Second Language Acquisition

A Study of Successful and Unsuccessful Incorporation of Progressive Verb Forms into Pupils’ Written Production

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find out how well Swedish pupils succeeded in their use of the progressive verb forms. A comprehensive research has been carried out in the area of second language acquisition, in which an interest in the order of acquisition of a second language as well as verb forms also was included. The material for the study was collected from second year pupils at an upper secondary school and consisted of two consecutive writing assignments. The first assignment was preceded by the teaching of the progressive verb forms, which the pupils were implicitly expected to use in their writing. In the second assignment, no grammar lessons were given prior to the assignment. A comparison of the evolution of the use of the verb forms mentioned was then conducted. The result indicates an increase of an accurate use. One conclusion that can be drawn is that learner strategies and motivation are beneficial to second language acquisition, as well as learning a more accurate grammar.
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1. Introduction

In Sweden, the English language plays an important role both in society at large and at school. Accordingly, it already has a prominent position at an early age; pupils start learning English around the age of nine, in compliance with the regulations of the Swedish National Agency of Education. Given that this is the case, it may not come as a surprise that in the national tests in English for year nine (age 16), which are made to assess a pupil’s level of achievement, as many as 95.8 per cent of the pupils pass (Skolverket: 2010). In the light of this, most Swedish pupils ought to show a fairly good grammatical knowledge of the English language when starting upper secondary school. However, having taught English both at secondary as well as upper secondary school (sixth form), I have noticed that pupils, in general, when entering the sixth form, and despite having passed the tests, still have problems achieving a basic level of grammatical accuracy. In my view, this manifests itself in writing in particular.

Since grammar and writing are interrelated, the main concern in this essay will be on one of the grammatical difficulties Swedish pupils experience in their written production. According to Estling Vannestål (2007:39), apart from having difficulties when it comes to “the use of an –s on present tense verbs in the third person singular”, Swedish pupils also have problems with the usage of “the simple and progressive [...] verb forms”. Thus, the progressive verb forms will be investigated, not only in the pupils’ production, but also in the way they are dealt with in their textbook.

Finally, closely connected to my topic are language learning strategies. What strategies do pupils use when using progressive verb forms? How can pupils benefit from using different strategies and thus succeed in achieving a higher level of grammatical accuracy? Asking these questions and encouraging pupils to comment upon their writing will help me to analyse their grammatical skills. In so doing, this essay will provide me with a wide range of important data which, I am sure, will further enable me to develop my teaching, and which in turn will help my pupils acquire the English language more effectively.
1.1 Aims

The aim with this essay is to find out how well second year pupils in upper secondary school perform when it comes to their use of the progressive verb forms in their written production. This question will be addressed from a theoretical position on three different levels: by studying second language acquisition theories, by exploring the Swedish national syllabus for teaching English and by researching language learner strategy theories. By also comparing the way in which the pupils actually experience the strategies when using the progressive form, and by observing how the pupils put them into practise