point out that the relative difficulty in correction also depends on the types of features to be corrected. Some features, according to Lund (1986), are less difficult to correct than others. He argues that correction does not occupy a uniform position on a scale of accuracy for different features even within a given population of learners. This observation led him to conclude that similar learners in the same environment may still not be learning in the same way. A possible explanation for the variation that characterises the informants' behaviour is the fact that verb correction requires more than a simple ability to recognise the incorrect verb forms, it also involves some degree of awareness of the notion of correctness. Learners need to identify the insertion or deletion point in the verb form by recognising the formal syntactic class of the element undergoing the morphological process (Pienemann 1988, Bialystok 1982). Unless they have this knowledge, they may not be able to make adequate corrections. These findings also support Hung's (1987) study in which he established that "the present tense was the easiest for subjects of all academic levels, and the past perfect was the most difficult" (Hung 1987:188)[6].

In short, the analysis of the data for the Hypothesis has shown that although a mere recognition of errors does not necessarily imply that the learner will be able to make an adequate correction, formal training is an important factor in discriminating between learners in their ability to make appropriate corrections. The Hypothesis that *formal training will be an important factor in discriminating between learners in their ability to make appropriate corrections, i.e., the more knowledgeable/advanced the learners are, the better will be their ability to make corrections* is therefore proved.

7.1.5 Hypothesis 5: The informants' ability to match verb forms to contexts of use

The informants' ability to choose possible verb forms to match the different linguistic contexts will vary from the one-to-one relationship at stage one to cases where such a default meaning is overruled by co-text at later stages of learning.

The task was designed to determine the informants' ability to identify and relate

verb forms to contexts of use and, by doing so, show the extent to which specific verb forms are actually used by the informants involved. Two variables are considered in analysing the Hypothesis:
(i) the level of association between verb forms and contexts, i.e., on the one hand, the informants were expected to choose only one verb form (in single answer model), and on the other hand, they were expected to choose two or more verb forms (in a multiple answer model) to match with contexts; and
(ii) the nature of co-text, i.e., whether containing constraining time reference or not.

The level of association is based on the way the Test was designed, i.e., some items were constructed on a single answer model, while others were constructed on a multiple answer model. The informants were required to make only one choice in the first model, whereas such a restriction did not apply in the second model. Thus while the first model was set to test a prototypical association between a verb form and a given function or context of use, the second model investigated the extent to which, in a non-prototypical association, the informants' ability to associate a variety of verb forms with a given function takes into account the different circumstances of use. The data are taken from three Tests: Tests 1, 3 and 4. Test 2 is not included because it was designed to focus the informants' attention on the morphological rather than on the semantic aspect of the verb forms. Also, both correct and incorrect verb forms were mixed in the task and that made it difficult to determine which part of a structure would attract the informant's attention.

The level of Association.

Level of association refers to the informants' ability to choose and match one verb form (in a single answer model) or several verb forms (in a multiple answer model) and enables one to determine, on the one hand to which extent informants can single out a single acceptable choice of item among other possible items as the only suitable answer for a given context, and on the other hand, the extent to which informants can associate a variety of verb forms with a given function. In both cases, the process would involve an ability to discriminate what is or is not appropriate for a given context. The scores for single and multiple answer items were computed and the results are presented in table 7.16.

The organisation of table 7.16 is similar to the others already described in this section, and consequently displays the same type of information, namely the groups and the number of informants included, the mean scores, the standard deviation, the standard error, the T value and the p probability.

The results for single answer items show a highly significant difference between G1 and G2 ($p<.001$), and a significant difference between G2 and G3 results ($p<.05$). This suggests that there is a greater progression between G1 and G2 than between G2 and G3 thereby confirming the pattern established by the results presented so

Table 7.16 — Results of a Student's t-test comparing pairs of groups on single and multiple answers

Choice	Group	Cases	Mean	S.D.	S.E.	t value	p
One single	G1	40	11.77	2.73	.43		
acceptable	G2	40	13.75	1.77	.28	-3.83	0.000***
answer	G2	40	13.75	1.77	.28		
(No of items:4)	G3	39	14.51	1.23	.19	-2.22	0.03*
	G1-3	119	13.33	2.31	.21		
	NS	21	15.52	1.12	.24	6.75	0.000***
Multiple	G1	40	25.52	4.39	.69		
acceptable	G2	40	28.45	4.06	.63	-3.11	0.003**
answers	G2	40	28.45	4.00	.63		
(No of items:11)	G3	39	30.33	4.33	.69	-2.00	0.04*
	G1-3	119	28.08	4.65	.42		
	NS	21	36.90	3.25	.71	10.65	0.000***

Level of significance *** p<.001 ** p<.01 * p<.05

far. A similar picture is offered by the results of multiple answer questions, in that there is a greater progression between G1 and G2 (p<.01) than between G2 and G3 (p<.05). However, in both cases, the NS informants scored significantly higher than the NNS informants (p<.001).

The results show no clear difference in the informants' ability to associate verb forms with given contexts of use, i.e., the fact that the informants were to choose only one or several verb forms to match a given context does not have any particular effect on the informants' performance. That is, level of association can discussed from two perspectives:

(i) by considering the informants' ability to single out one acceptable answer among other possible choices. The results show that the informants did not perform as expected. There are three possible explanations. First, the informants' choices are characterised by a wider variation compared to NS informants' choices, but also by a certain amount of L1 influence as seen in the results of item 3 (investigated further as language transfer in section 2 of this chapter). Second, the informants' choices (see also comments on table 6.10) further indicate their relative difficulty to discriminate acceptable from unacceptable verb forms. In this sense, these re-

sults reflect the informants' behaviour already described in Hypothesis 4. Third, considering the fact that all the informants were told (see also Test instructions) that there was at least one correct answer, rather than avoid answering, the informants' tendency was to go for *one easy and familiar verb form.* According to Laufer (1989) (his subjects were first year university students)

> It often happens that students know one meaning of a polyseme, or a homonym and are reluctant to abandon it even when, in a particular context, its meaning is different.... The mistaken assumption of the learner in this case was that the familiar meaning was the ONLY meaning (Laufer 1989:12)[7].

(ii) by considering the informants' ability to choose two or more verb forms among other possible choices. The informants' attempt (in particular G1) to select acceptable answers was hampered by their inability to discriminate acceptable from unacceptable verb forms: only those verb forms of which they were certain were selected. The increase in results across levels is evidence of higher level informants being more and more certain of their choices. One needs to recall at this stage that no point was awarded for unacceptable choices (see scoring procedures).

The results then support the view that the higher they are in the education system, the better is the informants' ability to discriminate acceptable verb forms from unacceptable ones. Which suggests, at the same time, that the time spent in learning has a significant influence as demonstrated by the continuous progression recorded from G1 to G3 for these variables. The informants' ability to identify and relate one single verb form to a given context proved to be less and less problematic across levels.

The nature of Co-text.

The second variable investigated is the distinction between the effect of co-text with constraining and co-text without constraining time reference. The analysis of the data for this variable was carried out by considering the presence or absence of a time reference (as described in tables 6.4, 6.7 and 6.10) which constrained the choice of verb forms. Tables 7.17, 7.18 and 7.19 present the results for both types of contexts, i.e., co-texts with and co-texts without such time references.

Table 7.17 — Results of a Student's t-test comparing pairs of groups with reference to co-texts in Test 1

Co-text type	Group	Cases	Mean	S.D.	S.E.	T value	p
With	G1	40	8.75	2.26	.35		
Time	G2	40	10.67	2.01	.31	-4.02	0.000***
Reference	G2	40	10.67	2.01	.31		
(No of items:13)	G3	39	11.58	1.25	.20	-2.43	0.01*
	G1-3	119	10.32	2.25	.20		
	NS	21	12.80	.40	.08	11.18	0.000***
Without	G1	40	8.87	2.35	.37		
Time	G2	40	10.17	2.12	.33	-2.59	0.01*
Reference	G2	40	10.17	2.12	.33		
(No of items:14)	G3	39	11.74	1.61	.25	-3.70	0.000***
	G1-3	119	10.25	2.35	.21		
	NS	21	13.76	.53	.11	14.28	0.000***

Level of significance *** p<.001 ** p<.01 * p<.05

Table 7.18 — Results of a Student's t-test comparing pairs of groups with reference to co-texts in Test 3

Co-text type	Group	Cases	Mean	S.D.	S.E.	T value	p
With	G1	40	17.27	3.94	.62		
Time	G2	40	19.87	3.02	.47	-3.31	0.001***
Reference	G2	40	19.87	3.02	.47		
(No of items:7)	G3	39	21.00	2.74	.43	-1.73	0.08
	G1-3	119	19.36	3.61	.33		
	NS	21	24.14	1.65	.36	9.75	0.000***
Without	G1	40	20.02	2.88	.45		
Time	G2	40	22.32	2.53	.40	-3.79	0.000***
Reference	G2	40	22.32	2.53	.40		
(No of items:8)	G3	39	23.84	2.81	.45	-2.52	0.01*
	G1-3	119	22.05	3.14	.28		
	NS	21	28.28	1.92	.42	12.22	0.000***

Table 7.19 — Results of Student's t-test comparing pairs of groups with reference to co-text in Test 4

Co-text type	Group	Cases	Mean	S.D.	S.E.	T value	p
With	G1	40	.82	.95	.15		
Time	G2	40	.40	.63	.10	2.34	0.02*
Reference	G2	40	.40	.63	.10		
(No of items:3)	G3	39	.46	.72	.11	-0.40	0.68
	G1-3	119	.56	.79	.07		
	NS	21	.95	1.32	.28	1.31	0.2
Without	G1	40	.92	.85	.13		
Time	G2	40	1.35	.94	.15	-2.10	0.03*
Reference	G2	40	1.35	.94	.15		
(No of items:7)	G3	39	1.43	.99	.16	-0.39	0.69
	G1-3	119	1.24	.95	.08		
	NS	21	3.14	1.19	.26	6.93	0.000***

Level of significance *** p<.001 ** p<.01 * p<.05

The first column of each table shows the different types of co-texts referred to and, as for the other tables, the next columns enter the groups, the number of informants involved, the mean scores, the standard deviation, the standard error, the T value, and the p probability.

Data from three Tests have been drawn on in computing these results, i.e., Tests 1, 3 and 4, because they represent three different types and quality of contexts and three types of elicitation tasks with different effects on the informants' performance. The major division between two types of co-texts (those with and those without constraining time reference indicators) was made to determine whether the results would show any real difference between groups for each type of co-text.

In Test 1, table 7.17, the results show significant differences between G1 and G2 (p<.001) and also significant results between G2 and G3 (p<.05) for co-text with time reference. The results for co-texts without time references show a significant difference between G1 and G2 (p<.05) and a high significant difference between G2 and G3 (p<.001). In Test 3, table 7.18, the results between G1 and G2 are significantly different, both for co-texts with time reference (p<.001), and for co-texts without time reference (p<.001). However, the results between G2 and G3 show a significant difference only for co-texts without time reference, but not for co-texts with time reference. In Test 4 table 7.19, the results show an improvement

only between G1 and G2 in both cases at the $p<.05$ level, but no significant difference was found between G2 and G3 for both co-text types.

Taken together, the results between NNS and NS informants are significantly different in co-text without time reference but not in co-text with time reference. These results (Test 4) show, on the one hand, the extent of the impact of a time reference in the interpretation of discrete item contexts and, on the other hand, learners' knowledge of past time reference as a whole. These results seem to confirm Sato's (1990) view that

> shared knowledge -about the world, about how people behave, and about *how events are structured*- allows a semantic domain like PTR (Past Time Reference) to be understood in a discourse context. The contextual embeddedness of temporal reference, in fact, may prove to be a major constraint on the emergence of particular surface coding devices (Sato 1990:89)[8].

The present results not only confirm Sato's views, but also explain why Test 1 and Test 3 produce comparable results. Both Tests 1 and 3 provide the informants with context types that allowed the informants to make their own decisions on what they believed to be appropriate and acceptable for the given contexts. This fact might have contributed to reducing the impact of explicit time reference in interpreting meanings of verb forms.

However, in the case of Test 4 (which is essentially based on isolated sentences), the presence or absence of a time reference was likely to affect the informants' interpretation of verb forms. It is then clear that, although the results as a whole show a continuous progression towards the TL norms, in particular for Tests 1 and 3, they do not show any significant effect owing to the presence or absence of a time reference constraint in those Tests. But, in Test 4, such a constraint was expected to have an impact on the informants' decisions to provide explanations of the relationship between verb forms and the time reference contexts.

In view of these results and observations, the Hypothesis that *the informants' ability to choose possible verb forms to match the different linguistic contexts will vary from the one-to-one relationship at stage one to cases where such a default meaning is overruled by co-text at later stages of learning* is partially confirmed.

7.1.6 Hypothesis 6: The informants' ability to make associations between tense and

In their attempt to associate tense and time, learners' ability will vary significantly between learners at the lower intermediate stage and learners at the subsequent stages.

The data to test the assumption are taken from Test 4.

It is argued (Smith 1981) that

> processing an utterance involves identifying the time - past, present or future - at which the

event described in that utterance is meant to be located. This identification exploits the interaction of the tense system of the language with other syntactic, semantic and pragmatic variables. .... It is well known, however, that the relation of time to tense is far from being one-to-one, and the localization of time is not even an exclusively linguistic matter.... To be specific, I wish to claim that morpho-syntactic tense form has a *default* meaning that specifies *time* rather than modality or remoteness, but that this default meaning can, in every case, be overruled by either co-text or context: by linguistic or pragmatic factors (Smith 1981:253)[9].

According to this view, in some cases, there is a one-to-one relationship between a verb form and time reference, but in other cases, such a default meaning may be overruled by other factors, such as co-text or context. It is assumed that co-text or a broad context would influence the informants' decisions to relate tense forms to time references. In the light of this view, the informants' ability to relate tense forms to time is investigated on the basis of the distinction made in the description of the items (see chapter 6.1.2) between prototypical and non-prototypical associations between tense and time. It was decided to include, for the purpose of the study, more cases of non-prototypical (8 items) than those of prototypical associations (2 items) on the assumption that prototypical types of association would create fewer problems for advanced language learners than the non-prototypical. The results for these two types of associations are given in table 7.20.

The first column of the table shows the two different types of association, the other columns enter respectively the groups, the number of informants involved, the mean scores, the standard deviation, the standard error, the T value, and the p probability.

The results between G1 and G2 show a significant difference ($p<.05$) for prototypical association, but not for non-prototypical association. No results between G2 and G3 showed any level of significance in both either case. Studies on the form and function approach suggest two ways of explaining the informants' ability to associate tense with time: firstly, learners may acquire grammatical forms without previously having a clear indication of the function the form may be related to - this is the form-function view. The resulting effect is that the relation tense-time is perceived by the learners as basically one-to-one, but where this is not the case learners are likely to face difficulties; secondly, learners (such as the informants in this study) already have acquired a large variety of cognitive knowledge, including reference to time, but have less adequate knowledge of what form a given function may be related to - this is the function-form view.

However, "form and function of English tense-aspect are not always in a one-to-one correspondence, and this misfit creates usage problems which non-native teachers and pupils find extremely difficult to tackle" (Hung 1987:6)[10]. Following Smith's (1981) notion of default and non-default use of language, it was further argued

Table 7.20 — Results of Student's t-test on prototypical and non-prototypical associations in Test 4

Association type	Group	Cases	Mean	S.D.	S.E.	T value	p
Prototypical	G1	40	.50	.55	.08		
	G2	40	.77	.53	.08	-2.27	0.02*
(No of items:2)	G2	40	.77	.53	.08		
	G3	39	.82	.64	.10	-0.34	0.73
	G1-3	119	.69	.59	.05		
	NS	21	1.23	.94	.20	2.54	0.01**
Non-prototypical	G1	40	1.O2	1.16	.18		
(No of items:8)	G2	40	.85	.92	.14	0.75	0.45
	G2	40	.85	.92	.14		
	G3	39	.84	.70	.11	0.02	0.98
	G1-3	119	.90	.94	.08		
	NS	21	2.57	2.54	.55	2.96	0.007***

Level of significance *** p<.001 ** p<.01 * p<.05

that the non-prototypical type of association would be more difficult than the prototypical one for many learners and in particular those from G1. The results indicate that between G1 and G2 there was a significant movement in the direction of TL norms in the case of prototypical association. This suggests that the majority of informants in the sample were acquiring the default use of language. But since there was no difference between the performances of the three groups in relation to non-prototypical association, it may be concluded that all the informants in the sample still had to acquire the non-default use of language.

This view is further supported by the informants' behaviour described earlier in relation to structures such as *If Mary 'came' tomorrow, we could have a party* and *Next Christmas 'falls' on a Monday* where many informants' tendency was to change the verb forms *came* to *comes* and *falls* to *will fall.* The results as exemplified by the informants' performance in the case of *came* and *falls* suggest two important things: firstly, that the non-default use of language represents a more advanced stage in language learning and is, therefore, much more difficult than the default use. Secondly, the results also indicate that there exist levels of non-default use, ranging from less to more advanced, as illustrated by the data

obtained from the different items where non-default use was tested, as described earlier in Hypotheses 3 and 4 (see also tables 6.32, 6.33 and 6.34).

These results indicate that there is evidence that by stage 2 the informants in the study have sufficient knowledge of the default use of the TL, but there is no clear evidence to support the non-default use in non-prototypical associations by stage 3. This means that the Hypothesis that *in their attempt to associate tense and time, learners' ability will vary significantly between learners at the lower intermediate stage and learners at the subsequent stages* is proved.

7.1.7 Hypothesis 7: The informants' metalingual knowledge of the circumstances o

us

Learners' metalinguistic knowledge used to explain different circumstances of use for verb forms in given contexts will vary significantly between learners from different instructional levels, i.e., the more advanced the learners are, the more acceptable their explanations will be. (It is assumed that metalingual knowledge may be consciously available to the advanced learner who is able to state a rule or explain the reason for a decision to use a given form.)

In this hypothesis, the researcher investigates the extent to which learners' formal training provides them with metalingual knowledge, and discusses the informants' perception of the relationship between the verb forms they are able to use and their functions as revealed in the descriptions supplied by the informants. The researcher's decision to include Test 4 alongside the production task (Test 1) and the traditional discrete tests (Tests 2 and 3) was motivated by the distinction often maintained between two kinds of learner knowledge, knowing how to use the language to communicate as determined by the results of Tests 1, 2 and 3, and knowing about the language (Lund 1986), as investigated in Test 4.

Thus, although every task was designed to test some discrete aspect of knowledge, taken together the results of the four tasks show the overall state of the informants' competence in the use of verb forms. That is, while the first six Hypotheses are concerned with the informants' ability to use language, this last Hypothesis focuses on what they know about the language they use. To use Lund's (1986) distinction, in the first case, language is assessed as a tool for communication, in the second case, language is the object of conscious attention.

To evaluate the responses to this Test, 40 native speakers of English judged the informants' explanations of the circumstances of verb form use according to the procedures described earlier in chapter 6.1.2. That is, each explanation was evaluated by four judges who had to decide whether it was appropriate (A) or inappropriate (I). An explanation was classed *appropriate* or *inappropriate* when at least three of the judges *agreed.* All doubtful cases (where the four judges were split 2 for and 2 against) were given to a fifth judge who took the final decision. A summary of the results of the evaluation is provided in table 7.21 and the detailed evaluation is given in appendix 10.

Table 7.21 — Evaluation of NNS informants' expalanations of circumstances of verb form usage expressed in %

Group	Items Scores	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
G1		59.9	7.5	4.9	9.9	32.5	9.9	25	54.9	17.5	7.9
G2		67.5	14.9	14.9	12.5	29.9	17.5	47.5	67.5	22.5	32.5
G3		84.6	23	20.5	17.9	46.1	12.8	51.2	76.9	25.6	51.9
G1-3	Average	70.6	15.1	13.4	13.4	36.2	13.3	41.2	66.4	21.9	30.7

Table 7.21 displays the results of judgements made by native speakers on the non-native informants' explanations on ten items. The three groups involved in the investigation are entered in column 1. Columns 2 to 11 show the percentages of the informants' appropriate explanations per group. It must be pointed out that columns 8 and 10 represent the two cases of prototypical association where tense forms are in default use with the context, while the rest of items represent cases of non-prototypical associations where the tense form prototypical functions are overridden by the contexts. The results in the table can be interpreted in several ways, but in the context of this study, the results are explained from two perspectives: (i) through progression across the instruction levels, and (ii) according to the types of association involved, i.e., prototypical or non-prototypical.

(i) The informants' progression across levels is continuous and most of the results show improvement from G1 to G3. However, there are also minor variations, in particular for item 6 where G3 informants' explanations were further from TL norms than those offered by G2 informants and in the case of item 5 where G1 informants produced more acceptable explanations than G2 informants. In all the other cases, there is continuous progression from G1 to G3. One can note that with the exception of items 1 and 8, the explanations failed to convince the NS judges, with items 3, 4 and 6 recording the lowest scores.

(ii) The informants' responses in relation to types of association are more complex. In an attempt to determine which type of association is most easily described by learners, a more explicit version of tables 6.5 and 6.11 is given in table 7.22.

The results in table 7.22 indicate that there are for these informants, on the one hand, easy and familiar cases such as items 1 and 8 where all the groups had high scores, but in most cases, the majority of informants failed to provide adequate explanations for the circumstances of use for the verb forms and contexts provided. A number of observations emerge from the results. First, that two areas

Table 7.22 — The degree of accuracy of metalingual knowledge as revealed in the explanations of verb functions (expressed in %)

Item	Score for G1-3 (%)	Type of association	Description
1	70.6	Non-protot.	Pres. tense/Future time
8	66.4	Prototypical	Past tense/Past time
7	41.2	Non-protot.	Pres. tense/Future time
5	36.2	Non-protot.	Pres. tense/Future time
10	30.7	Prototypical	Pres. tense/Present time
9	21.9	Non-protot.	Pres. tense/Past time
2	15.1	Non-protot.	Past tense/Future time
3	13.4	Non-protot.	Pres. tense/Past time
4	13.4	Non-protot.	Past tense/Future time
6	13.3	Non-protot.	Past tense/Present time

were particularly easy and familiar to the informants, those represented by items 1 and 8. Second, the function of items with (i) non-past verb forms, and (ii) past prototypical verb forms appear to be more easily described. These results may be seen in relation to the informants' performance described in the previous Hypotheses which demonstrated that the majority of these learners favour non-past forms. These results show that learners also have more supporting metalingual in the non-past functions.

It follows from the present analysis that the Hypothesis that *Learners' metalinguistic knowledge used to explain different circumstances of use for verb forms in given contexts will vary significantly between learners from different instructional levels, i.e., the more advanced the learners are, the more acceptable their explanations will be* is neither accepted nor rejected.

The next section considers some of the findings for which no specific hypotheses were formulated.

7.2 Additional findings

These findings are *additional* in the sense that no specific hypotheses were formulated which the data described below test. The two areas involved are *language transfer* and *writing proficiency.* The first considers the influence of L1 (French) on the informants' performance in relation to the data taken from Test 3. The second considers the informants' overall proficiency in the written language, as manifested through 30 selected compositions.

Language transfer: the influence of French

Faerch and Kasper (1987:112)[11] define transfer as "a psycholinguistic procedure by means of which L2 learners activate their L1/Ln knowledge in developing or using their interlanguage". Transfer is therefore a creative - not a mechanical - process by which learners reconstruct the L2 on basis of similarities or differences between L1 and L2 features. Transfer is used by learners as one of the problem-solving procedures in the language learning situation. The question has often been that of determining the motivation behind learners' decisions to transfer one L1 feature rather than another. A generally accepted position is that learners' decision to transfer may depend (a) on the perceived distance between L1 and L2, (b) on the familiarity of the feature or (c) the urgency to communicate. Furthermore, there are differences in the way transfer occurs depending on whether it is activated in learning, reception or production. In Faerch and Kasper's (1987:112)[12] view, "a functional distinction should be maintained between transfer as a communication procedure, used either in production or reception, and transfer as a learning procedure".

Although the phenomenon is common to most L2 learners, it is generally found that learners at the lower proficiency levels are more prone to utilise L1 clues than more advanced learners. If this is true, then similarity and dissimilarity between L1 and L2 features (Gass 1984, Kellerman 1979, 1983) play a major role in the learner's decision-making as to what should be transferred. In which case, it is important that we have some ability to predict where the phenomenon in question will and will not occur (Gass 1984). The influence of French as the informants' L1 has been considered with reference to item 3 (Test 3). The item was selected because it includes, among the choices provided, two verb forms (*has, had* which are likely to be translated in English with their French meanings. It was expected that the informants' knowledge of verb forms in this particular situation would be influenced by their knowledge of the French verb system. Item 3 invited the informants to complete the following sentence with the following forms:

```
My sister ..... 26 years old when she got married.
        A. had
        B. was
        C. is
        D. has
```

Table 7.23 summarises the informants' responses for item 3. The table is organised as follows: column 1 lists the different choices provided and columns 2, 3, 4 and 5 give the percentages of choices made by the informants according to Groups.

The responses show that more than one third of G1 informants chose *had* alongside *was*, whereas at G2 and G3 progressively fewer informants considered *had* a possible

Table 7.23 — Percentages of choices for item 3, Test 3

Choices made	G1	G2	G3	NS
A (had)	37.8	12.5	5.1	-
B (was)	62.2	90.0	94.9	100
C (is)	5.4	-	-	-
D (has)	2.7	-	2.6	-

choice. Those informants who chose *had* carried into English the exact translation of the French equivalent *avait*. What then occurred was therefore a literal transfer of the French equivalent. Some informants chose both *had* and *was*. It may be said that those informants who selected both *had* and *was* were in a transitional stage of learning characterised by *free variation*. Learning, for these informants, consists of sorting out the appropriate function through a match of forms *was* and *had* with their respective functions in English (Ellis 1987, Faerch and Kasper 1987). The responses show that the use of the IL form *had* dramatically decreases from G1 to G3, while that of the TL form *was* shows a corresponding increase across levels. This suggests a progressive eradication of the L1 influence represented by *had* and its replacement by *was*.

Two observations, among others, emerge from the discussion of this item. Firstly, that the phenomenon of transfer almost always exists in second language learning even at more advanced levels. This supports Ringbom's (1981:89)[13] argument that "there is a tendency in foreign language learners to transfer function words from one foreign language to another even if the correct and incorrect words are rather dissimilar in sounds". Secondly, it is clear from the example that there are differences in the way the phenomenon is eradicated. One possible explanation is that learners transfer of L1 features is eradicated at different rates depending on the learner's perception of the distance between L1 and L2, on the faimiliarity of the feature or on the urgency to communicate.

Composition

Larsen-Freeman (1983) argues that

> the assessment of proficiency of any group of L2 learners requires a two-step procedure. The first will be to use one performance variable to make a gross estimate of a learner's overall L2 proficiency. Once an individual learner has been categorised as 'beginning', for example, a second step might involve the use of another performance variable to more precisely identify

his or her proficiency (Larsen-Freeman 1983:300-1)[14].

According to this view, a composition test type can be used to determine the learners' overall proficiency because it leaves the learners free to choose their own language. It is, however, claimed that many of the problems faced by our students stem, not so much from the syntactic difficulties of the English language, but rather from the difficulty of creating meaning in writing because there is less attention to form and more attention to content (Bialystok 1982, Tarone 1988). That is, writing includes expressing thoughts in a more realistic context as well as requiring the use of unconscious grammar based on spontaneous knowledge of the language. Many researchers (Gartz 1985, Kumpf 1982, Hassan 1986, etc.) have also concluded that narrative is the best source for revealing learners' knowledge of tense and aspect relations.

Evaluation procedure

A total of 30 compositions, ten from each group, were selected randomly for impressionistic evaluation. Ten native speakers were asked to evaluate the 30 compositions written by the non-native informants. The native speakers were requested to do three things:

(i) read the compositions as many times as necessary to enable them to assess every composition in one the three classes *very good, good* or *poor* on the basis of the overall knowledge of language exhibited;
(ii) decide whether the informants' compositions were *relevant* or *irrelevant* in the way they treated the topic provided; and
(iii) determine whether the tense favoured by the informants was present, i.e., [- past] or past, i.e., [+ past].

The researcher's decision to consider only 30 instead of 119 was motivated by three reasons: Firstly, it was believed that a detailed analysis of each composition was judged not necessary because a detailed description of another set of compositions from the same population is offered in the preliminary study to this project. Secondly, the present study is not concerned with discourse analysis and, therefore, does not need detailed description of compositions including features such as text organisation, length of sentences, etc. And thirdly, the judgement being impressionistic, there was no need to use more than a restricted sub-set of the whole sample. For these reasons, the analysis of the composition was limited to an impressionistic evaluation, i.e., on the overall use of language. The overall results of native speakers' decisions on the informants' compositions are displayed in tables 7.24 and 7.25.

Table 7.24 — Evaluation results of NNS informants' compositions.

Inf/Group	Overall Impression			Relevance to Topic		Tense favoured	
G3	very good	good	poor	relevant	irrelevant	+ past	- past
1		V			V	V	
2			V		V	V	
3	V			V		V	
4			V		V	V	
5		V			V	V	
6		V		V		V	
7			V		V	V	
8	V				V	V	
9		V			V	V	
10	V			V		V	
G2							
11			V		V		V
12			V		V	V	
13			V	V		V	
14	V			V		V	
15		V			V		V
16	V				V	V	
17	V				V	V	
18		V			V	V	
19		V			V	V	
20	V			V		V	

Inf/Group	Overall Impression			Relevance to Topic		Tense favoured	
G1	very good	good	poor	relevant	irrelevant	+ past	- past
21		V		V		V	
22		V			V	V	
23		V			V	V	
24			V		V		V
25			V		V		V
26			V		V		V
27		V			V	V	
28		V			V		V
29	V				V	V	
30			V		V	V	

Table 7.25 — A summarised evaluation of NNS informants' compositions.

Group	Overall Impression			Relevance to Topic		Tense favoured	
	very good	good	poor	relevant	irrelevant	past	present
G3	30	40	30	30	70	100	-
G2	40	30	30	40	60	80	20
G1	10	50	40	10	90	60	40

Table 7.24 enters the individual results for the informants selected. The first column of the table shows the informants' reference numbers as follows: 1 to 10 for G3 informants, 11 to 20 for G2 informants and 21 to 30 for G1 informants. Columns 2, 3 and 4 enter the informants' *overall performance*, i.e., use of language structures, concord, punctuation, etc., columns 5 and 6 the degree of *topic relevance,* i.e., whether the description of the topic was relevant or irrelevant, and the last two columns show the informants' *favoured tense,* i.e., whether the past or the present was favoured.

All these results are summarised in table 7.25. This latter table gives the percentages of the informants for each group for the three categories already described. The results of the first three columns show that there is no difference in the overall proficiency between G2 and G3. However, there were slightly more informants from G2 (i.e., 40%) whose compositions were relevant to the topic than it was the case with G3 informants (only 30%). But in the last category (*tense use*), all the G3 informants favoured past, whereas 20% of the informants from G2 failed to do so. G1 informants present a different picture. Only 10% of composition from this group was judged *very good*, while 50% of the group produced *good* compositions. However, 90% G1 compositions were irrelevant to the topic, and 40% of the informants from this group (G1) favoured the non-past tense forms. These results lend themselves to several observations, two of which seem especially relevant to the present discussion, namely:

(i) There is an important difference in the performance of G1 and the other two groups, G2 and G3;
(ii)There is no clear difference between G2 and G3 performance, which confirms most of the results in this study, i.e., that G2 and G3 informants did not produce, on many occasions, results that were significantly different.
These observations further confirm Lund's (1986) view that the informants are typical classroom learners who have good correction scores, but weaker production scores.

7.3 Summary of the findings

7.3.1 Summary of the quantitative results

In chapter 6 an overall quantitative analysis of the data was presented. The analysis showed with the help of tables and graphs where the groups of informants' perfomance was either different or comparable. This quantitative information was complemented and supported by a qualitative analysis of Hypotheses set to test specific features using data from the different Tests. The data were analysed by means of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Student's t-test and Pearson Correlation Coefficient.

The first of these statistical techniques was used to indicate whether in general the groups performed significantly differently on any of the tasks measured. The second

enabled us to compare the scores obtained by the different groups (G1, G2, G3 and NS) to determine the eventual progression between G1 and G2, between G2 and G3 and towards NS norms. Finally Pearson Correlation Coefficient was computed to show whether the variables analysed are correlated and to determine the strength of such relationships between the different tasks in the study. Assuming that the Tests designed for this study can be used successfully for assessing the informants' knowledge of verb forms, then the results obtained clearly indicate differences in the informants' ability to deal with verb forms. Using the first statistical tecnique, i.e., the ANOVA, the following overall picture of the informants' results was produced.

Figure 7.1 — Group mean scores on five domains in the use/knowledge of verb forms

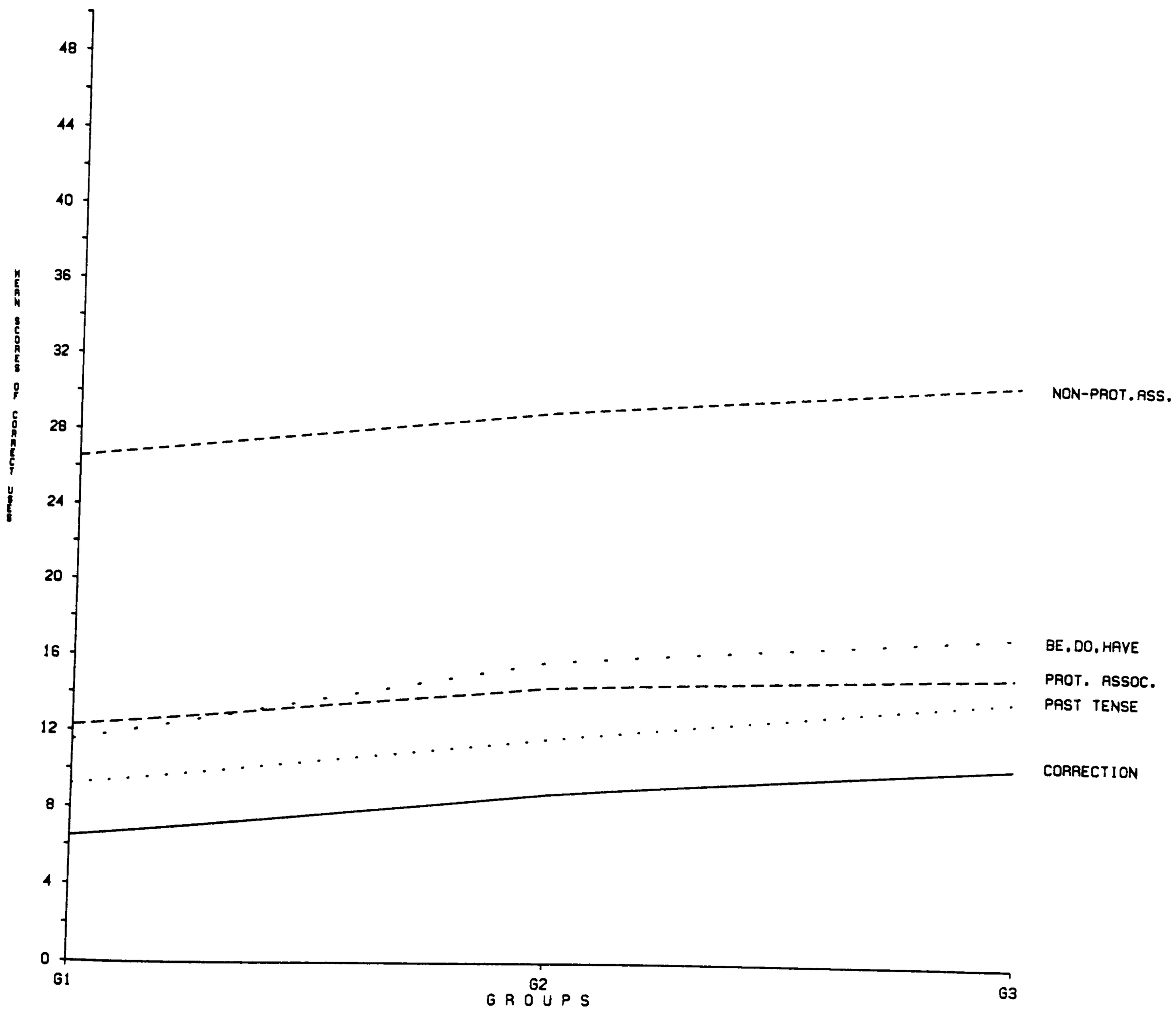


Figure 7.1 shows the progression lines for five domains in the use/knowledge of verb forms. Test 1 results are described in two domains, knowledge of past tense marking as a whole and knowledge of past tense marking for *be do* and *have*. The results for past tense marking are taken from table 7.1, and those for *be, do* and *have* from tables 7.4, 7.5 and 7.6 respectively. The results for the third domain, i.e., verb correction, are taken from table 7.14 (Test 2). The results for the fourth and fifth domains *prototypical and non-prototypical associations* are combined results taken from tables 7.16 and 7.20 (Note that the results for domains 4 and 5 do not include data consisting of NSs' judgements on NNS informants' explanations of the circumstances of verb form uses, which were discussed separately in Hypothesis 7).

In general, the results displayed in figure 7.1 typically reflect those in figure 6.3 in that there is a continuous progression for most of the variables from G1 to G3 and towards the TL norms. However, the results of *be, do* and *have* show clearly that there is a much greater improvement between G1 and G2 than between G2 and G3. This is not the case with the results for prototypical association between verb forms and contexts of use.

7.3.2 Summary of the findings

The analysis of data in the present study was based on 7 Hypotheses which were drawn up to investigate, among many others, the following questions:

Knowledge of verb forms:
1. To what extent the occurrence of tense marking shows progression from G1 to G3;
2. To what extent L2 learners' ability to use verb forms productively differs from that of NS.

Knowledge of the relationship between verb forms and contexts of use:
3. To what extent learners' perception of form and function reflects their levels of proficiency.

Knowledge about the L2:
4. To what extent learners can explain the use of verb forms.

Relationship of the findings to previous studies:
5. To what extent the established position as related in previous studies and in the IL literature as a whole can be empirically validated.

When considering these results, it is important to remember (a) that the Hypotheses formulated for this study have been evaluated only in the context of the (student) population from which the informants were drawn; and (b) that the interpretation of the data and the conclusions of the findings apply to the identified population. A total of 7 hypotheses were formulated to investigate the informants' formal and functional knowledge of verb forms. These Hypotheses were tested with data from four different Tests. The three areas that were investigated include the

informants' knowledge of verb forms, their ability to relate verb forms to contexts of use and their metalingual knowledge of the circumstances of use of verb forms. Each of these areas is summarised separately.

7.3.3 Learners' formal knowledge of verb forms

The analysis of learners' formal knowledge was investigated in Hypotheses 1, 3 and 4 and focused on tense marking and verb correction. Lexical and inflectional verbs were considered and tense marking was analysed from non-past and past standpoints. The results for lexical past tense marking show significant differences between all the groups, i.e., between intermediate and higher intermediate, between higher intermediate and advanced learners, and between these learners and the NS group. The results for inflectional past tense marking are significant only between intermediate and higher intermediate learners, but not between higher intermediate and advanced learners. There was no significant difference between groups for non-past tense marking. The results provide evidence in support of the position established in previous studies (Wolfram 1985, Sato 1985) that **L2 learners favour non-past past tense forms, even in past time contexts. This suggests that the over-production of unmarked tense forms is a persistent problem even for advanced learners.** This view is further supported by the data from the preliminary study to this project where cases of non-past tense marking were discussed (see also the results of learners' overall proficiency on compositions, tables 7.24 and 7.25).

The analysis of the data relating to learners' ability to recognise the correctness of verb forms shows that **recognition of correctness does not necessarily imply the ability to make appropriate corrections.** The results show that at both stages, i.e., that of recognition of correctness and that of actual correction, learners display important variations. The results show that despite being advanced learners (in terms of experience and time of exposure), learners are still uncertain in their ability to discriminate correct from incorrect verb forms. According to Lund (1986),

> the increased use of discrimination activities in instruction is compatible with comprehension-based teaching approaches that de-emphasise the early explicit production... In other words, discrimination activities may help students develop a sense of what the target language requires before they are asked to produce it (Lund 1986:156-7)[15].

On the other hand, if one takes the view that learners' difficulty in recognising and correcting also depends on the types of features to be corrected (Lund 1986, Tarone 1979) in that some features are less difficult to correct than others, then the results for tense correction (Test 2) confirm Lund's (1986) claim that correction is not a regular process even within a given population of learners. The analysis of the data collected for this study shows that not all the features investigated produced

consistent results within groups and across levels, and that there was fluctuation which could be related to the forms requiring correction. That is, some features were less problematic to correct (e.g., the third person -s) than others (e.g., lexical past tense marking).

7.3.4 Learners' knowledge of verb forms

Two aspects of learners' knowledge of verb forms were investigated:
(i) learners' ability to supply appropriate verb forms, and
(ii) learners' ability to relate verb forms to contexts of use.

Learners' ability to supply appropriate verb forms

Although L2 learners are hypothesised to have a common processing system, individual differences between the performance of one and another or between one group and another caused by different external factors such as setting and teaching conditions will result in different repertoires. It may therefore be argued that the development of an IL system also depends on the linguistic repertoire developed by the learner. Additionally, Gatbonton (1978), Ellis (1895), Tarone (1982, 1985, 1988) and many others share the view that L2 learners make use of a range of styles according to situational or linguistic context.

Learners' ability to supply verb forms was investigated in Hypothesis 2. Three verb forms were considered:*be, do* and *have.* It was observed that in supplying *be* and *do*, there was a 100% agreement among the NS speakers, but the results varied for learners, i.e., 67% supplied *be* and 72% supplied *do* in the same contexts. The results were, however, more varied for *have*, where only 66% NSs and 8% learners supplied *have* for appropriate contexts. The results show that learners were very consistent for those verb forms which are easy and familiar, but inconsistent with *have* when required to supply it in an idiomatic context.

Another striking observation on the results obtained in testing Hypothesis 2 is the difference and level of variation revealed in the choice of verb forms between the NSs and the learners. The response to item 10 (Test 1) *Sedec has/have* (NSs) and *Sedec is/sells* (learners) offers a perfect illustration of such variation. The findings lend further support to Raupach's (1987) view that **there is a tendency in foreign language learners to vary to a much wider degree than the native speakers in their use of second language structures at a specific point in time**.

Learners' ability to relate verb forms to contexts of use

The analysis of the data was based on the view that the relationship between a verb form and its context (e.g., reference to time) are not always in a one-to-one correspondence (Smith 1981, Hung 1986, Sato 1985, 1990). The results from this study show that, on the one hand, the different contexts in which tasks were presented, (i.e., whether as a text or a series of discrete items), have played a

significant role in determining learners' decisions to relate verb forms to functions and, on the other hand, the nature of the relationship, (i.e., whether prototypical or non-prototypical), caused differences in the way learners relate verb forms to contexts of use. **Where there was a prototypical association between a verb form and reference to time, learners' ability to relate both notions was less problematic and produced more consistent results. However, in cases where the verb form was overruled by co-text or context, learners experienced many difficulties.** It is assumed that learners' difficulties were caused by, among other reasons, learners' limited knowledge of circumstances of use and by their knowledge of tense marking.

7.3.5 Learners' metalingual knowledge of circumstances of verb form use

The results in this domain suggest that **learners' knowledge of language is different from their knowledge about language.** That is, learners' knowledge about the L2 and, in particular, the learners' ability to verbalise their knowledge of the circumstances in the use of verb is in many ways a different kind of knowledge from the kind described in the first six Hypotheses. Evidence for this rests on three facts: Firstly, the results from Tests 1, 2 and 3 which are internally more consistent than the results obtained from Test 4 where learners were asked to reveal knowledge about language. Secondly, the variation in the results for Test 4 offers further evidence that knowledge about L2 is not as accessible to learners as knowledge of language, i.e., **there is a difference between knowing a language and knowing how to describe this knowledge.** And thirdly, the emphasis laid on non-default use of language in this task confirms that most learners in the sample have difficulty in understanding this aspect of language learning. This further supports Lund's (1986) claim that metalinguistic performance may not accurately reflect formal accuracy. It may therefore be argued that the differences in results are due not only to different elicitation procedures but also to the fact that different knowledge domains were being investigated.

To sum up the discussion on learners' knowledge of and knowledge about the L2: the overall results show evidence of progression between the intermediate, the higher intermediate and the advanced levels for most of the variables investigated. However, the results indicate a much greater progression between the intermemediate and the higher intermediate levels than between the higher intermediate and the advanced levels for most variables. One can explain such differences by arguing that **between intermediate and higher intermediate levels learners are acquiring the default use of tense forms, in which case one would expect considerable improvement. But, between higher intermediate and advanced levels where learners are acquiring fine tuning, i.e., cases of verb forms overruled by context or co-text, learning is likely to be more difficult and consequently results in slower rate of improvement.** Learners' poor results when asked to supply metalingual knowledge seem to be related (i) to the overall teaching system for these groups of learners, and (ii) to

their limited exposure to and experience of the TL. Table 7.26 summarises the hypotheses and their results.

Table 7.26 — Summary of Hypotheses and results of the study

Hyp.	Knowledge domain	Variable investigated	Data from	Reference to previous studies	Results and Observations
1	Tense marking	Ability to mark tenses (past/non-past)	Test 1	Hassan (1987) Lund (1986) Sato (1985), (1990) Wolfram (1985)	The view that learners favour non-past tense forms is proved. There is no difference between lexical and inflectional tense marking
2	Lexical choice	Ability to supply verb forms in contexts	Test 1	Palmer (1988) Raupach (1987) Wolfram (1985)	Learners' ability varies with stage of learning, teaching emphasis and cultural influence
3	Tense marking rules	Ability to recognise correctness	Test 2	Arnaud (1989) Bartch (1987) Lund (1986) Smith (1981)	Learners' ability improves with more learning. Hypothesis is confirmed.
4	Tense marking rules	Ability to make appropriate corrections	Test 2	Lund (1986) Pienemann (1988) Tarone (1979)	That formal training has an impact on the ability to correct is proved.
5	Form/function association	Ability to match verb forms and contexts of use	Tests 1,3, 4.	Hung (1987) Laufer (1989) Sato (1990)	Results show no significant differences for any given context type.
6	Form/function association	Ability to associate tense and time	Test 4	Hung (1987) Smith (1981) Towell (1987)	Learners' results are significant for default use of language, but not for non-default use
7	Metalingual knowledge	Ability to provide explanations for verb form use.	Test 4	Baker (1978) Lund (1986) Tarone (1988)	Results show little difference between the three groups Hypothesis is neither proved nor rejected.

Chapter seven references

1. R. Towell 1987 Approaches to the analysis of oral development of the advanced learner, in: Coleman, J.A. and Towell R. (eds), *The Advanced Language Learner,* London: SUFLRA-CILT, p.169

2. W. Wolfram 1985 Variability in tense marking: A case for the obvious, *Language Learning,* 35/2, p. 233

3. C. J. Sato 1985 *The Syntax of Conversation in Interlanguage Development,* PhD Dissertation, Los Angeles, p.143

4. See also Wilkins' (1974) views on *lexical choice* and J. L. Arnaud (1989) on the importance of lexical knowledge.

5. R. Bartsch 1987 *Norms of Language: Theoretical and Practical Aspects,* London: Longman, p.xii

6. H.W.J. Hung 1986 *Interlanguage and temporal expressions: The development and use of tense-aspect and some time adverbials in Cantonese learners,* PhD Dissertation, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, p.188

7. B. Laufer 1989 A Factor of difficultyin vocabulary learning: deceptive transparency, in: Nation, P. and Carter, R. (eds), p.12

8. C.J. Sato 1990 *The syntax of conversation in Interlanguage,* Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, p.89

9. N. Smith 1981 Grammaticality, Time and Tense, *Biological Sciences,* Vol. 295, No 1077, p.253

10. H.W.J Hung 1986 op. cit. p.6

11. C. Faerch and G. Kasper 1987 Perspectives on Language Transfer, *Applied Linguistics,* 8/2, p.112

12. C. Faerch and G. Kasper 1987 op. cit. p. 112

13. H. Ringbom 1981 The influence of other languages on the vocabulary of foreign language learners, in: Nikel, G. and Nehls, D. (eds), p. 89

24. D. Larsen-Freeman 1983 Assessing global second language proficiency, in: Seliger, H.W. and Long, M.H. (eds), pp. 300-1

15. J.R. Lund 1986 *The Formal accuracy of College German students with the finite verb on communicative production task and linguistic awareness tasks,* PhD Dissertation, University of Minnesota, pp.156-7

Chapter VIII

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

This chapter reviews the study in three sections. The first section restates the objectives of the study and summarises the findings as they relate to the informants' ability to produce verb forms productively. The second section presents the main implications of the study on the basis of the domains investigated in the study. The third section considers some limitations of the study on the basis of which specific recommendations are made for further studies into the acquisition of verb forms in English.

8.1 Conclusions and summary of findings

This study set out to analyse and explain advanced L2 learners' knowledge of verb forms, and focused on the extent to which time spent in a formal acquisition setting contributes to the acquisition of verb forms in English. The study was motivated by the learners' poor performance in the researcher's working context, and was therefore based on the researcher's own experience as a teacher of English to student-teachers at a Teachers' Training College.

The survey of literature presented in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 was intended to offer a theoretical background for the study and to provide specific information on verb forms from both theoretical and experimental standpoints. The preliminary task was designed not only to collect reliable information on learners' overall knowledge of language, but also to devise a model of language description for the main study. The analysis of data was carried out in three domains: (a) learners' knowledge of verb morphology, in particular tense marking and the ability to recognise inappropriate forms and replace them with appropriate ones; (b) learners' knowledge of form-function relationships as revealed in the ability to match verb forms and contexts of use and to associate tense and time; and (c) learners' knowledge about the L2 as shown in their ability to explain the circumstances of the use of verb forms.

The overall results indicate that there was a continuous progression towards the TL norms in domains (a) and (b) but not in domain (c). A closer analysis of the progression for the first two domains (a) and (b) revealed that the improvement towards the TL norms was, for most variables, much greater between the intermediate and higher intermediate than between higher intermediate and advanced learners. That is, there was a significant movement in the direction of TL norms between the intermediate and higher intermediate levels, whilst between higher intermediate and advanced levels such a movement occurred only in limited cases.

In the domain of the form-function relationship, the overall picture drawn from learners' results between intermediate and higher intermediate suggests that at this stage very little of the knowledge is automatic and that everything has to be created, as other studies, for example Towell (1987), have shown. Between higher intermediate and advanced levels, learners' results indicated that the majority of learners had already acquired the default use, but not the non-default use of verb forms and functions. The results in table 7.22, for instance, show that very few learners even at the advanced level could be considered as having progressed beyond the default use.

In short, the findings can briefly be summarised as follows:

i. Time of exposure and level of experience are important variables which are closely related to IL variation and achievement, i.e., they have a significant effect on the rate of approximation towards the TL norms.

ii. In the earlier stages, where learners are acquiring the default use of verb forms and functions, movement in the direction of TL norms is faster than in the later stage where learners are trying to understand the non-default uses. (It is important to note that these stages correspond to those initially devised and they are not necessarily natural developmental stages).

iii. There is a parallel development between the ability to mark tenses and the ability to supply verb forms.

iv. At the first stage, represented by G1, more learners favour unmarked or non-past forms even in past time contexts.

v. The ability to discriminate correct from incorrect forms is closely related to the ability to make appropriate corrections. However, the ability to make appropriate corrections requires an ability to recognise the class type of the incorrect features.

8.2 Implications of the study

8.2.1 L2 learning

The findings from this study draw attention to the distinction between knowledge of the L2 and knowledge about the L2. These are two kinds of knowledge whose difference has not been sufficiently emphasised in the literature. In most formal L2 settings, learners are taught about the language, but little is known about the learners' ability to verbalise their knowledge in this area. This study therefore shows that in the early stage of Higher education, learners are generally good at learning languages (also Ntahwakuderwa 1987).

However, the findings from this study indicate that learners cannot easily verbalise their knowledge. This means that teachers need to find out why learners cannot verbalise what they have been taught. Assuming that learning languages and learning about them are closely associated in the language classroom, the findings

from the present study suggest that such an association is only theoretical and that there is not necessarily such a close association in practice. In the light of the findings from the present study, it is of the upmost importance that additional classes are organised to teach student-teachers how to talk about the language they will be expected to teach. Such a programme would be based on the view that language users, including native speakers and learners in particular, refer to one given faculty when processing knowledge of language and another when processing knowledge about language. This assumption certainly merits further research.

8.2.2 IL variation

Evidence of IL variation can be seen through the differences in results, both within and between groups. That is, the results obtained for each level were not identical, but only broadly comparable and varied with the task type. In other words, although the different elicitation measures appeared to be very comparable, the picture of IL displayed by learners is that of variable competence at the same stage. The picture of IL obtained suggests that there is a relationship between the methods of elicitation and the results in that the different elicitation tasks produced similar but not identical results.

The study therefore shows that even with carefully attended presentation of language tasks, a learner will not produce identical results where the tasks differ. Tarone's (1982, 1985, 1988) view of IL variation is that learners acquire language through the unattended mode, despite the fact that there is variation in the learner's repertoire that is related to context. A learner has a repertoire of speech styles at any one stage during the learning period and that progression towards the TL is the result of a dynamic change in the use of language in relation to context. In this study, IL as a dynamic system is seen not only through changes at the different proficiency levels, i.e., intermediate, higher intermediate and advanced, but also, as predicted by Tarone, in the slight but appreciable differences obtained in each different elicitation context.

8.2.3 IL theory

There is evidence from the present study to show that at any one stage, learners have certain knowledge about marking tenses and this is consistent for most of the verb forms investigated. The study maintains that those stages of knowledge at given levels of language learning are to be viewed as a continuum towards the TL norms. Learners' knowledge of verb forms is presented as a continuum through which all learners may be hypothesised to progress. The knowledge of the existence of such a continuum should allow us to make decisions not only about what to teach or test, but also should reveal what teachers can expect from a given group of learners. This information is useful for both language teachers and Education planners working with these types of learner, so that what has been discovered about the nature of the learners' knowledge continuum can be used, for instance,

in syllabus design and in the development of teaching materials.

In the same way, the study shows that learners have a simplified knowledge of the form-function relationship, i.e., at the early stage of L2 learning IL is seen as a simplified code. This is seen through learners' tendency at an early stage not to mark tenses where there are (past) time references, suggesting that the presence of a time reference is sufficient and that of tense marking would be redundant.

8.2.4 Rate of approximation to the TL norms

The results of the study show that there is a continuous progression from intermediate to advanced level, but that the progression is greater between the intermediate and higher intermediate level than between the higher intermediate and advanced level. These findings suggest that one should not expect total approximation to the TL norms. This means that in the early stage of learning, improvement is greater than in later stages and that one should expect the rate of progress to slow as learners approach TL norms. Time spent in formal training does not guarantee a consistent rate of progression towards TL norms. This view is consistent with the *model of language description* proposed in this study (chap. 5.2) and is supported by most of the results. The model suggests that when learners are acquiring the default uses of language there is consistent progression, but at a later stage where learners are expected to understand the non-default uses, progress is slower.

8.2.5 Language theories: default meaning in language description

The present study hypothesised a three-stage model of IL description combining the notion of form-function and function-form with that of default meaning (Smith 1981) as follows:

```
IL Stage 1: Form and function are not consistently marked:
        e.g., I  come  to your home  yesterday.
              I  come  to your home  tomorrow.
IL Stage 2: Form is in default use with function:
        e.g., I will come to your home tomorrow.
              I came to your home yesterday.
IL Stage 3: Default uses of form are sometimes overruled
            by function (co-text or context).
        e.g., If I came to your home tomorrow, would you help me.
```

The findings from the present study only partially confirm this model in that two kinds of results were predominantly revealed. On the one hand, intermediate learners' overproduction of non-past verb forms even in past time contexts is consistent with the stage 1 hypothesis, while learners' knowledge of past tense marking, for instance, provides evidence of learners' default uses of language at

stage 2. On the other hand, the learners did not produce consistent results in the case of non-default uses (stage 3), as illustrated by the results in tables 7.20 and 7.22.

These results show that there is a relatively good progress towards acquiring default uses of language forms and functions, but where the default forms and functions are overridden, learning is much more difficult. However, when NSs are included the results show that the model can be used to describe the language of native and non-native speakers taken together. The model is therefore not absolutely proved for L2 learners. This means that the sample used in the present study was not sufficiently advanced to represent stage 3.

8.2.6 Conducting research studies

Further research may benefit from this study in two ways, on the one hand, by avoiding aspects of the study that caused difficulties, and on the other hand, by building on what has been emphasised as useful. Despite minor practical difficulties mentioned at various stages of the study, the measures devised in the methodology chapter have largely produced consistent results, i.e., a greater improvement between the intermediate and higher intermediate learners than between higher intermediate and advanced learners across all the measures. These results show that these are reliable ways of measuring language proficiency.

However, in tasks where learners are required to provide more than one verb form for a given context (as in Test 3), it is difficult to be certain of those verb forms which are most natural or the most unmarked for the learners (although some indication was given in table 6.10). One possible way of designing such a test in a future study would be to ask learners to provide as many verb forms as they thought would be appropriate in the given context and rank them in order of appropriacy. On the basis of such responses one might be able to determine those verb forms that are most natural for learners.

Conducting a study of this kind also requires the contribution of native speakers. One has to note that, although the contribution of native speakers in a study of this kind is crucial both to determine the criterion for evaluation of L2 learners and to decide on the validity of L2 learners' knowledge about the TL, obtaining NSs' judgements on L2 learners' descriptive knowledge of L2 forms proved to be time consuming and therefore to a degree impractical.

8.3 Recommendations for further studies

8.3.1 On testing the model of language description

In order to test the model of language description suggested in the present study, it seems essential in further research to include in the sample genuinely advanced L2 learners who can fill the gap between G3 informants and native speakers in order

to determine whether the performance displayed by a full range of learners would follow a linear progression through learning stages. This would allow a researcher not only to support the findings of this study, but also to determine the rate and nature of approximation towards the TL.

8.3.2 Obtaining native speaker judgement

It is generally accepted in the literature that in order to make a valid assessment of the data in IL studies, one needs to ask native speakers of the TL to perform the same tasks as are performed by the subjects (Tarone 1987). Although obtaining NS judgements or other responses allows us to establish a valid target baseline, getting valid judgements on the circumstances of use of verbs, i.e., on learners' knowledge about the L2, proved to be time consuming and impractical, particularly in cases where NSs found it difficult to decide on the appropriateness of L2 learners' explanations. In addition, because this part of the test was concerned with knowledge about the language, obtaining data that could be manipulated statistically proved to be complex and difficult.

8.3.3 Instruments of measurement

These kinds of instruments of measurement may, in specific cases, give unexpected results. The data obtained in the item relating to the idiomatic use of *have* are typical examples of what learners and even NSs are likely to produce in cases where exceptional items are included in the standard instruments of measurement. It is therefore important to note that, with this kind of test, it is difficult to dis-associate lexical and grammatical knowledge.

8.4 Concluding observations

This study has offered a cross-sectional profile of L2 learners' knowledge of verb forms across different proficiency levels. In particular, the study argues that learners' acquisition of verb form-function relationships follows a number of stages which are closely related to Smith's (1981) notion of default and non-default use of language. The overall results support the view that where form and function are in default use, learners' progression is continuous, but in cases of non-default uses, learners' results show a less consistent progression.

These findings therefore show that the learners' knowledge of the L2 improves more consistently than their knowledge about the L2. However, if by definition a language teacher is expected both to know the L2 and to be able to verbalise this knowledge, then the findings from this study lead us to conclude that these learners are not sufficiently trained to become teachers of English. It is therefore clear that the present study aligns itself with some other studies on language learning/teaching in Zaire that argue the need for better training in our Teachers' Training Colleges if we want to produce capable and well qualified teachers of English.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Acct-Cerdotola, 1983 *Atlas Linguistique de l'Afrique Centrale: Atlas linguistique du Zaire,* Yaoundé.

Adjemian, C. 1976 On the Nature of Interlanguage System, *Language Learning,* 26:297-320.

Adjemian, C. 1983 The Transferability of lexical properties, in: S. Gass and L. Selinker (eds), *Language Transfer in language learning,* Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Alderson, J.C. 1978a *A study of cloze procedures with Native and Non-native speakers of English,* Ph Thesis, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh.

Alderson, J.C. and Hughes,A. (eds), 1981 Issues in Language Testing, *The British Council ELT Document 111,* London.

Allwright, R. 1987 Concluding Comments, In: R. Ellis (ed), *Second Language in Context,* London: Prentice-Hall.

Andersen, R. 1980 The role of creolization in Schumann's pidginization hypothesis for second language acquisition, in: Scarcella and Krashen (eds).

Andersen, R.W., 1984b The One to One Principle of Interlanguage construction, *Language Learning,* 34/4:77-95.

Anderson, J.R. 1980 *Cognitive Psychology and its Implications,* San Francisco: Freeman.

Anderson, J.R. 1983 *The Architecture of Cognition,* Cambridge: Havard University Press.

Arnaud, P. 1989 Vocabulary and Grammar: a multitrait-multimethod investigation, in: Nation, P. and Carter, R. (eds) *Vocabulary Acquisition, AILA REVIEW 6,* pp.56-65.

Atkinson, M. 1982 *Explanation in the Study of Child Language Development,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bailey, C.J.N. 1973 *Variation and Linguistic Theory,* Washington: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Bailey, N., Maden, C. and Krashen,S. 1974 Is there a natural sequence in Adult Language Learning ?, *Language Learning,* 24/2:235-243.

Baker, C.L. 1978 *Introduction to Generative Transformational Syntax,* New York: Prentice-Hall.

Bartsch, R. 1987 *Norms of Language: Theoretical and Practical Aspects,* London:Longman.

Beede, L. 198O Sociolinguistic variation and style shifting in SLA, *Language Learning,* 3O:433-48.

Bellugi, U. 1968 Linguistic Mechanism Underlying Child Speech, *Proceedings of the Conference on Language and Language Behaviour,* pp. 36-50.

Bialystok, E. 1979 An Analytical View of Second Language Competence: a model and some evidence, *The Modern Language Journal,* LXIII: 257-62.

Bialystok, E. 1982 On the relationship between knowing and using forms, *Applied Linguistics III,* pp. 181-206.

Bialystok, E. 1983 Some factors in the selection and implementation of communication strategies, In: Faerch, C. and Kasper, G. (eds), *Strategies in Interlanguage Communication,* London: Longman.

Bialystok, E. and Sharwood, S. M. 1985 Interlanguage is not a state of mind: An evaluation of the construct for second language acquisition, *Applied Linguistics,* 6:101-117.

Bickerton, D. 1975 *Dynamics of a Creole System,* London: Cambridge University Press.

Bickerton, D. 1981 Discussion. In: Andersen, R.W. (ed.), *New Dimensions in Second Language Acquisition Research,* Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers, pp. 202-206.

Biselela, T. 1990 *The learning of English by Bilingual speakers of Ciluba and French in Zaire: Problems and Solustions,* PhD Thesis, School of Education, University of Durham.

Bley-Vroman, R. 1983 The Comparative Fallacy in Interlanguage Studies: the case of systematicity, *Language Learning,* 33:1-18.

Bokamba, E.G. 1982 Education and development in Zaire, in: Ntalaja, N. (ed), *The Crisis in Zaire: Myths and Realities*, New Jersey: African World Press.

Brian, H. 1982 *Language Testing,* M.E.P.L., Hayes.

Broeder, P., Extra, G. and Hout, R.V. 1989 Processes in the developing lexicon of adult immigrant learners, in: Nation, P. and Carter, R. (eds), pp. 86-109.

Brooks, N. 1960 *Language and Language Learning,* New York: Harcourt Brace and World.

Brown, J.D., 1988 *Understanding Research in Second Language Learning: A teacher's guide to statistics and research design,* C.U.P., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, P. and Fraser, C. 1979 Speech as a Marker of Situation, In: Scherer,K. and Giles, H. (eds), *Social Markers in Speech,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, R. 1976 *A First Language: The Early Stages,* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Burmeister, H. and Ufert, D. 198O Strategy Switching, In: Felix (ed), *Second Language Development: Trends and Issues,* Tubingen: Gunter Narr Verlag.

Butler, C. 1985 *Statistics in Linguistics,* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Byers, B.A. 1989 *Defining norms for a non-standardized Language: A study of verbs and pronoun variation in Cajun French,* PhD Dissertation, unpublished, Indiana University.

Carmen, J.C. and Valian, V. 1985 Memory for French Negation by Students of French, *Language Learning,* Vol.35/2:165-180.

Carroll, J.B. and Hall, P.J. 1985 *Make your own Language Tests,* Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Carter, R. 1987 Is there a core vocabulary? Some implications for language teaching, *Applied Linguistics,* Vol8/2:178-193.

Chavez-Oller, M.A., Chihara, T., Weaver, K.A. and Oller, J.W. 1985 When are cloze items sensitive to constraints across sentences, *Language Learning* 35/2: 181-206.

Chomsky, N. 1959 Verbal Behaviour, *Language* 35:26-58.

Chomsky, N. 1965 *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax,* MIT.

Chomsky, N. 1966 Linguistic Theory, In: Mead, R.G.(ed), *Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages,* Menasha, Wis:George Banta.

Chomsky, N. 1975 *Reflections on Language,* New York: Pantheon Press.

Chomsky, N. 1982 *Some Concepts and Consequences of the Theory of Government and Binding,* Mass, Cambridge: Mitt Press.

Chryshochoos, J.E. 1990 *The Role of Theories of Language and Language Learning in the pre-service and in-service Training, Education and Development of Language Teachers,* PhD Dissertation, University of Durham.

Clahsen, H. and Muysken, P. 1989 The UG paradox in L2 acquisition, *Second Language Research,* Vol.1:1-29.

Coleman, J. A. and Towell, R. (eds), 1987 *The Advanced Language Learner,* London: SUFLRA/CILT.

Collins, W. 1987 *The Collins Dictionary and Thesaurus,* London.

Committee of Inquiry appointed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science under the Chairmanship of Sir Alan Bullock FBA, 1975 *Report of the Committee: A Language for Life* (The Bullock Report), London: HMSO.

Committee of Inquiry into the Teaching of English Language, 1988 *Report of the Committee* (Kingman Report), London: HMSO.

Comrie, B. 1982 *Language Universals and Linguistic Theory,* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Cook, V. 1973 The Comparison of Language Development in native children and foreign adults, *IRAL* XI:13-28.

Cooper, M.F. 1984 *Introducing SPSS-X,* Video tapes, University of Newcastle.

Corder, S.P. 1967 The Significance of Learners' Errors, *International Review of Applied Linguistics* 4:161-9.

Corder, S.P. 1971 Idiosyncratic Dialects and Error Analysis, *IRAL* 9/2

Corder, S.P. 1973 The Elicitation of Interlanguage, In: Svartik,J.(ed), *Errata: Papers on Error Analysis,* Lund: EWK Gleerup.

Corder, S.P. 1978a Language-learner Language, In: Richards, J.(ed), *Understanding Second and Foreign Language Learning,* Rowley, Mass: Newbury house.

Corder, S.P. 1981 *Error Analysis and Interlanguage,* Oxford: O.U.P.

Crystal, D. 1980 *A First Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Davies, A., Criper, C. and Howatt, A.P.R.(eds), 1984 *Interlanguage,* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Decamp, D. 1971 Implicational Scales and Sociolinguistic Linearity, *Linguistics* 13:30-43.

Dickerson, L. 1975 Interlanguage as a System of Variable Rules, *TESOL Quarterly* 9:401-7.

Dickerson, L. and Dickerson, W. 1977 Interlanguage phonology: current research and future directions, In: Corder,S.P. and Roulets, E. (eds), *The Notion of Simplification, Interlanguages and Pidgins,* pp. 18-3O.

Dittmar, N. 1980 *Ordering Adult Learners according to Language Abilities,* In: Felix, S. (ed), 1980a.

Dulay, H. and Burt, M. 1972 Goofing: an indicator of children's Second Language Learning Strategies, *Language Learning,* 22:235-252.

Dulay, H. and Burt, M. 1974 Natural Sequences in Child SLA, *Language Learning* 24:37-53.

Dulay, H. and Burt, M. 1977 Remarks on creativity in language acquisition, in: Burt, M., Dulay, H. and Finocchiaro, M. (eds). *Viewpoints on English as a Second Language,* New York: Regents.

Dulay, H. and Burt, M. 1978 Remarks on Creativity in Language Acquisition, In: Ritchie, W. (ed), *Second Language Acquisition Research,* Academic Press.

Dulay, H., Burt, M. and Krashen, S. 1982 *Language Two,* London: O.U.P.

Eckman, F.R. 1977 Markedness and the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, *Language Learning,* 27:315-330.

Eckman, F.R. 1983 The importance of the NL and TL in Interlanguage Phonology: A response to Eckman, *Language Learning* 33/3: 383-387.

Eckman, F., Bell, L. and Nelson, D. 1988 On the generalization of relative clause instruction in the acquisition of English as a second language, *Applied Linguistics,* Vol.9/1:1-20.

Ellis, R. 1982 The Origin of Interlanguage, *Applied Linguistics,* 3:207-23.

Ellis, R. 1984b Sources of variability in Interlanguage, *Paper presented at the IL seminar in honour of Pit Corder,* Edinburgh.

Ellis, R. 1985 *Understanding Second Language Acquisition,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. 1987 *Second Language Acquisition in Context,* London: Prentice Hall International.

Faerch, C. and Kasper, G. 1980 Processes and strategies in foreign language learning, *Interlanguage Studies Bulletin* 5/1: 47-118.

Faerch, C. and Kasper, G.(eds) 1983 *Strategies in Interlanguage communication,* London: Longman.

Faerch, C. and Kasper, G. 1987 Perspectives on Language Transfer, *Applied Linguistics,* 8/2:111-136.

Faerch, C., Haastrup, K. and Philipson, R. 1984 *Learner Language and Language Learning,* Copenhagen: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Fairman, T. 1988 Teaching the Englishes, *IRAL,* 26/2:115-126.

Fairman, T. 1989 Writing Descriptive Grammar, *The British Association for Applied Linguistics Newsletter* No 33:8-20 & No 34:7-20.

Farhady, H. and Hatch, E. 1982 *Research Design and Statistics for Applied Linguistics,* London: Newbury House.

Felix, S. 1980 Interference, Interlanguage and related Issues, In: Felix, S. (ed), *Second Language Development,* Tubingen: Gunther Narr.

Fillmore, W. 1979 Individual differences in second language acquisition, in: Fillmore, C. Kempler, D. and Wang, W. (eds), *Individual Differences in language ability and language behavior,* New York: Academic Press.

Finegan, E. and Besnier, N. 1989 *Language: Its Structure and Use*, San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Ferguson, C. 1971 *Language Structure and Language use*, Standford: Standford University Press.

Flynn, S., 1987 Contrast and Construction in a Parameter-Setting Model of L2 Acquisition, *Language Learning* 37/1: 19-62.

Flynn, S. and O'neil, W. (eds) 1988 *Linguistic Theory in Second Language Acquisition,* Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer.

Foley, W.A. and Van Valin, R.Jr 1984 *Functional Syntax and Universal Grammar,* London: C.U.P.

Gass, S. M. 1979 Language Transfer and Universal Grammatical Relations, *Language Learning* 29/2:327-344.

Gass, S.M. 198O An Investigation of Syntactic Transfer in Adult second language learning, In: Scarcelle, R.C. and Krashen, S.D. (eds), *Research in SLA,* Rowley: Newbury House.

Gass, S.M. and Selinker, L. 1983 *Language Transfer in Language Learning,* Rowley: Newbury House.

Gass, S. 1984 A Review of Interlanguage Syntax: Language Transfer and Language Universals, *Language Learning* 34:115-32.

Gass, S.M. 1986 An Interactionist Approach to L2 Sentence Interpretation, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition,* 8:19-37.

Gass, S. 1988 Integrating research areas: a framework for second language studies, *Applied Linguistics,* Vol.9/2: 198-217.

Gass, S.M. 1989 Language Universals and Second Language Acquisition, *Language Learning,* 39/4:497-534.

Gass, S. and Schachter, J. 1989 (eds) *Linguistic Perspectives on second language acquisition,* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Gartz, I. T. 1985 *Discourse and Fluency Features in the English Interlanguage structures of Mexican bilingual curricula College Students: A Longitudinal*

study based on data taken from Compositions, PhD Dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin.

Gatbonton, E. 1978 Patterned phonetic variability in Second Language speech: A gradual Diffusion Model, *Canadian Modern Language Review,* 34/3: 335-47.

Giles, H. and Byrne 1982 An intergroup approach to second language acquisition, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development 3,* pp. 17-40.

Godfrey, 1980 A Discourse analysis of tense in adult ESL monologues, in: Larsen-Freeman (ed), *Discourse Analysis in Second Language Research,* Mass: Newbury House.

Greenbaum, S. 1988 *Good English and the Grammarian,* London: Longman.

Grundy, P. 1989 *Relevant to whom – the role of Pragmatics in defining linguistic communities,* Paper presented at University of Silesia, 2nd International Pragmatics Conference, Poland.

Gumperz, J.J. 1965 Linguistic Repertoires, Grammars and Second Language Instruction, *Languages and Linguistics* 18:81-90.

Hague, S.M.F. 1989 *Attitude, Motivation and Achievement in English Language Learning: A case study of High School students in Dhaka city, Bangladesh,* PhD Dissertation, University of Durham.

Hakuta, K. 1976 A case study of a Japanese child learning English as a second Language, *Language Learning,* 26:321-351.

Hamayan, E. 1978 *Acquisition of French syntactic structures: production strategies and awareness by native and non-native speakers,* PhD Dissertation, McGill University

Hangen, E. 1953 *The Norwegian Language in America,* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylavia Press.

Hartley, A.F. 1982 *Linguistics for Language Learners,* London: The Macmillan Press Ltd.

Hassan, A.J. 1986 *English Interlanguage of Palestinian University students in Gaza Strip: An analysis of relative clauses and verb tenses,* PhD Dissertation, Ball State University.

Hatch, E. 1978 Discourse analysis and second language acquisition, in: Hatch, E. (ed).

Hatch, E. and Farhaday, H. 1982 *Research Design and Statistics for Applied Linguists,* Cambridge: Newbury House.

Heaton, B. 1975 *Writing English Language Tests,* London: Longman.

Heaton, B. 1982 Writing in Perspective: Some comments on the testing and marking of written communication, in: Heaton, B. (ed), *Language Testing,* Hayes: MEPL.

Huebner, T. 1979 Order of Acquisition vs Dynamic Paradigm: A Comparison of Methods in Interlanguage Research, *TESOL Quarterly,* 13:21-8.

Huebner, T. 1983 *A Longitudinal Analysis of the Acquisition of English,* Ann Arbor: Karoma Publishers.

Huebner, T. 1985 System and Variability in IL Syntax, *Language Learning,* 35/2: 141-163.

Hulstijn, J.H. and Hulstijn W, W. 1984 Grammatical errors as a function of processing constraints and explicit knowledge, *Language Learning,* 34:23-43.

Hung, H.W.J. 1986 *Interlanguage and Temporal expressions: The development and use of tense-aspect and some time adverbials in Cantonese learners,* PhD Dissertation, Edinburgh University.

Hutchinson, C. 1987 Assessing Advanced Communicative Competence, In: Coleman, J.A. and Towell, R. (eds), *The Advanced Language Learner,* London: SUFLRA-CILT.

Hyltenstam, K. 1977 Implicational Patterns in IL Syntax Variation, *Language Learning* 27/2:383-411.

Hyltenstam, K. and Pienemann, M.(eds), 1985 *Modelling and Assessing Second Language Acquisition,* Avon: Multilingual Matters.

Hymes, D. 1962 The Ethnography of Speaking, In: Gladwyn,T and Sturtevant, W.C. (eds), *Anthropology and Human Behaviour:* 13-53

Janicki, K. 1985 *The foreigner's language: A sociolinguistic perspective,* Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Jakobson, R. 1968 *Child Language, Aphasia and Phonological Universals,* The Hague: Mouton.

Jakobson, R. and Halle, M. 1956 *Fondamentals of Language,* The Hague:Mouton.

Jordens, P. 198O Interlanguage Research: Interpretation or Explanation, *Language Learning* 3O/1:195-2O7.

Judge, A. and Healey, F.G. 1983 *A Reference Grammar for modern French,* London: Edward Arnold.

Kasper, G. (ed.) 1988 Classroom Research, *AILA REVIEW 5.*

Kellerman, E. 1977 Towards a Characterization of the Strategy of Transfer in Second Language Learning, *Interlanguage Studies Bulletin* 2:58-146.

Kellerman, E. 1979 Transfer and Non-transfer: where we are now, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 2:37-57.

Kellermann, E. 1983 Now you see it, now you don't, in: Gass,S. and Selinker, L. (eds).

Kilby, D. 1984 *Descriptive Syntax and the English Verb,* London: Croom Helm.

Klein, W. 1986 *Second Language Acquisition,* Cambridge: C.U.P.

Kleinmann, H. 1977 Avoidance behaviour in adult SLA, *Language Learning,* 27: 93-108.

Kohn, K. 1982 Beyond Output: The Analysis of Interlanguage Development, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition,* 4:137-52.

Kimani, N. 1987 *The Acquistion of six Morpho-syntactic structures of English by Kenyan school children,* PhD Dissertation, Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh.

Krashen, S. 1977 Some issues relating to the Monitor Model in: Brown, H., Yorio, C. and Crymes (eds), *On TESOL '77,* Washington, D.C.:TESOL.

Krashen, S. 1981 *First Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning,* Oxford: Pergamon.

Krashen, S. 1982 *Principles and practice in Second Language Acquisition,* Oxford: Pergamon.

Kumpf, L. 1983 A case study of Temporal reference in Interlanguage, In: Campbell, C. et al. (eds), *Proceedings of the Los Angeles second research Forum,* Vol. II, Los Angeles, UCLA, pp.179-192.

Labov, W. 197O The study of Language in its context, *Stadium Generale,* 23:3O-87.

Labov, W. 1972 Some Principles of Linguistic Methodology, *Language in Society,* 1:97-120.

Lado, R. 1957 *Linguistics across Cultures,* Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

Laufer, B. 1989 A factor of difficulty in vocabulary learning: deceptive transparency, in: Nation, P. and Carter, R. (eds), pp. 10-33.

Lamendella, J. 1977 General Principles of Neurofunctional organization and their manifestations in primary and non-primary acquisition, *Language Learning,* 27:155-96.

Lambert, W.A. 1966 *Some Observations on First Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning,* Mimeograph.

Larsen-Freeman, D. 1975 The Acquisition of Grammatical Morphemes by Adult Second Language Students, *TESOL Quarterly* 9/4:4O9-419.

Larsen-Freeman, D. 1983 Assessing Global second language proficiency, in: Seliger, H.W. and Long, M.H. (eds), *Classroom Oriented Research in SLA,* Rowley: Newbury House.

Lee, Y.P. et al 1985 New Directions in Language Testing, *International Symposium on Language Testing,* Hong Kong, Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Leech, G.N. 1971 *Meaning and the English Verb,* London: Longman.

Lenneberg, E.H. 1967 *Biological Foundation of Language,* New York: Wiley.

Lightbown, P. 1984 The Relationship between Theory and Method in Second Language Acquisition Research, In: Davies, A., Criper, C. and Howatt, A. P. (eds), *Interlanguage,* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Lightbown, P.M. 1987 The Influence of Linguistic Theories on Language Acquisition research: Description and Explanation, *Language Learning,* 37/4: 483-510.

Li, X. 1988 Effects of contextual cues on inferring and remembering meanings of new words, *Applied Linguistics*, Vol.9/4:402-413.

Locke, J. 1690 An Essay concerning Human Understanding, In: Fairman, T. (1989) *Writing Descriptive Grammar*, BAAL Review, 33/34.

Long, H.M. and Sato, J.C. 1984 Methodological Issues in IL studies: An Interactionist Perspective, In: Davies, A., Criper, C. and Howatt,A.P.R. (eds), *Interlanguage*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Long, H.M. and Seliger, H. 1983 *Classroom Oriented Research in Second Language Acquistion*, Rowley: Newbury House.

Lund, J.R. 1986 *The Formal accuracy of College German Students with the Finite Verb on a Communicative Production task and Linguistic Awareness tasks*, PhD Dissertation, University of Minnesota.

Lyons, J. 1968 *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mayala, N.K. 1989 The Need for a characterisation of Elicitation procedures in collecting data from adult L2 learners, in: Sheperd, D. and Mayala, N.K. (eds), *Durham Research Papers in Applied Linguistics*, School of English.

Mayala, N.K. 1990 *Views on Learner-oriented data collection Methodology*, Paper presented at the 25th IATEFL conference, Dublin.

Mbaya, M. 1982 *L'Anglais dans l'Enseignement Zairois 1956-1982*, Bukavu: CERUKI.

Mclaughlin, B. 1978 *Second Language Acquisition in Childhood*, Hillsdale: Erlbaum.

Mclaughlin, B. 1984 *Second Language Acquisition in Childhood: Volume 2: School-age children*, Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Mclaughlin, B. 1987 *Theories of Second Language Learning*, London: Edward Arnold.

Meisel,J. 1987 Reference to past events and actions in the development of natural language acquisition, in: Pfaff (ed.) *First and second language acquisition processes*, Cambridge, MA: Newbury House.

Meisel, J., Clahsen, H. and Pienemann, M. 1981 On determining developmental stages in natural second language acquisition, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition,* 3/2:109-135.

Meara, P. 1984 *Vocabulary Acquisition: A Neglected ASpect of Language Learning,* In: Davies, A., Criper, C. and Howatt, A.P.(eds).

Mobaidin, H.E.Z. 1988 *Tense and Aspect Transfer Errors: A new analysis of transfer errors in English Compositions of Jordanian unviversity students,* PhD Dissertation, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Moore, D.S. 1979 *Statistics: Concepts and Controversies,* San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Company.

Moravcsik, J.M.E. (ed), 1974 *Logic and Philosophy for Linguistics,* Paris: The Hague, Mouton and Co.

Naigles, R.L. 1988 *Syntactic Bootstrapping as a procedure for verb learning,* PhD Dissertation, unpublished, University of Pennsylvania.

Nemser, W. 1971 Approximative Systems of Foreign Language Learners, *IRAL* 9:115-23

Ndoma, U. 1984 National Language Policy in Education in Zaire, *Language Problems and language Planning,* Vol.8/2:172-184.

Ndoma, U. 1990 Filling the Gap: A study skills program for first-year students, *Forum,* Vol. XXVIII, No 1, p.52.

Ngalasso, M.M. 1989 Language Policies and the Right to Language, *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Language learning and teaching,* EGL, Vol.1, pp. 109-126.

Norusis, M.J. 1986 *The SPSS Guide to Data Analysis,* Chicago: SPSS Inc.

Norusis, M.J. 1988 *SPSS-X Introductory Statistics Guide,* Chicago: SPSS International.

Ntahwakuderwa, B.S.C. 1987 *Form and Funtion in the Interlanguage of Zairean learners of English,* PhD Dissertation, Edinburgh University.

Palmer, F.R. 1987 *The English Verb,* London: Longman.

Parker, F. 1986 *Linguistics for Non-linguists,* London: Taylor and Francis Ltd.

Pavesi, M 1984 The acquisition of relative clauses in a formal and in an informal settings: Further evidence in support of the Markedness Hypothesis *IRAL, Special Issue*, pp.152-163.

Perdue, C. 1984 *Second Language Acquisition by Immigrants: A field manual,* Rowley, Mass: Newbury House.

Pica, T. 1987 Second language acquisition, social interaction and the classroom, *Applied Linguistics,* Vol.8/1: 3-21.

Pienemann, M. 1988 Determining the Influence of Instruction on L2 Speech Processing, *AILA REVIEW 5,* pp. 40-67.

Pienemann, M. Johnston, M. and Brindley, G. 1988 Constructing an acquisition-based procedure for second language assessment, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition,* Vol. 10/2: 217-243.

Quirk, R. et al 1985 *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language,* London: Longman.

Raupach, M. 1987 Procedural Learning in Advanced Learners of a Foreign Language, In: Coleman, J.A. and Towell, R. (eds), *The Advanced Language Learner,* London: SUFLRA-CILT.

Reichenbach,H. 1947 Analysis of conversational language, in: Moravcsik, J.M.E. (ed).

Richards, J. C. 1971 Error Analysis and Second Language Strategies, *Language Science* 17:12-22.

Richards, J.C. 1974 (ed) *Error Analysis: Perspectives on SLA,* London: Longman.

Richards, J.C. and Sampson G.P. 1974 The study of learner English, in: Richards, J.C. (ed).

Richards, J. Platt, J. and Weber, H. 1985 *Longman Ditionary of Applied Linguistics,* London: Longman.

Richards, J.C. and Rogers, T.S. 1986 *Approaches and methods in language teaching: A description and analysis,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ritchie, W.C. 1978 *Second Language Acquisition Research: Issues and Implications,* London: Academic Press.

Ringbom, H. 1981 The Influence of other languages on the vocabulary of foreign language learners, in: Nikel, G. Nehls, D. (eds),*Error Analysis, Contrastive Linguistics and second language learning*, Lund: J.G.V.H.

Rogers, M. 1981 Interlanguage variability: Verb placement errors in German, In: Nickel, G. and Nels, D.(eds), Error Analysis, Contrastive Linguistics and Second Language Learning, *IRAL* (Special Issue), pp. 43-83.

Roulet, E. 1975 *Linguistic Theory, Linguistic Description and Language Teaching,* London: Longman.

Rüschoff, B. 1989 New Technologies in Language Learning, *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Language Learning and Teaching,* EGL, Vol.1:63-75.

Rutherford, W. E. 1982 Markedness in second language acquisition, *Language Learning,* 32: 85-107.

Rutherford, W. E. 1987 *Seond Language Grammmar: Learning and Teaching,* London: Longman.

Santos, T. 1987 Markedness theory and error evaluation: An experimental study, *Applied Linguistics,* Vol.8/3: 207-218.

Sato, C.J. 1985 *The Syntax of Conversation in Interlanguage Development,* PhD Dissertation, Los Angeles.

Sato, C.J. 1990 *The Syntax of Conversation in Interlanguage'* Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag.

Schachter, J. 1974 An Error in Error Analysis, *Language Learning* 24: 2O5-14.

Schachter, J. and Rutherford, W.E. 1979 Discourse function and language transfer, *Working Papers on Bilingualism,* 19: 3-12.

Schachter, J. 1983 A new account of language transfer, in: Gass,S. and Selinker, L. (eds), *Language Transfer in Language Learning,* Rowley: Newbury House Publishers.

Schachter, J. 1986 In Search of Systematicity in Interlanguage Production, *Studies in SLA* 8/2: 119-33.

Schachter, J. 1988 Second language acquisition and its relationship to Universal Grammar, *Applied Linguistics,* Vol.8/1: 219-235.

Schumann, J. 1978c The acculturation model for second language acquisition, in: Gingras, R. (ed), *Second language acquisition and foreign language teaching,* Arlington, VA: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Seliger, H. 198O Utterance Planning and Correction Behaviour: Its Function in the Grammar Construction Process for Second Language Learners, In: Dechert, H. and Raupach, M. (eds), *Temporal Variables of Speech: Studies in honor of Frieda Goldman-Eisler,* The Hague: Mouton.

Seliger, H.W. and Long, M. (eds) 1983 *Classroom Oriented Research in SLA,* Rowley: Newbury House.

Selinker, L. 1969 Language Transfer, *General Linguistics* 9:67-92.

Selinker, L. 1972 Interlanguage, *IRAL* 1O:2O9-31.

Selkirk, K.E. 1978 *Sampling,* (Rediguide), Nottingham: Nottingham University.

Sherrill, B. 1985 *Non-errors of the third kind ? An investigation of Interlanguage production by L2, L3 and L4 learners of Italian,* PhD Dissertation, University of South Carolina.

Skinner, B.F. 1957 *Verbal Behaviour,* New York: Appleton- Century- Crofts.

Smith, N.V. 1981 Grammaticality, Time and Tense, *Biological Sciences,* Vol.295, No 1O77: 253-265.

Smith, H.W. 1981 *Strategies of social research: The methodological imagination,* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Sperber, D. and Wilson, D. 1986 *Relevance: Communication and Cognition,* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Spolsky, B. 1989 *Conditions for Second Language Learning,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stockwel, R.P., Bowen, J.D. and Martin, J.W. 1965 *The Grammatical Structure of English and Spanish,* Chicago: University Press of Chicago.

Svartvik, J. (ed) *Errata: Papers in error analysis,* Lund: Gleerup Publishers.

Tarone, E., Cohen, A. and Dumas, G 1976 A closer look at some Interlanguage terminology: a framework for communication strategies, *Working Papers in Bilingualism*, 9: 76-90.

Tarone, E., Frauenfelder, U. and Selinker, L. 1976 Systematicity/Variability and Stability/Instability in Interlanguage systems, *Language Learning :Special Issue* 4, pp.93-134.

Tarone, E. 1979 Interlanguage as Chameleon, *Language Learning*, 29:181-92.

Tarone, E., 1982 Systematicity and Attention in Interlanguage, *Language Learning* 32/1:69-84.

Tarone, E. 1983 On the variability of Interlanguage systems', *Applied Linguistics* 4/2:143-63.

Tarone, E. 1985 Variability in Interlanguage use:A study of style shifting in Morphology and Syntax, *Language Learning* 35/3: 373-403.

Tarone, E. 1987 Methodologies for studying variability in second language acquisition, in: Ellis, R. (ed).

Tarone, E. 1988 *Variation in Interlanguage*, London: Edward Arnold.

Taylor, B. 1976 Adult Second Language Learning and their Pedagogical Implications, *TESOL Quarterly*, 9:391-9.

Taylor, G. 1986 Errors and Explanations, *Applied Linguistics*, Vol.7/2: 145-164.

Towell, R. 1987 Approaches to the Analysis of Oral Development of the Advanced Learner, In: Coleman, J.A. and Towell, R.(eds), *The Advanced Language Learner*, London: SUFLRA-CILT.

Tremblay, J.P. 1972 *Grammaire comparative du Français et de l'Anglais à l'usage des Anglophones*, Québec: Presses de l'Univerité de Laval.

Trevis, A. 1987 Toward an analysis of the (Inter)language activity of referring to time in narratives, In: Pfaff, C.W. (ed.), *First and SLA Process*, Cambridge: Newbury House Publishers.

Varadi, T. 1983 Strategies of Target Language Learner Communication: Message-adjustment, Reprinted, In: Faerch, C. and Kasper, G. (eds), *Strategies in Interlanguage Communication*, London: Longman.

Wagner-Gough, J. 1978 Comparative studies in second language learning, in: Hatch, E. (ed) *Second Language Acquisition,* Rowley Mass: Newbury House.

Watson, J. 1924 *Behaviourism,* New York: Norton.

Weinreich, U. 1953 *Languages in Contacts: Findings and Problems,* The Hague: Mouton.

Weir, C. 1988 *Communicative Language Testing,* Exeter: University of Exeter Press.

Wells, G. 1985 *Language development in the pre-school years,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wenden, A. and Rubin, J. (eds) 1987 *Learner Strategies in Language Learning,* London: Prentice Hall.

Widdowson, H.G. 1983 *Learning purpose and learning use,* London: Oxford University Press.

Widdowson, H.G. 1989 Parameters in Language Teaching, *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Language Learning and Teaching,* EGL, Vol.1:25-40.

Wilkins, D.A. 1974 *Second Language Learning and Teaching,* London: Edward Arnold.

White, L. 1987 Against Comprehensive input: the input hypothesis and the development of second language competence, *Applied Linguistics,* Vol.8/2: 95-110.

Wode, H. 1977 On the systematicity of L1 transfer in L2 acquisition, in: Henning, G.(ed) *Proceedings of the Los Angeles second language research forum,* Los Angeles: UCLA.

Wode, H. 1983 *Learning a second Language,* Tubingen: Gunter Narr Verlag.

Wolfe, D.K. 1967 Some Theoretical Aspects of Language Learning and Language Teaching, *Language Learning,* 17/3: 173-188.

Wolfram, W. 1985 Variability in Tense Marking: A case for the Obvious, *Language Learning* 35/2:229-253.

Wong-Fillmore, C. 1979 Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition', In: Fillmore, C. et al (eds), *Individual Differences in Language Ability and*

Language Behaviour, London: Academic Press.

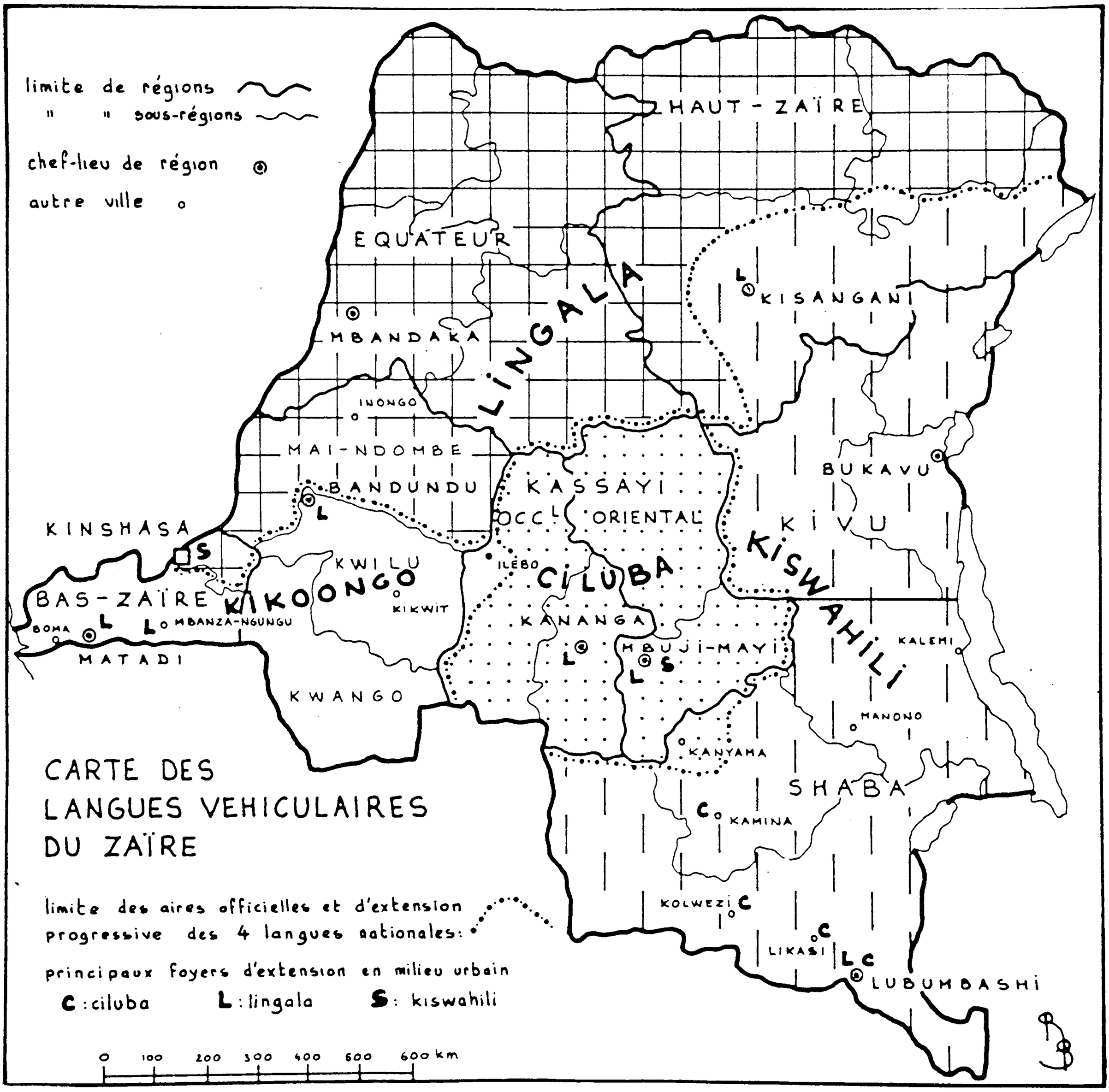
Zobl, H. 1983c Markedness and the projection problem, *Language Learning*, 33: 293-313.

Zobl, H. 1984 Cross-generalizations and the contrastive dimension of the Interlanguage Hypothesis, in: Davies et al (eds).

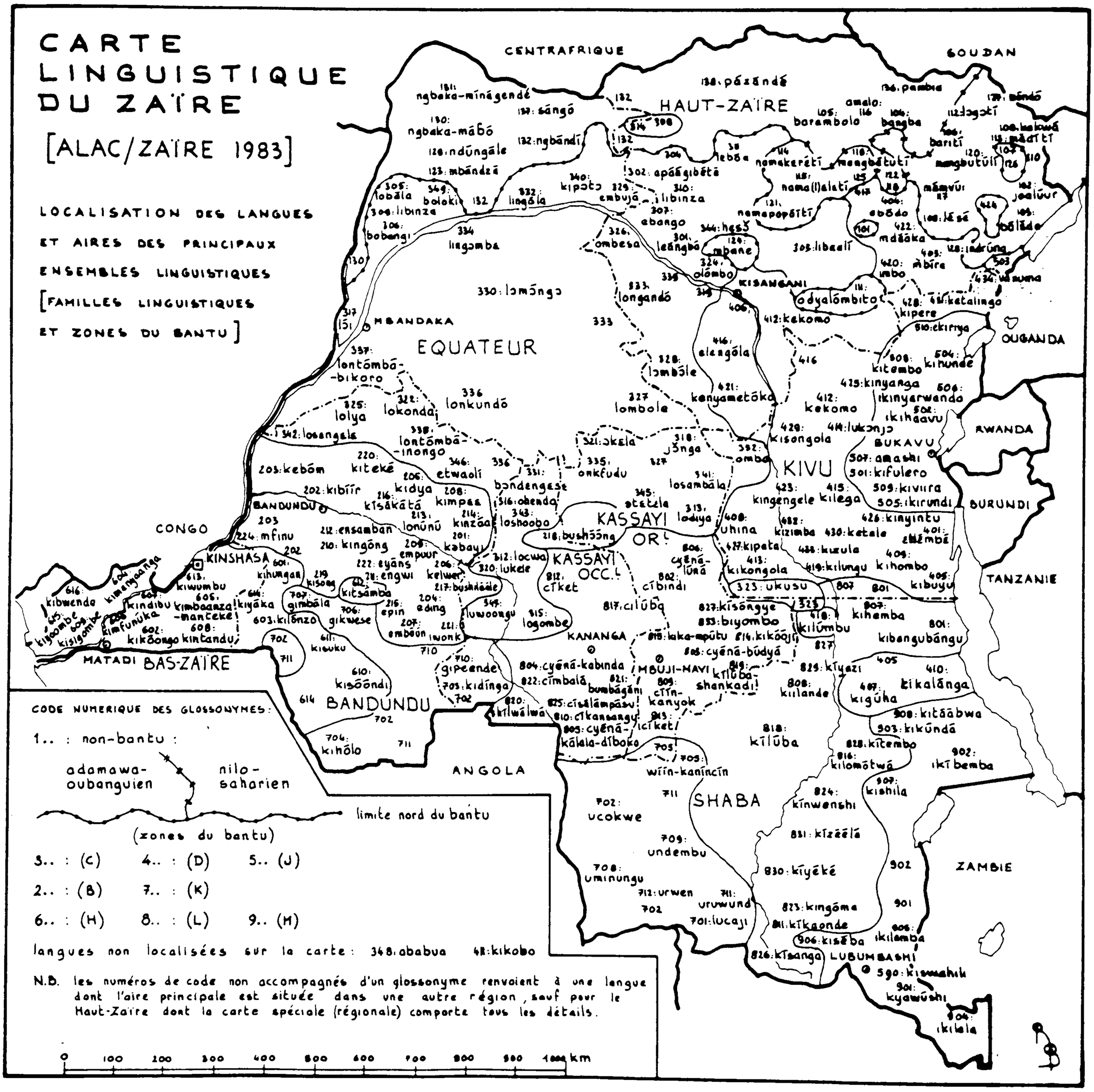
Appendices: Figures, Maps, Tables and Tasks

A.1 Research Context

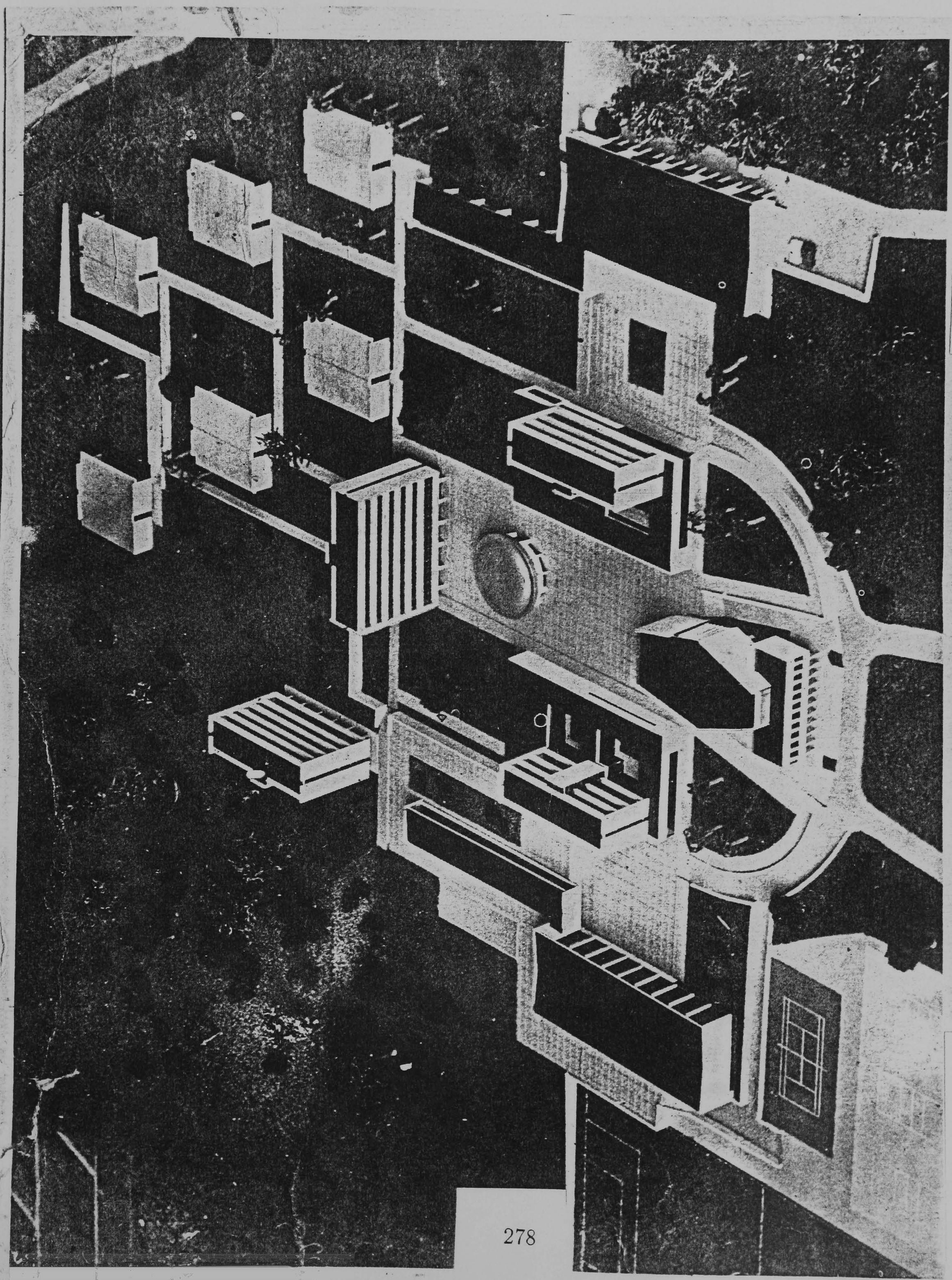
A.1.1 Principle languages of Zaire



A.1.2 Languages of Zaire



A.1.3 Institut Pédagogique National



A.2 Learner strategies: some major classifications

A. P.CORDER (1981)

1. Message adjustment: a. topic avoidance
   b. message abandonment
   c. semantic avoidance
   d. message reduction
2. Resource expansion or risk-taking strategies:
   a. borrowing
   b. language switch
   c. paraphrase or circumlocution
   d. appeal for assistance

B. TARONE (1983)

1. Paraphrase: a. approximation
   b. word coinage
   c. circumlocution
2. Borrowing: a. literal translation
   b. language switch
   c. appeal for assistance
   d. mime
3. Avoidance: a. topic avoidance
   b. message abandonment

C. TARONE, COHEN & DUMAS (1976).

1. Transfer
2. Overgeneralization
3. Prefabricated patterns
4. Overelaboration
5. Epenthesis or Vowel insertion
6. Avoidance: a. topic avoidance
   b. semantic avoidance
   c. appeal to authority
   d. paraphrase

e. message abandonment

f. language switch

D. FAERCH & KASPER (1983)

1. Formal reduction strategies:

a. phonological

b. morphological

c. syntactic

d. lexical

2. Functional reduction strategies:

a. actional reduction

b. modal reduction

c. reduction of the propositional content:-topic avoidance

-message abandonment

-meaning replacement

3. Achievement strategies:

a. compensatory strategies:

-code switching

-interlingual transfer

-intralingual transfer

-IL based strategies:

(generalization, paraphrase

word coinage, restructuring)

-cooperative strategies

-non-linguistic strategies

b. retrieval strategies.

A.3 Preliminary Study

A.3.1 Preliminary Study Questionnaire

LEARNER'S BACKGROUND

1. FIRST NAME: SEX: M
   F
2. FAMILY NAME:
3. LANGUAGES SPOKEN:
   a. Mother tongue:
   b. Zairean (national) languages:
   c. French: YES: NO:
   d. English: very good:
   good:
   poor:
4. Tick your study level: 1st year
   2nd year
   3rd year
5. Write a paragraph of 10/15 lines on your personal experience.
   Start your text with one of these:
   When I was.....
   One day when I ....
   When I first ......

A.3.2 Responses to the preliminary study questionnaire

1. Section A : Learning Strategies.

Question 1: Do you think English is easy or difficult ? Why ?

```
A.   Easy:                    0.58
B.   Difficult:               0.29
(A) - Requires little effort: 0.35
    - Similar to French:      0.10
(B) - Pronunciation:          0.22
    - A different language:   0.12
```

Question 2: How do you encourage yourself to learn more in English ?

```
A. Reading:              0.71
B. Through Contacts:     0.55
C. Listening:            0.26
D. Attending lectures:   0.22
E. Speaking/Singing:     0.22
F. Writing:              0.06
```

Question 3: When do you think you always learn something more in English - in the classroom ? in reading ? in listening to the radio ?

```
A. Reading:        0.84
B. Classroom:      0.58
C. Listen/radio:   0.16
D. Others:         0.10
```

Question 4: What is, according to you, the most difficult aspect of English ? And how do you challenge it ?

```
A. Speaking/pronunciation:   0.65
B. Grammar/tenses:           0.22
```

C. Spoken/written difference: 0.22
D. Writing: 0.10
(A). Listening/practice: 0.51
. Reading/dictionary: 0.29

Question 5: Do you often repeat structures (sentences) after you have heard them from a teacher or another student ?
Why do (don't) you do so ?

A. Yes: 0.81
B. No: 0.19
C. Sometimes: 0.06
(A) - improve knowledge/vocabulary: 0.55
- practice the language: 0.19
(B) - may be misleading/incorrect: 0.12
- not necessary: 0.10

Question 6: When the teacher gives a topic/lesson to prepare, how do you generally organise yourself ?

A. Try to understand it: 0.65
B. Read the topic first: 0.51
C. Plan the analysis/description: 0.39

Question 7: You are reading a text/book and suddenly you come across a difficult but important word, what do you do ?

A. Consult a dictionary: 0.84
B. Guess the meaning through context: 0.45
C. Ask help from someone: 0.19
D. Take note to consult dictionary: 0.10

Question 8: Suppose you want to explain the words 'season' and 'playing' to a friend, how would you do it ?

A. Through example(s): 0.45
B. Describe: 0.35
C. Use a picture: 0.22
D. Make comparison: 0.16
E. Translate/French 0.06

Question 9: Do you think talking to native speakers of English is important for you ? Why ?

A. Yes: 0.87
B. No: 0.19
(A) - Practice/prununciation: 0.51
- Improve understanding/knowledge: 0.39
(B) - Speakers/non-standard English: 0.12
- Not necessary: 0.06

Question 10: Do you think listening to native speakers of English is important ? Why ?

A. Yes: 0.85
B. No: 0.9
(A)- To help improve pronunciation: 0.80

Question 11: There are many varieties of English in the world, are you aware of it ? (Do you know it ?)

A. Yes: 0.94
B. No: -
C. Unsure: 0.06

Question 12: Which particular variety of English would you learn/speak ?

A. British: 0.51
B. American: 0.22
C. No preference: 0.22

(A). Original/standard/classical: 0.39
(B). Easy/ pronunciation: 0.22

Question 13: When you are learning on your own (alone) explain/describe how you maximise your learning ?

A. Checking references: 0.29
B. More reading/practice: 0.26
C. Getting organised: 0.22
C. Taking sufficient rest/time: 0.19

Question 14: Describe what you do in the classroom: Learning or checking your knowledge ?

A. Learning: 0.42
B. Checking: 0.10
C. Both: 0.42

Question 15: What do you think you know better in English ?

A. Grammar: 0.26
B. Conversational English: 0.22
C. Nothing in particular: 0.19
D. Writing: 0.16
E. Literature: 0.16

2. Section B: Communication Strategies.

Question 1: When talking to friends (in English), which topics: (a) are your preferences ? (b) do you try to avoid ? For which reasons ?

A. - Social life/current events: 0.55
   - Academic subjects: 0.35
B. - Personal/private topics: 0.16
   - Horror/stupid topics: 0.12

- Religious topics: 0.06
- Political subjects: 0.06

(A)- Important and Useful: 0.32
- Familiar/informative: 0.16

(B)- Disagreement/misunderstanding 0.19
- Dangerous: 0.03

Question 2: Are you aware of making mistakes in English and not correcting yourself ? Why ?

A. Yes: 0.42
B. No: 0.42
C. Sometimes: 0.10

(A) - Not aware/mistakes: 0.39
(B) - Still learning: 0.35

Question 3: Do you always correct yourself when you make mistakes ?

A. Yes: 0.61
B. No: 0.12
C. Sometimes: 0.22

(A) - When aware of situation: 0.22
(B) - Knowledge limitatations: 0.32

Question 4: In which language do you find it easy to speak: (a) to your friends ? (b) to teachers ?

A. Friends: - French: 0.26
- English: 0.16
- Both: 0.32

B. Teachers: - English: 0.51
- French: 0.12
- Both: 0.16

Question 5: You are speaking, then suddenly you realise you cannot pronounce an important word related to what you are saying, what will you do ?

A. Find correspondence in French: 0.42
B. Find another similar word: 0.29
C. Ask for help: 0.26
D. Refer to example: 0.12
E. Abandon talk/idea: 0.10

Question 6: It is often said 'think before speaking'. Do you agree with the saying ? Why ?

A. Yes: 0.74
B. No: 0.19
(A) - Organise thought: 0.45
- Avoid mistakes: 0.22
- Careful speech: 0.12
(B) - Reduce fluency: 0.12
- Speech less natural: 0.03

Question 7: In which situation do you feel obliged to speak English ?

A. In an English speaking community: 0.90
B. In the classroom: 0.39
C. With teachers: 0.10

Question 8: When are you happy (proud) to use (your) English ?

A. English speaking community: 0.39
B. With friends: 0.29
C. With less advanced learners of English: 0.22
D. When speaking correctly/fluently: 0.16
D. When teaching/classroom: 0.10

Question 9: How would help a friend: (a) who cannot speak English correctly and often makes mistakes when speaking ? (b) who has problems in understanding spoken English ? (c) who has difficulties in writing simple (structures) sentences ?

```
A. - Correct him/get him repeat:    0.77
   - Advise more practice:          0.32
   - Use grammar book/dictionary:   0.10
B. - Take active part to conversations in English: 0.42
   - Advise him to read more:                      0.22
   - Advise him to listen to radio programmes:     0.16
   - Make friends with English speakers:           0.16
C. - Advise him to write more compositions:        0.32
   - Advise him to use  grammar books:             0.26
   - Advise him to read more:                      0.22
```

Question 10: Does your teacher like you to speak: (a) when he poses ? (b) when he is speaking ? (c) anytime during the lecture ?

```
A. - Yes:       0.73
   -  No:       0.10
B. - Yes:       0.10
   -  No:       0.71
C. - Yes:       0.32
   -  No:       0.35
   - Smetimes:  0.10
```

3. Section C: Personality/Affective Habits.

Question 1: How did you feel when you started learning English ?

```
A. - (Very) pleased:  0.29
   -  Excited:        0.12
B. - Afraid/Unsure:   0.35
```

- Worried/anxious: 0.10

Question 2: What made you study English in the first place ?

A. Learn another language: 0.26
B. Necassary means of communication: 0.22
C. Interest in English: 0.22
D. Jop opportunities: 0.12

Question 3: Do you still have the same feeling now ?

A. Yes: 0.51
B. No: 0.35
C. Unsure: 0.10

Question 4: How has 'learning English' changed your life ?

A. new life/style: 0.32
A. Improve knowledge: 0.26
B. More consideration: 0.19
C. Another means of communication: 0.12
D. No change: 0.10

Question 5: What English words or expressions do you (often) use to express emotion ?

A. (Oh!) My God: 0.26
B. (I'm) sorry: 0.16
C. (Oh!) Dear: 0.16
D. It is a pity: 0.06
E. Damn/Gosh/What 0.06

Question 6: What do you find: (a) Shocking in English ? (b) funny in English ?

A. - Pronunciation: 0.16

- Speech-writing difference: 0.12
- Irreg. past tense formation: 0.10

B. - Pronunciation: 0.29
- Speech-writing difference: 0.12
- Dirty expressions/language: 0.06

Question 7: Choose two sentences you find difficult to express in English and write them down in your mother tongue.

The researcher could not understand many of these languages.

Question 8: What is the most personal thing you do in English ? (a) Do you dream in English ? (b) Do you think in English ? (c) Do you talk to yourself in English ?

A. Yes:	0.12	No:	0.61	Sometimes:	0.06
B. Yes:	0.48	No:	0.19	Sometimes:	0.10
C. Yes:	0.61	No:	0.16	Sometimes:	0.03

Question 9: How do you feel when someone corrects your English ?

A. Happy and grateful: 0.48
B. Rather concerned/unhappy: 0.22
C. Depends who corrects: 0.19
D. Don't mind: 0.06

Question 10: Are you afraid of making mistakes when in a group ?

A. Yes: 0.39
B. No: 0.61
C. Sometimes: 0.06

(A) - Not intelligent/stupid: 0.19
- People's laughter: 0.16

(B) - Still a learner/learning: 0.29
- mistakes are unavoidable: 0.26

- Face difficulties: 0.10

4. Section D: Language Transfer.

Question 1: Are there any English words you have learned and which you use even when speaking your mother tongue ?

A. Words: ball, bar, basket/ball, blanket, bye-bye, car, cocktail, cook, cup, dancing, no, yes.
B. Expressions: My God!, It's a pity, I don't know.

Question 2: What is the average time you speak these languages outside the classroom ?

A. French:	about 3 hours/day	0.21
B. English:	about 5 hours/day	0.35
C. Other languages:	about 6 hours/days	0.42

Question 3: Which language between (b) and (c) in question 2 above, helps you or confuses you in your learning English ? Explain.

A. Help:	- French:	0.71
	- Other languages:	0.03
B. Confuse:	- French:	0.16
	- Other languages:	0.22
C. Neither help or confuse:		0.06

Question 4: When you are short of words, you sometimes borrow words from other languages. Which language do you often get them from ?

A. French:	0.80
B. Other languages:	0.03

Question 5: Go back to question 7 in Part C (Personality) and take the two sentences (in your mother tongue) and try to translate them in English.

5. Section E: Concluding Question.

After answering all these questions, what have you learned ? Do you think such consciousness of these learning habits will help you to learn English better in the future ?

A. - Yes: 0.84

B. - No: 0.03

(A) - Aware of learning difficulties: 0.32

- Aware of problematic areas in English: 0.22
- Raise questions on learning English: 0.19
- Time used to speak/practise English: 0.09

A.3.3 Examples of IL verb forms in compositions.

These verbs have been classified according to the TL system (ie regular or irregular), but they could equally be grouped according to the way they were treated by the informants. Thus *sleeped* in (3) would be under regular.

1. **Regular verbs (past)**

The current between my headmaster and me could

not *passed* as usualy.

2. **Regular verbs (non-past)**

She was very ill but she *carrys* to the hospital.

I was given anything I *want*.

It was very difficult for me to understand

the meaning *carries* by what I read.

3. **Irregular verbs (past)**

I didn't see a car and *sleeped* there.

When I was *taked* my diplome.

She decided to *gave* some presents to who will succed

4. **Irregular verbs (non-past)**

My travel was not good when she *become* strong,

I was well.

If she tried to call me to help her, I *feel* angry.

He took me and *lead* me to the house.

5. **Be (past)**

She decided to gave some presents to whom will succed

and I *were* among those girls.

The staff leader of our school *was agree* to choose me.

I *was drunk* and *eaten* same things, and I *was liked* this day

6. **Be (non-past)**

Perhaps because live *is* became difficult.

Then since I had these precautions I haven't *be* often ill.

7. **Have (past)**

When I was at secondary school,

I *had* got in my quater some students...

One day when I was in ....(place),

I *had* seen a woman looking for medicine

to tame her husband.

8. **Have (non-past)**

When I was twenty years old, I've got some American friends.

When I first went to the boarding house, see the age I've got

9. **Invariable verbs**

I was very strong,

I *beated* someone who was not to my level

A.3.4 IL verb forms: summarised results

Inf.	Regular verb forms				Irreg. verb forms				Copula Be				Lexical Have			
	Past		Non-P.		Past		Non-P.		Past		Non-P.		Past		Non-P.	
	TL	IL	TL	IL	TL	IL	TL	IL	TL	IL	TL	IL	TL	IL	TL	IL
1.	-	-	6	4	1	1	1	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
2.	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	3	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
3.	1	-	-	2	3	1	-	-	3	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
4.	6	-	-	-	3	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5.	2	1	-	4	2	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6.	4	-	-	1	2	-	-	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
7.	4	1	5	-	4	1	8	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
8.	3	2	-	2	1	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
9.	-	2	-	1	2	2	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1O.	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
11.	1	1	-	2	2	-	-	7	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
12.	3	-	1	-	3	-	-	1	3	-	2	-	1	-	1	-
13.	5	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
14.	2	-	1	-	4	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
15.	1	-	1	-	3	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
16.	2	1	-	1	3	-	4	1	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	-
17.	3	-	-	-	8	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
18.	1	-	8	2	-	1	2	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	2	-
19.	3	2	4	-	3	1	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
2O.	5	-	1	1	4	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Total	51	1O	27	2O	54	1O	16	19	36	3	15	1	5	-	3	-

Inf.	Auxiliary Be		Auxiliary Have		Invar. verbs		TOTAL	
	Past	Non-P.	Past	Non-P.	Past	Non-P.	Past	Non-P.
	TL IL	TL IL	TL IL	TL IL	TL IL	TL IL	TL IL	TL IL
1.	1 -	1 1	- -	1 -	- -	- -	3 1	11 5
2.	- -	- -	1 -	1 -	- -	- -	7 -	2 1
3.	1 -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	9 1	- 2
4.	3 -	- -	- -	- -	1 -	- -	15 -	- 2
5.	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	4 3	- 5
6.	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	8 1	- 2
7.	- -	- -	1 -	- -	- -	- -	1O 3	13 3
8.	2 1	- -	- -	- -	1 -	- -	9 5	- 2
9.	1 1	- 1	- -	- -	- -	- -	8 5	- 2
1O.	- -	- -	- -	- -	- 1	- -	7 1	- 1
11.	1 -	- 1	- -	- -	- -	- -	7 2	- 1O
12.	- -	1 -	- -	- -	- -	- -	1O -	5 1
13.	2 -	- -	- -	1 2	- -	- -	13 -	1 2
14.	1 -	1 -	- -	- -	- -	- -	8 -	4 -
15.	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	5 -	3 -
16.	- -	2 1	- -	- 1	- -	- -	6 1	9 4
17.	1 -	1 -	3 -	- -	- -	- -	16 -	1 1
18.	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	2 1	13 3
19.	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	7 3	6 -
2O.	- -	- -	1 -	- -	- -	- -	13 -	2 1
Tot.	13 2	6 4	6 -	3 3	2 1	- -	165 27	7O 46

A.4 Tasks for the Main Study

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE TEST

This is a test of your ability to undrestand and write about English. The test has three tasks. There will be detailed instructions before each task.

Task one: Writing a composition of approximately
two pages on the given topic.
Time allowed: 50 minutes.

Task two: Finding missing/omitted verbs from a passage
and writing those verbs in the space provided.
Time allowed: 30 minutes.

Task three: Part one: making all the necessary correctionson verbs.
Part two: selecting acceptable/grammatical verb forms.
Part three: explaining the use of verb tenses.
Time allowed: one hour.

Personal Information.

First name: .....
Family name: .....
Sex: M ..... F.....
Study Level: G1 ..... G2 ..... G3 .....
Languages spoken:
a. Mother tongue: .....
b. Zairean (national) languages: .....
c. French: .....
d. English: .....

Instructions for Composition

Imagine that a British/ American/ French, etc... friend of yours has recently been in your country. You arranged for him to stay a week with some relative of yours. They were eager to welcome your friend, but had never met any young people from Europe before.

Your friend was very frank, sincere and likeable, but he had many casual ways that you think have upset your relatives. Your friend was often untidy and unpunctual, treated older people as equal (in a very friendly way of course), and liked to argue about subjects such as politics and religion. Your friend was probably ignorant of the customs observed in your country when visiting people.

Your friend's father wants to know everything about his son's stay in your country. Write a letter to him in which you describe as clearly as possible your relatives' impressions before and after your friend's visit.

Please allow yourself some time for a draft.

A.4.1 Task one: Selective Deletion Gap Filling

Instructions:

Please fill in the numbered blanks with *verbs* in the appropriate tenses. Only one word is allowed for each blank.

PASSAGE

Kima is a freshman and he is (*e.g., having*) all the problems that most freshmen have. As a matter of fact, his problems (1. started) before he even left home. He had to do a lot of things he didn't (2. like) to do just because he was (3. going) to go away to college. He had his eyes (4. examined) and he had his cavities filled, although he (5. hates) to go to the dentist, and he got his watch fixed by a neighborhood jeweler.

Then, at his mother's suggestion, he (6. had) his father's tailor measure him for a suit. He didn't have a suit (7. made), though, because his father wouldn't let him order one. "You (8. are) still growing, son," he (9. said). "Buy yourself a pair of slacks and a sports jacket. Sedec (10. has) such a large selection that I am sure you will (11. find) something you like there." Kima's father always (12. suggested) Sedec for clothes. Kima went to Sedec to please his father but he didn't find anything he (13.liked) there, so he went to another shop to buy the slacks. He (14. took) them out of the boxes as soon as he got home so that his father would not notice where they (15. came) from.

When Kima was all ready to leave for school, his mother (16. suggested) that he visit all his relatives. "What (17. do) you want me to do that for ?" he asked, and she (18. answered), "To say good-bye". She made him (19. go) to see his cousins in Binza, his uncle Meya in Lemba and his aunt Boyi who lives outside the city. He didn't want to visit all those people but he (20. did) it anyway because of his mother's insistence.

On the day that he (21.left) for college, his sister helped him pack his clothes. She (22.let) him borrow her suitcase because he didn't have one of his own. When everything (23. was) all ready he got his father to drive him to the station and the whole family (24. went) along. Of course his mother insisted on kissing him good-bye in spite of his embarrassment. As soon as the train (25. pulled) into the station Kima jumped on and hurriedly (26. found) his seat. By the time it pulled out he (27. was) already contempleting his new life away from home.

A.4.2 Task Two: Verb Correction

Each of the sentences below may have a verb tense error in it. Where you think the tense is incorrect, please underline the verb and then correct it. (e.g., 1). There are sentences in which you may have to delete (i.e., cross out) either part (e.g., 2) or a complete verb (e.g., 3).

Examples: 1. The chairman ~~resigns~~ yesterday.
.resigned
2. The killer ~~puted~~ the gun on the table and walked out.
.....put..
3. She ~~was~~ liked him very much before he died.
.....

There are also sentences without any error, i.e., with correct verb forms. No sentence has more than one error.

1. This university attracts a lot of students because it have a good English department.
.....
2. The little boy burned his finger while playing with a candle.
.....
3. My brother sends me a present last month.
.....
4. Can you see the man in a blue jumper over there ?
He costed the National Football Team one million zaires.
.....
5. The baseball player that Mac likes the best always try to hit a home run.
.....
6. The man never gets arrested until he started drinking.
.....
7. If Mary came tomorrow we could have a party.
.....

8. Mrs Hockey is the oldest person in the village. She lives here all her life.

.....

9. Peter has met the King in July last year.

.....

10. John says he saws the driver who caused the accident.

.....

11. She didn't go shopping because she loses the money her husband gave her.

.....

12. According to her father, she is born in London.

.....

13. This is a detective who always notice tiny details that other detectives miss.

.....

14. Two graduate students on our programme leave school before the end of this year.

.....

15. Linda mailed the letter before we came and told her the news.

.....

16. Everytime the girl threw the ball in the air, the dog jumped and catched it.

.....

17. I think the name of the murderer was broadcasted this morning.

.....

18. The school inspector is here since yesterday.

.....

19. Next Christmas falls on Monday.

.....

20. I am sorry, but that wasn't me you hear.

.....

A.4.3 Task Three: Multiple-Choice

Instructions:

In this test there are fifteen sentences. For each sentence there are four choices: A, B, C, and D. Tick ANY choice you think is acceptable/grammatical for each sentence. Some sentences have only one correct answer or choice, while others may have two or more acceptable choices. Please think carefully before deciding which answer(s) to choose.

Examples: Parents ---------- disappointed when their children don't succeed in life.

A. felt B. have felt √ C. feel D. are feeling

Mr and Mrs Smith ------- beef for lunch this afternoon.

√ A. have √ B. had √ C. are having D. have been

WHICH CHOICE(S) DO YOU THINK BEST REFLECTS THE CORRECT MEANING(S) IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES ?

1. You can't see the headmaster now because he ----------.
   A. is sleeping
   B. sleeps
   C. is asleep
   D. has slept
2. When his wife goes away at the week-end he -------- her to come back in time.
   A. asked
   B. is asking
   C. asks
   D. had asked
3. My sister ---------- 26 years old when she got married.
   A. had
   B. was
   C. is

D. has

4. Can you see the man who -------- at the bus stop?

A. stand

B. stands

C. is stood

D. is standing

5. One of the burglars --------- into the water although it was ice-cold.

A. was jumped

B. jumped

C. was jumping

D. jumps

6. Bill says that Mary -------- a lot of letters recently.

A. is writing

B. writes

C. wrote

D. has written

7. Andrew is the only boy who -------- to school every day.

A. is walk

B. is walking

C. walks

D. walking

8. Schooling ---------- much more these days than it used to fifty years ago.

A. costs

B. has cost

C. cost

D. is costing

9. Everybody believes that she --------- too much.

A. talks

B. is talking

C. has been talked

D. talking

10. Many students in this college ------- a test right now.

A. takes

B. is taking

C. are taking

D. take

11. What ---------- since you came here ?

A. did you learned

B. do you learn

C. have you learnt

D. did you learn

12. This isn't the car Peter -------- .

A. buys

B. has bought

C. is buying

D. bought

13. We haven't seen their eldest son for two years.
He might ---------- the country.

A. leave

B. has left

C. left

D. have left

14. Whenever he --------- tired, he let the students leave the class early.

A. feels

B. had felt

C. felt

D. was feeling

15. Many people admit they -------- their fingers while cooking.

A. have burned

B. have been burning

C. having burnt

D. have been burned

A.4.4 Task Four: Grammaticality and Time-Tense Relationship

Instructions:

1. In each of the following sentences decide on whether the underlined verb refers to the past, present or future time.
2. When would someone use such a sentence ?

Example: She *lived* in London for ten years.

Time: .. *past*.....

Explanation: *when describing an event/happening that took place before the present moment.*

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES ?

1. He is giving his paper next week.
   Time: .....
   Explanation .....
   .....
2. It is time we had a holiday.
   Time: .....
   Explanation .....
   .....
3. He just walks into the room and sits down in front of the fire without saying a word to anyone.
   Time. .....
   Explanation .....
   .....
4. If you wanted to you would make a lot of money.
   Time: .....
   Explanation .....
   .....
5. Assuming Janet has arrived tomorrow, we can leave.
   Time: .....

Explanation .....

.....

6. John: Did you want to speak to me?

   Old man: Yes, I hoped you would give me a hand with the painting.

   Time: .....

   Explanation .....

   .....

7. Tomorrow we leave.

   Time: .....

   Explanation .....

   .....

8. The teacher advised them to read the book.

   Time: .....

   Explanation .....

   .....

9. John tells me that you are having an affair with my wife.

   Time: .....

   Explanation .....

   .....

10. You take the first turning on the left past the roundabout, then you cross the bridge and bear right until you reach the public library.

    Time: .....

    Explanation .....

    .....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

A.5 The Informants' Backgrounds

A.5.1 Preliminary study

Level	Sex	Number	%
1	M	12	38.7
	F	8	25.8
3	M	7	22.6
	F	4	12.9
Total	M	19	61.3
	F	12	38.7

A.5.2 Pilot Study

Category	Sex	Number	%
N.S.	M	4	14.3
	F	5	17.9
N-N.S.	M	7	25.0
	F	12	42.8
Total	M	11	39.3
	F	17	60.7

A.5.3 The Main study

Category	Level	Sex	Number	%
N-N.S.	1	M	22	15.7
		F	18	12.8
	2	M	28	19.9
		F	12	8.6
	3	M	27	19.2
		F	12	8.6
	Sub-total	M	77	54.9
		F	42	29.9
N.S.		M	11	7.8
		F	10	7.1
Total		M	88	62.9
		F	52	37.1

A.6 Description of Co-texts in Test 3

1. B and D are unacceptable because they do not carry the tense suggested by the time indicator 'now', ie the present continuous. But without co-text indication, all four answers are possible.

2. The same explanation as for item 1, but here the simple present tense is the only acceptable verb tense. So answers A, B, D are unacceptable. However, without co-text all four answers may be possible.

3. A has the correct tense but cannot be selected because it is a wrong lexical choice. C has an incorrect tense. D has an incorrect tense and it is a wrong lexical choice. But without co-text C is also a possible answer.

4. A is unacceptable because of its lack of concord with the subject. The other three answers are all possible with or without co-text, although (C) is not usually found among speakers of standard varieties.

5. A is unacceptable because the verb does not take a passive form. D does not carry the corresponding tense of the co-text. B and C are also possible without co-text.

6. A & B are unacceptable because overriden by the time reference in the context, but not by the co-text. Thus C and D are acceptable.

7. A is unacceptable because such verb form combination is not allowed. D is not allowed to stand alone as the main verb. The remaining B & C are possible answers with or without co-text.

8. The interpretation of 'these days' can be 'now' or 'a recent habit'. Thus, the verb forms (A, D) reflecting these two interpretations are acceptable. C is unacceptable for its lack of concord with the subject. B is overriden by the co-text, but possible without co-text.

9. C is an unacceptable combination. D is not allowed to stand alone as the main verb. So A & B are both posssible with or without co-text.

10. A & D are unacceptable because overriden by the time reference, and in addition A lacks concord with the subject. A and B are unacceptable because they lack concord with the subject. C remains then the only possible answer.

11. Just like item 8 above 'since' may have two interpretations, it may express a link between past and present which requires a present perfect verb form in English. But, it also implies that both past and present tenses could equally be used with or without co-text. This means that only A is not acceptable because of its double past tense which makes it morphologically wrong.

12. All four may be possible with or without co-text indication.

13. The time expression 'for two years' suggests a link between the past and the present time as in item 11. But here the co-text, ie the whole of sentence one overrides the verb forms B & C.

14. A is the only unacceptable answer because of its incorrect tense. It is worth pointing out that 'whenever' is a flexible time adverb. It can be used in any time.

15. B & D are excluded on the ground that nothing in the context shows that the process of burning has been going on for sometime. And in addition D is excluded because of its passive form. The context does indicate that burning is caused (by other people). C is unacceptable because it cannot stand alone as the main verb. So, with or without co-text A seems to be the only acceptable answer.

A.7 Codes for Computing the Data

A.7.1 Codes for Test 1

Feature	Code	Explanation
a. Verbs	1	regular verb form
	2	irregular verb form
	3	'have' form
	4	'be' form
	5	'do' form
	7	invariable verb form
	8	'ing' form
	9	infinitive verb form
	0	past participle verb form
b. Tense	1	present tense
	2	past tense

A.7.2 Codes for Test 2

Code	Explanation
1	Adequate/appropriate change
2	Inadequate change made where change was required.
3	No change made on incorrect item
4	No change made on correct item
5	Change made on correct item
6	Alternative adequate change

A.7.3 Codes for Test 3

Code	Explanation
1	Any answer selected
2	Any answer not selected

A.7.4 Codes for Test 4

Feature	Code	Explanation
Association type	1	appropppriate prototypical association
	2	appropriate non-prototypical assoc.
	3	any inappropriate association
	0	no answer given
Relevance of expl.	1	appropriate explanation
	2	inappropriate explanation
	0	no explanation provided

A.7.5 Suggested Labels for the variables

Variable	Code	Label
Sex	M	Male
	F	Female
Level	L	Education level
Language	Lang	English Language
National L.	Natlang	Zairean National languages
Jug. of L.	Juglang	Judgement on English
Fill blanks	Fil	Selective Deletion
		Gap Filling
Correct verb	Veco	Verb Correction
Choose answer	Q	Multiple-choice questions
Relate notion	TT	Time-tense relationship

A.8 Percentages of Responses

A.8.1 Percentages of responses for Test 1

		Levels			
Item	Verb form	G1	G2	G3	NS
1	infl. past	64.7	72.2	50.0	20.0
	lex. past	23.5	27.8	46.7	80.0
2	infinitive	48.4	73.5	51.4	100
3	infl.+ ing	27.3	33.3	38.9	35.0
	lex. + ing	18.2	3.3	11.1	40.0
	have + ing	-	2.5	5.1	20
4	past part.	69.7	84.0	85.7	100
5	infl. past	39.4	46.7	34.2	95.0
6	have past	3.3	19.0	14.3	57.1
	infl. past	36.7	33.3	50.0	23.8
	invariable	-	-	-	9.5
7	past part.	28.6	84.6	47.6	90.5
8	be -past	95.0	100	81.6	100
9	lex. past	73.1	84.8	86.1	85.7
10	have -past	29.0	13.2	28.6	90.5

		Levels			
Item	Verb form	G1	G2	G3	NS
11	infinitive	87.5	89.7	94.9	100
12	infl. past	12.1	5.4	17.1	76.2
	infl. -past	48.5	62.2	54.3	4.8
13	infl. past	26.5	63.9	70.3	100
14	lex. past	39.1	41.9	71.4	100
	invariable	56.5	51.6	21.4	-
15	lex. past	64.3	37.8	38.9	80.0
16	infl. past	32.3	70.0	82.4	100
17	do -past	69.0	86.5	92.3	100
18	infl. past	70.0	83.8	83.8	61.9
	lex. past	10.0	10.8	8.1	38.1
19	infinitive	53.3	50.0	48.4	95.0
20	do past	69.0	90.0	100	81
21	lex. past	86.7	84.8	85.3	90.0
22	invariable	12.5	36.4	36.8	81.0
	infl. past	32.4	44.7	42.1	14.3
23	be past	75.0	88.6	91.2	100
24	lex. past	71.4	87.5	96.4	100
25	infl. past	71.4	75.0	46.2	52.4
	lex. past	14.3	25.0	53.8	47.6
26	lex. past	76.7	67.6	83.8	100
27	be past	57.1	91.7	88.2	100

A.8.2 Percentages of responses for Test 2

		Levels			
Item	Activity	G1	G2	G3	NS
1	Acc. change	87.5	82.5	92.3	100
	Unac. change	7.5	7.5	-	-
	No change	5.0	10.0	7.7	-
2	No change	37.5	67.5	69.2	71.4
	Unac. change	47.5	5.0	5.1	-
	Acc. change	15.0	27.5	25.6	-
3	Acc.. change	60.0	97.5	97.4	100
	Unac. change	30.0	2.5	2.6	-
	No change	10.0	-	-	-
4	Acc. change	42.5	52.5	41.0	100
	Unac. change	30.0	20.0	25.6	-
	No change	27.5	27.5	33.3	-
5	Acc. change	17.5	62.5	87.2	100
	Unac. change	42.5	7.5	5.1	-
	No change	40.0	30.0	7.7	-
6	Acc. change	20.0	32.5	48.7	100
	Unac. change	75.0	42.5	38.5	-
	No change	5.0	25.0	12.8	-
7	No change	12.5	22.5	7.7	9.5
	Unacc. change	75.0	30.0	17.9	-
	Acc. change	12.5	47.5	74.4	90.5
8	Acc. change	2.5	5.0	10.3	100
	Unac. change	47.5	22.5	20.5	-
	No change	50.0	72.5	69.2	-
9	Acc. change	32.5	62.5	79.5	100
	Unac. change	40.0	10.0	10.3	-
	No change	27.5	27.5	10.3	-
10	Acc. change	67.5	87.5	74.4	100
	Unac. change	17.5	2.5	25.6	-
	No change	15.0	10.0	-	-

		Levels			
Item	Activity	G1	G2	G3	NS
11	Acc. change	70.0	72.5	92.3	100
	Unac. change	20.0	20.0	7.7	-
	No change	10.0	7.5	-	-
12	Acc. change	75.0	70.0	84.6	100
	Unac. change	17.5	2.5	2.6	4.8
	No change	7.5	27.5	12.8	-
13	Acc. change	42.5	75.0	89.7	100
	Unac. change	27.5	2.5	2.6	-
	No change	30.0	22.5	7.7	-
14	Acc. change	55.0	82.5	82.1	61.9
	Unac. change	15.0	2.5	2.6	-
	No change	30.0	15.0	15.4	38.1
15	Acc. change	7.5	2.5	20.5	23.8
	Unac. change	50.0	20.0	12.8	-
	No change	42.5	77.5	66.7	76.2
16	Acc. change	25.0	37.5	48.7	100
	Unac. change	45.0	15.0	23.1	-
	No change	30.0	47.5	28.2	-
17	Acc. change	10.0	5.0	20.5	100
	Unac. change	50.0	35.0	23.1	-
	No change	40.0	60.0	56.4	-
18	Acc. change	7.5	20.0	20.5	81.0
	Unac. change	57.5	25.0	23.1	-
	No change	35.0	55.0	56.4	19.0
19	No change	20.0	50.0	66.7	85.7
	Unac. change	35.0	27.5	5.1	-
	Acc. change	45.0	22.5	28.2	14.3
20	Acc. change	25.0	42.5	61.5	100
	Unac. change	55.0	27.5	15.4	-
	No change	20.0	30.0	23.1	-

A.8.3 Percentages of responses for Test 3

		Groups			
Item	choice	G1	G2	G3	NS
1	A	84.6	90.0	94.9	90.5
	B	33.3	25.0	15.4	-
	C	23.1	35.0	38.5	100
	D	5.1	-	-	-
2	A	30.8	17.5	5.1	4.8
	B	5.1	2.5	-	-
	C	71.8	85.0	100	95.2
	D	2.6	2.5	-	4.8
3	A	37.8	12.5	5.1	-
	B	62.2	90.0	94.9	100
	C	5.4	-	-	-
	D	2.7	-	2.6	-
4	A	10.3	7.5	-	-
	B	38.5	47.5	30.8	81.0
	C	-	7.5	23.1	-
	D	84.6	82.5	100	100
5	A	25.6	7.5	5.3	-
	B	71.8	82.5	92.1	100
	C	12.8	27.5	18.4	38.1
	D	5.1	12.5	-	-

		Groups			
Item	choice	G1	G2	G3	NS
6	A	12.5	17.5	15.4	19.0
	B	17.5	22.5	17.9	4.8
	C	52.5	45.0	38.5	57.1
	D	42.5	47.5	76.9	100
7	A	-	-	-	-
	B	26.1	22.5	12.8	57.1
	C	84.2	82.5	92.3	85.7
	D	10.5	7.5	2.6	-
8	A	38.9	79.5	78.9	95.2
	B	19.4	2.6	5.3	-
	C	38.9	12.8	15.8	-
	D	27.8	33.3	34.2	38.1
9	A	91.9	90.0	94.9	100
	B	18.9	32.5	35.9	61.9
	C	5.4	2.5	7.7	4.8
	D	8.1	2.5	-	-
10	A	5.1	-	2.6	-
	B	2.6	2.5	-	-
	C	61.5	82.5	94.9	100
	D	53.8	42.5	33.3	19.0

		Groups			
Item	choice	G1	G2	G3	NS
11	A	17.9	10.0	5.1	-
	B	23.1	5.0	10.3	9.5
	C	35.9	57.5	82.1	100
	D	43.6	50.0	46.2	28.6
12	A	5.1	-	2.6	-
	B	56.4	50.0	61.5	71.4
	C	2.6	-	7.7	66.7
	D	48.7	82.5	82.1	95.2
13	A	43.6	51.3	23.1	14.3
	B	7.7	7.7	7.7	-
	C	30.8	10.3	2.6	-
	D	17.9	46.2	74.4	100
14	A	51.3	72.5	61.5	14.3
	B	10.3	2.5	2.6	4.8
	C	38.5	37.5	46.2	85.7
	D	23.1	10.0	7.7	81.0
15	A	48.7	52.5	64.1	100
	B	28.2	30.0	43.6	4.8
	C	12.8	7.5	5.1	4.8
	D	33.3	17.5	5.1	-

A.8.4 Percentages of responses for Test 4

Item	Activity type	Groups			
		G1	G2	G3	NS
1	Association only	7.5	2.5	-	33.3
	Explanation only	22.5	15	15.4	-
	Association + Explan.	35	52.5	69.2	66.7
2	Association only	-	-	-	23.8
	Explanation only	5	15	23.1	4.8
	Association + Explan.	2.5	-	-	66.7
3	Association only	-	-	-	19
	Explanation only	5	10	5.1	14.3
	Association + Explan.	-	5	2.6	57.1
4	Association only	-	-	-	33.3
	Explanation only	10	15	15.4	4.8
	Association + Explan.	-	-	2.6	61.9
5	Association only	10	5	-	28.6
	Explanation only	12.5	7.5	23.1	-
	Association + Explan.	20	22.5	23.1	66.7
6	Association only	2.5	-	-	33.3
	Explanation only	5	10	10.3	14.3
	Association + Explan.	-	7.5	5.1	47.6
7	Association only	15	2.5	2.6	28.6
	Explanation only	15	7.5	5.1	4.8
	Association + Explan.	10	42.5	43.6	57.1
8	Association only	17.5	7.5	5.1	38.1
	Explanation only	7.5	-	10.3	-
	Association + Explan.	47.5	70	64.1	57.1
9	Association only	2.5	-	-	28.6
	Explanation only	12.5	7.5	7.7	14.3
	Association + Explan.	7.5	12.5	17.9	52.4
10	Association only	30	10	-	28.6
	Explanation only	5	30	33.3	-
	Association + Explan.	2.5	7.5	17.9	66.7

A.9 Model explanations for tense-time relationship

Item 1. He *is giving* his paper next week.

Explanation: The present tense is used to represent the future time because the arrangement is definite.

Item 2. It is time we *had* a holiday.

Explanation: The past is used to express hypothetical meaning, or simply a wish.

Item 3. He just *walks* into the room and *sits* down in front of the fire without saying a word to anyone.

Explanation: The past event is portrayed or imagined as if it was going on at the present moment.

Item 4. If you *wanted* to you would make a lot of money.

Explanation: The past tense is used to express something hypothetical, something that might happen.

Item 5. Assuming Janet *has arrived* tomorrow, we can leave.

Explanation: The present perfect is used to describe something which must have occured before something else can follow it. What follows is conditional on what has to precede it.

Item 6. John: Did you want to speak to me ?

Old man: Yes, I *hoped* you would give me a hand with the painting.

Explanation: The past tense is used to make an indirect or polite request, as used in everyday conversation.

Item 7. Tomorrow we *leave.*

Explanation: The time of the event is determined by the presence

of the time adverb 'tomorrow', and thge arrangment is a fixed one.

Item 8. The teacher *advised* them to read the book.

Explanation: The event took place before the present moment.

It is a past event.

Item 9. John *tells* me that you are having an affair with my wife.

Explanation: The act of telling took place before the present

moment, but the message is still of particular relevance.

Item 1O. You *take* the first turning on the left past the roundabout, then you *cross* the bridge and bear right until you reach the public library.

Explanation: This tense is used for giving instructions or

directions on what has to be done immediately or very soon.

A.10 Results of NNSs' explanations of circumstances of verb use

Group	Items									
G1/No	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	4									
2										
3	4							4		4
4										
5										
6										
7										
8	4			4	4		4	4		4
9	4				4		4	4		
10										
11								4		
12					4	4		4		
13	4	4								
14								4		
15										
16								4		
17										
18	4			4				4		
19	4			4	4					
20	4						4			
21	4		4		4			4	4	
22	4							4		
23	4	4			4			4	4	
24	4							4		
25	4									

Group	Items									
G1/No	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
26	4						4	4	4	
27			4				4			
28								4		
29	4			4		4	4		4	
30	4							4	4	
31								4		
32	4				4			4		
33	4							4	4	
34	4						4			
35	4	4			4		4	4	4	4
36	4				4					
37					4					
38	4				4			4		
39	4				4		4	4		
40	4				4		4	4		
G2/No										
41	4							4		
42	4				4		4	4	4	4
43	4		4	4			4		4	4
44			4					4		
45	4						4	4	4	
46										
47	4	4			4		4	4	4	4
48	4						4	4		4
49	4								4	4
50		4	4			4	4		4	4

Group	Items									
G2/No	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
51	4									
52	4				4	4		4		4
53							4			
54										
55								4		
56	4	4			4			4		
57	4				4					
58	4									
59	4						4	4		4
60								4		
61	4		4		4		4	4	4	4
62	4			4			4	4		4
63									4	
64										
65								4		
66				4		4		4		
67	4						4	4		
68		4					4	4		
69	4						4	4		
70	4				4		4	4		4
71	4			4	4	4		4	4	
72	4	4			4			4		
73	4		4				4	4		4
74	4	4	4				4			4
75	4				4			4		

Group	Items									
G2/No	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
76	4			4	4	4	4	4		
77	4				4	4				4
78	4						4	4		
79	4							4		
80						4	4	4		4
G3/No										
81	4								4	4
82	4			4			4	4	4	4
83	4						4	4	4	4
84	4	4		4				4		4
85	4									4
86	4				4			4		
87	4							4		
88										
89	4						4	4		4
90	4	4			4	4	4	4	4	4
91	4				4		4	4		
92								4		
93	4	4					4	4		4
94					4	4	4	4	4	4
95	4				4		4			
96	4						4	4		4
97	4				4		4	4		4
98	4			4			4			
99	4				4			4		
100		4								

Group	Items									
G3/No	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
101			4		4		4	4		
102	4				4		4	4	4	4
103	4							4		
104	4	4		4	4		4			4
105	4				4	4	4			4
106	4	4				4	4	4		4
107	4		4	4	4	4		4	4	4
108	4			4	4			4		
109	4	4						4		4
110					4			4		
111	4			4				4		
112	4		4				4	4		
113	4	4					4	4		
114	4				4			4		
115	4				4		4	4	4	4
116	4	4						4		
117	4				4				4	4
118	4				4			4	4	4
119	4							4		

A.11 Frequency Distributions of scores

A.11.1 Frequency distributions of scores for Test 1

Value	Groups			
	G1	G2	G3	NS
7	1			
11	1			
12		1		
13	2	2		
14	5			
15	3		1	
16	5	1		
17	2	4		
18	5	4		
19	4	2	2	
20	1	1	2	
21	3	5	3	
22	2	5	1	
23	5	2	7	
24	1	7	13	
25		3	4	
26		3	3	6
27			3	15

A.11.2 Frequency distributions of scores for Test 2

Value	Groups			
	G1	G2	G3	NS
2	2			
3	1			
4	3			
5	3	2	1	
6	5			
7	5	2	1	
8	6	4		
9	1	2		
10	3	6	3	
11	4	7	1	
12	5	2	8	
13	2	6	8	
14		2	6	
15		3	2	
16		3	7	
17		1	1	1
18			1	10
19				6
20				4

A.11.3 Frequency distributions of scores for Test 3

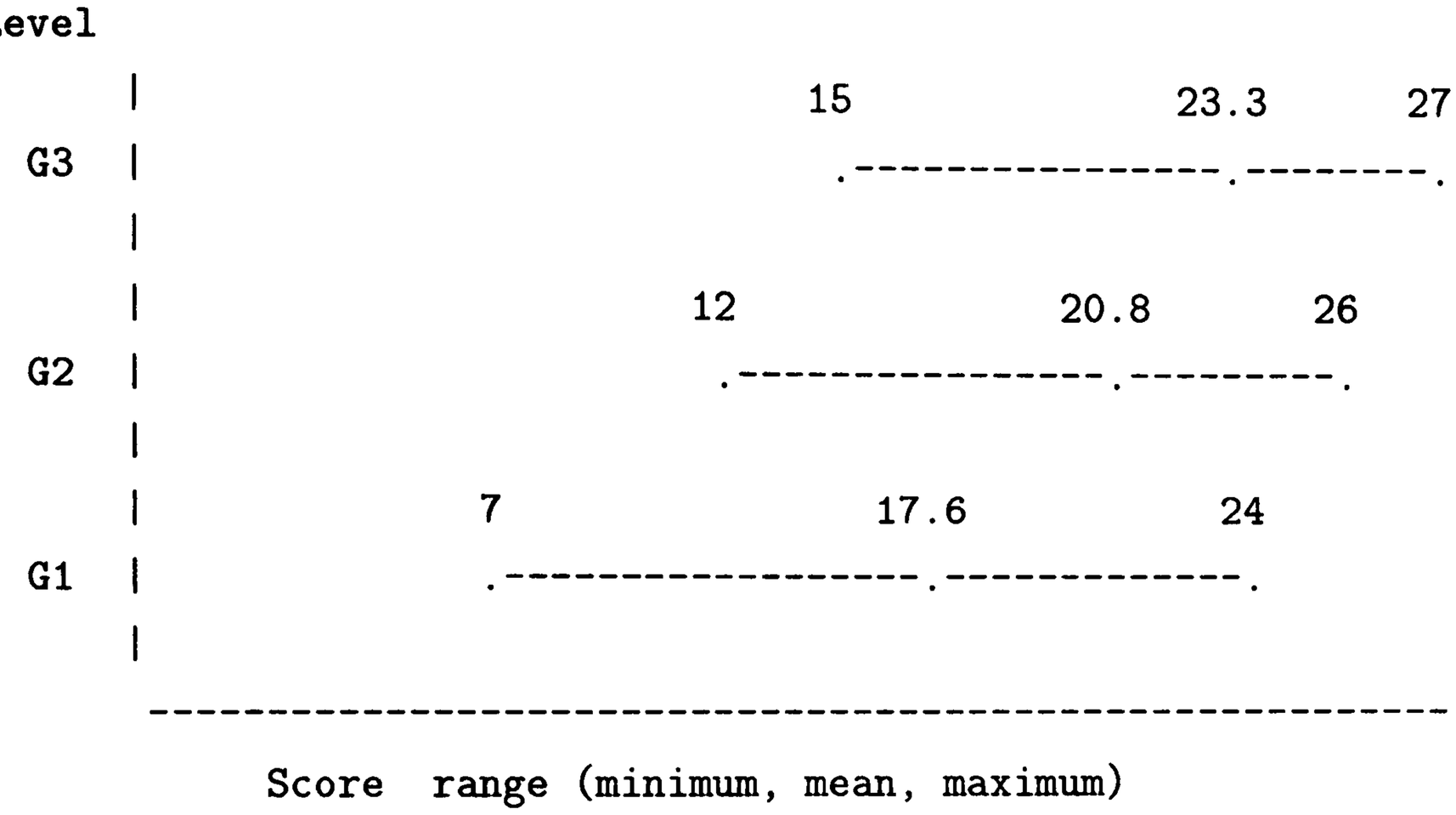
Value	Groups			
	G1	G2	G3	NS
21	1			
22	2			
26	1			
27	3			
29	1			
30	2	2	1	
31	1	1		
32	2	2	1	
33	3	1		
34	2	2		
35	3		2	
36	4	2	2	
37	3	4		
38	2	5		
39	3	4	7	
40	2	2	6	1
41	3	3	1	1
42		2	4	
43	2	1	1	
44		1	4	
45		4	5	1
46		1	3	1
47		2	1	5
48			1	5
49		1		2
50				1
51				2
52				1
53				1

A.11.4 Frequency distributions of scores for Test 4

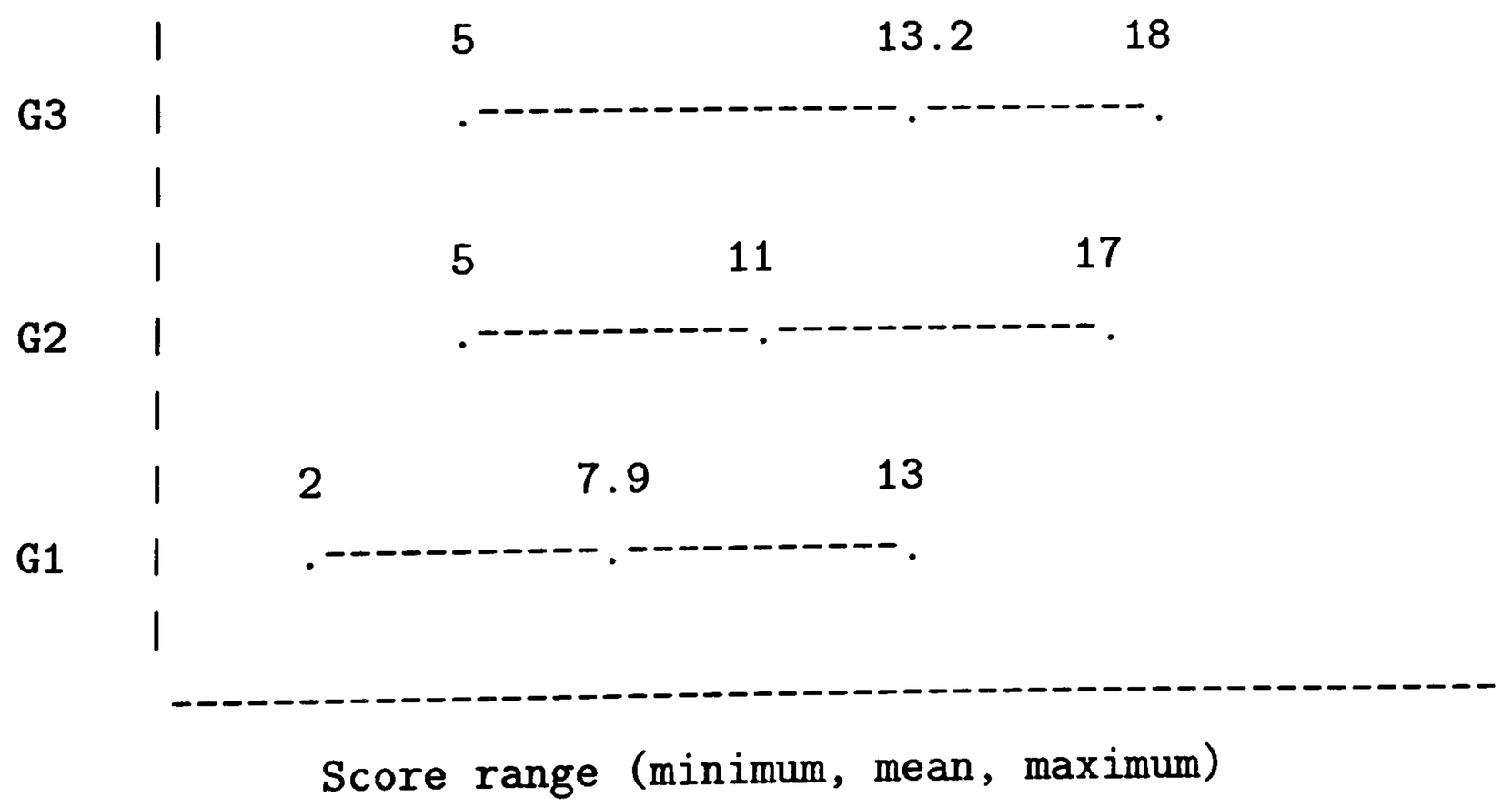
Value	Groups			
	G1	G2	G3	NS
0	3			
1	1		1	
2	3	2	2	
3	5	5		
4	2	2		
5	5	2	2	
6	2	3	2	
7	1	2	3	
8	3	3	6	
9	6	3	1	4
10	1	1	4	2
11	2	5	4	
12	3	1		1
13		1	2	
14	1	5	5	
15	2		2	
16		1	2	
17		2	1	
19		1		
20		1		
21			1	
22			1	1
25				1
28				1
29				9
30				2

A.12 Graphic Representations of Dispersion

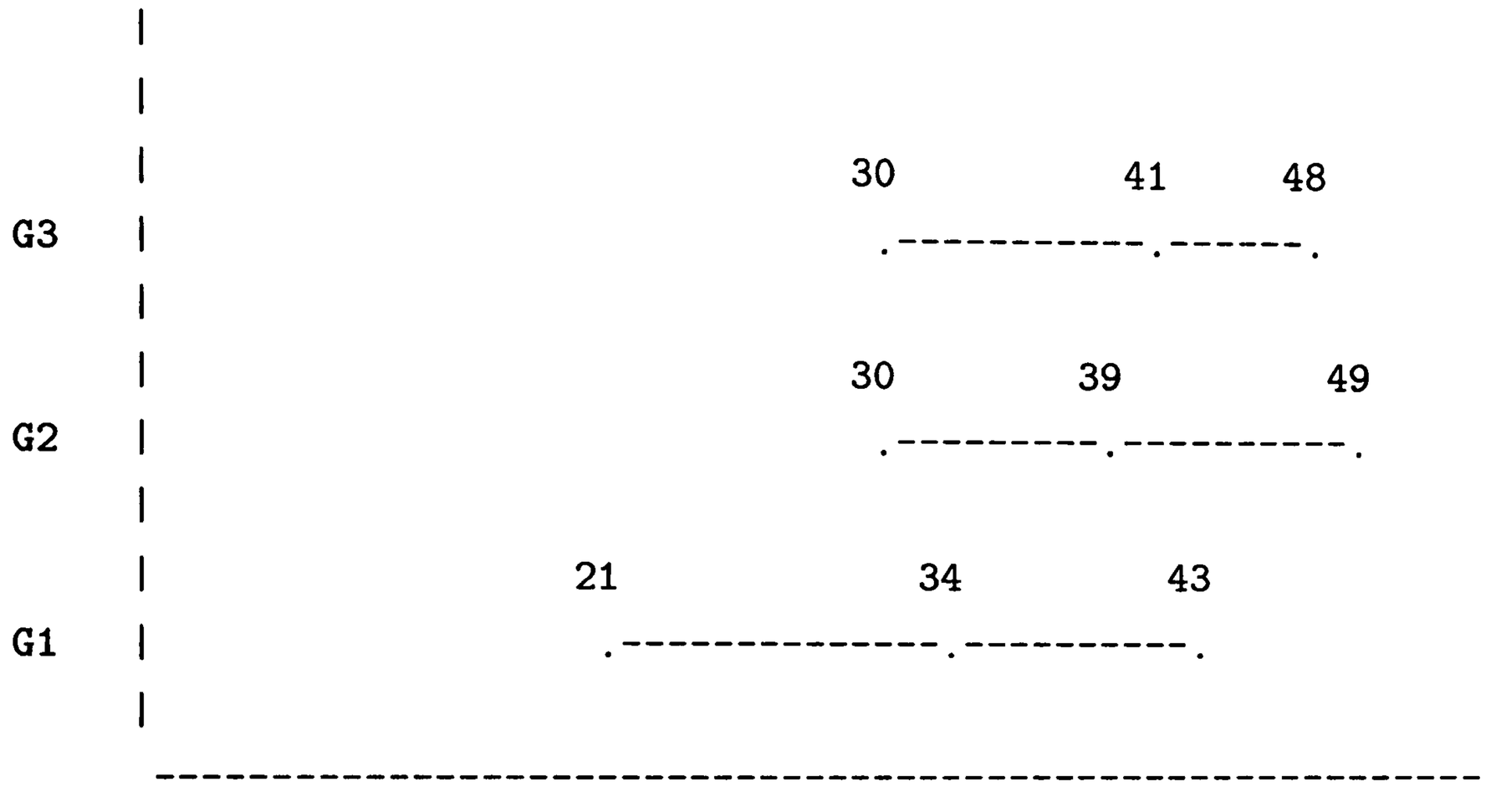
A.12.1 Graphic representation of dispersion for Test 1



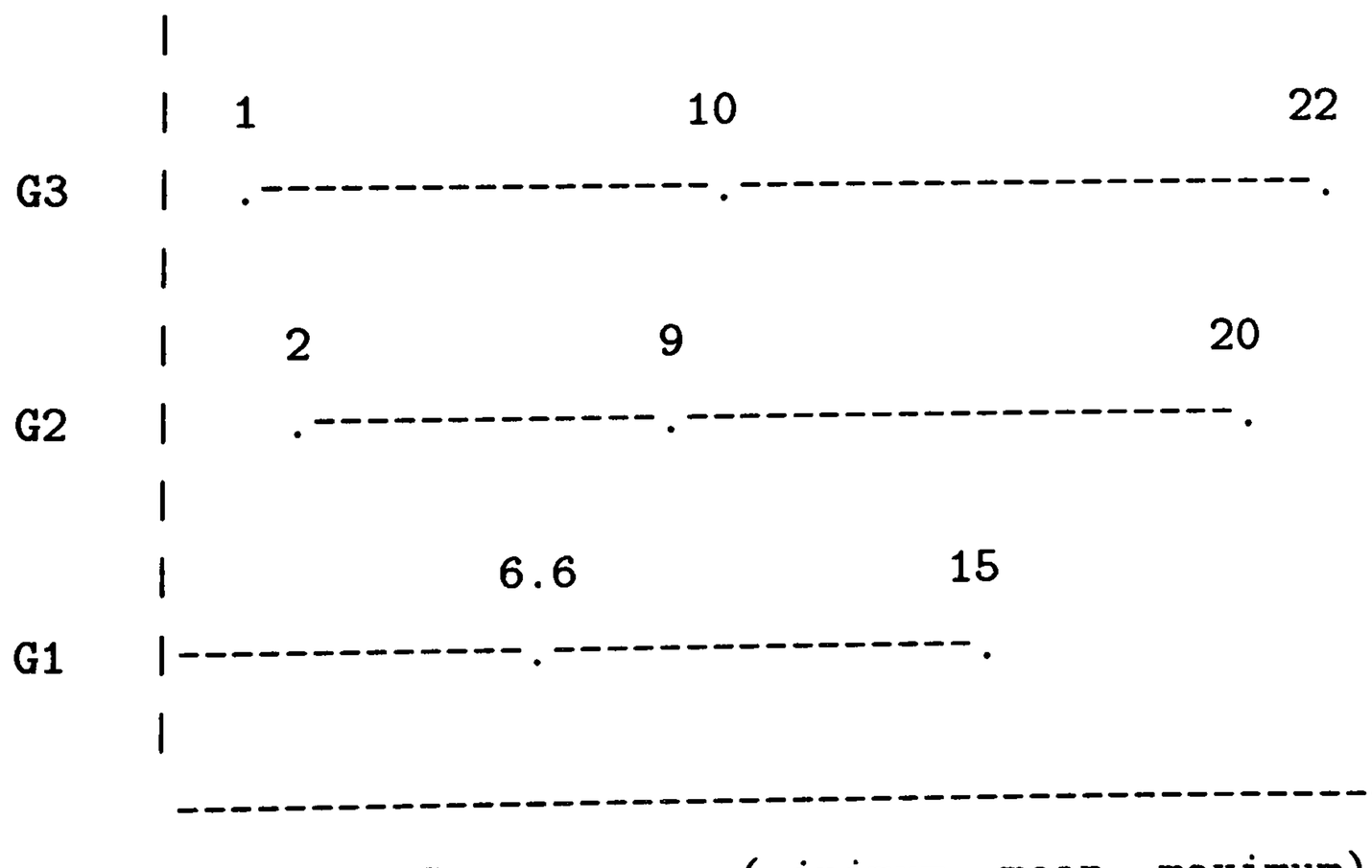
A.12.2 Graphic representation of dispersion for Test 2



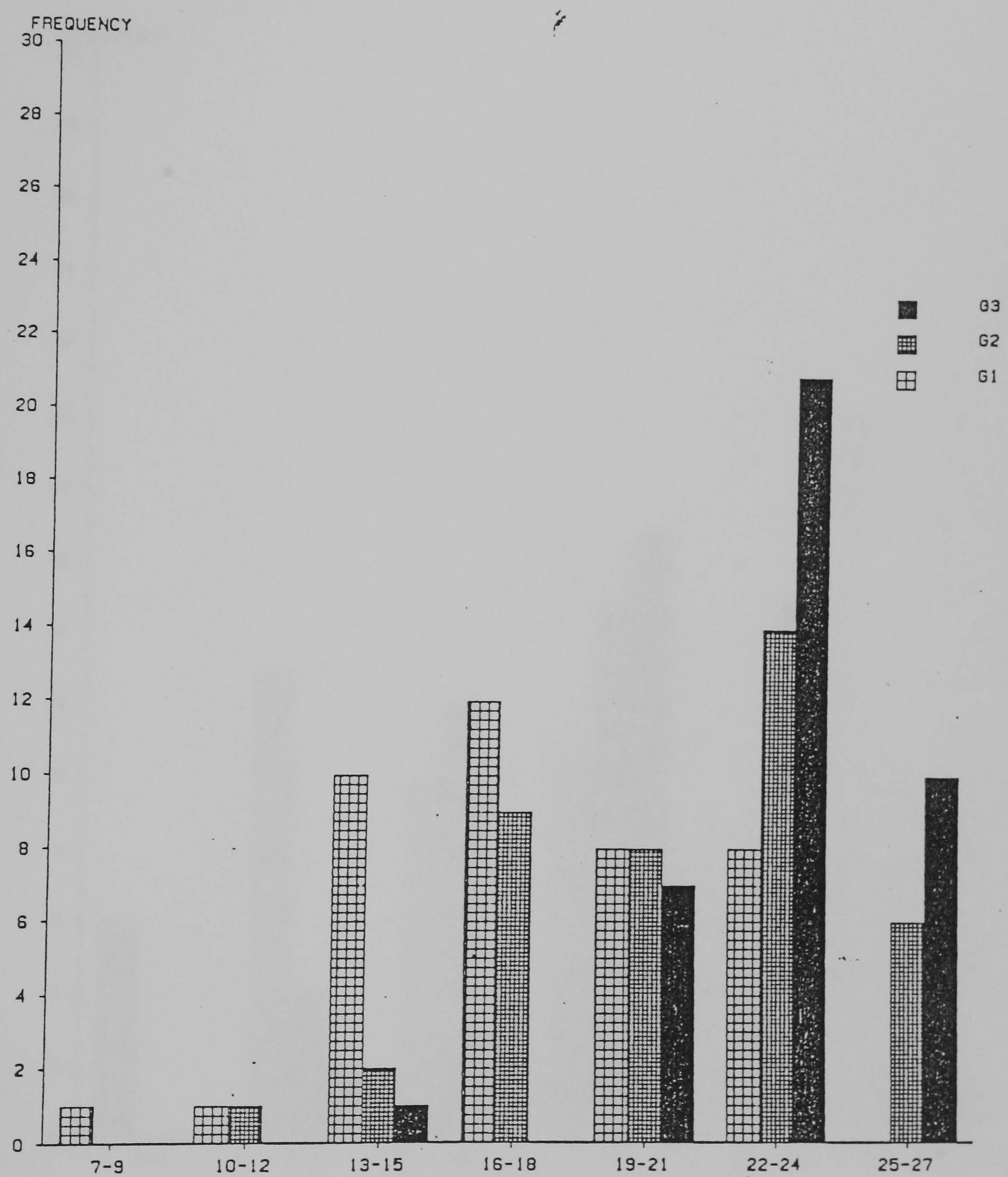
A.12.3 Graphic representation of dispersion for Test 3



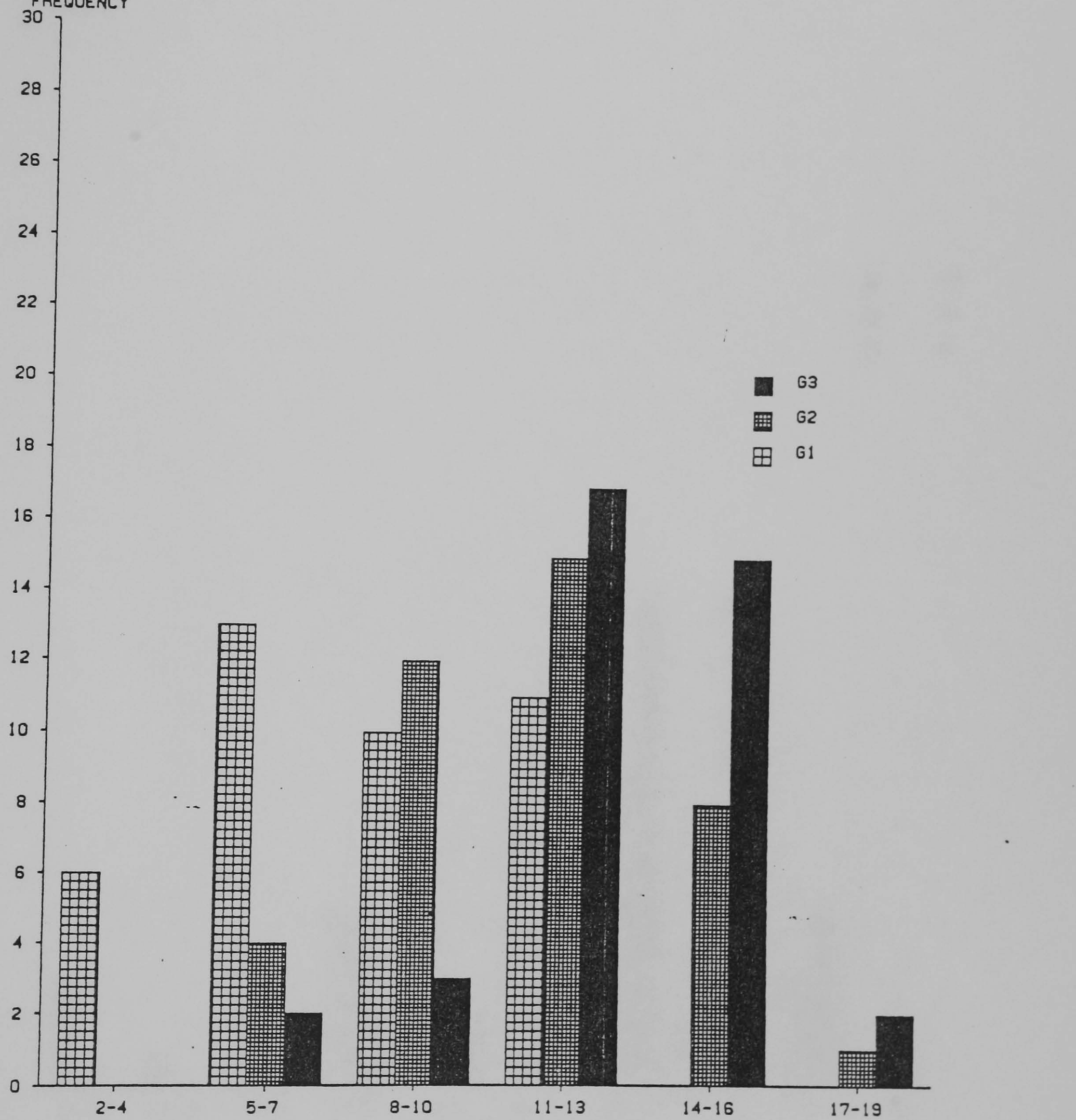
A.12.4 Graphic representation of dispersion for Test 4



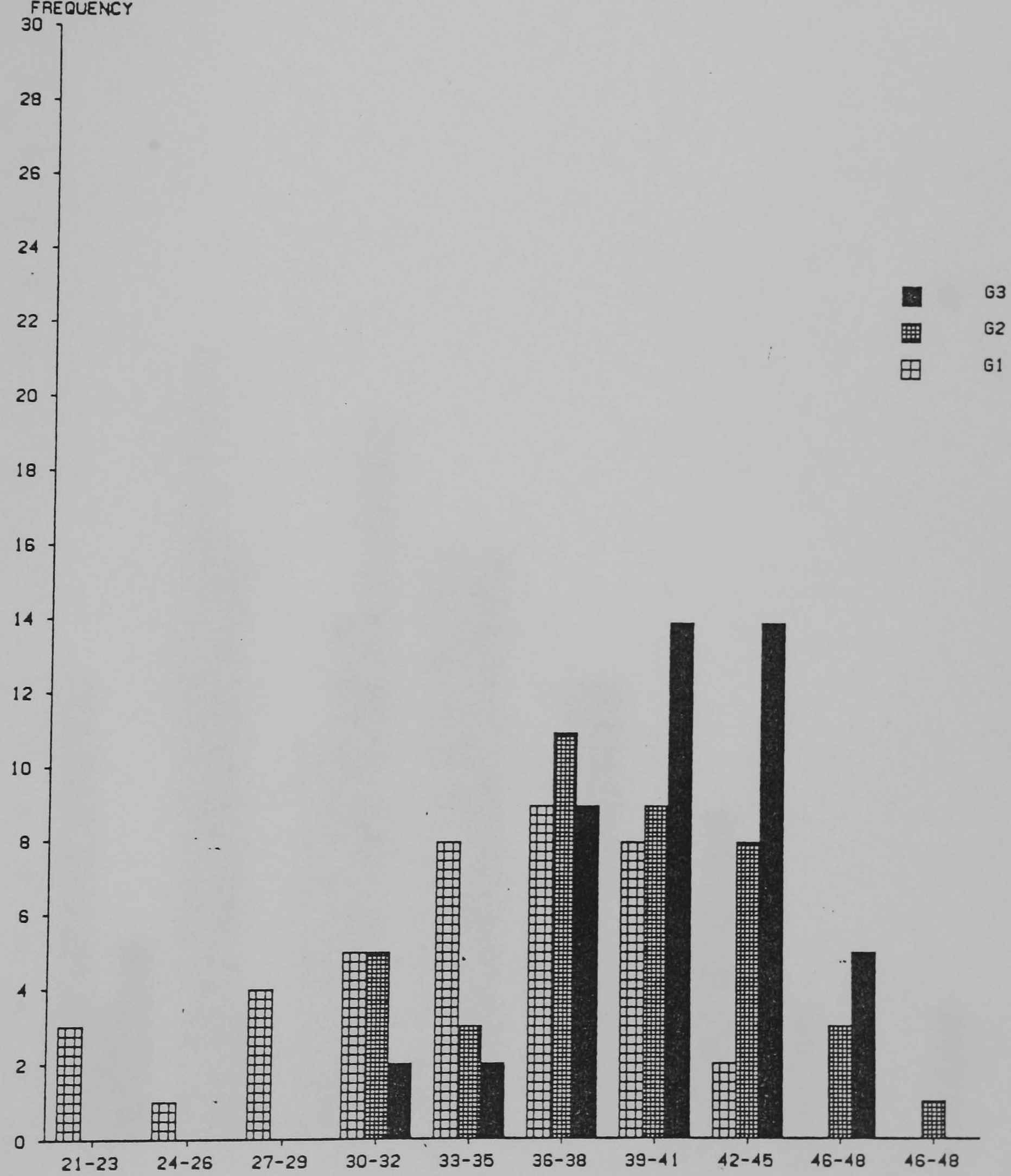
A.12.5 Frequency distributions for Test 1



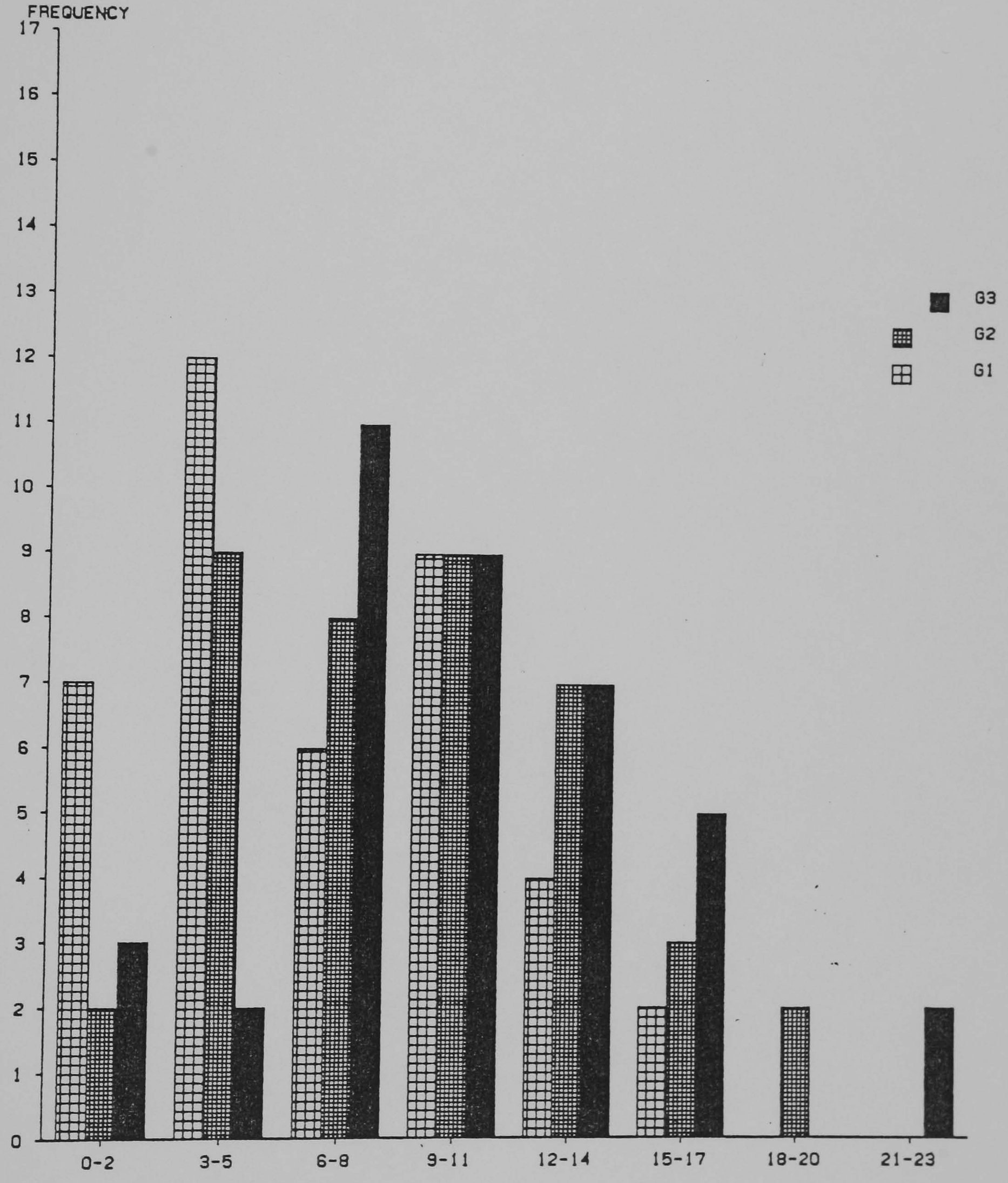
A.12.6 Frequency distributions for Test 2



A.12.7 Frequency distributions for Test 3



A.12.8 Frequency distributions for Test 4



UNIV DUNELM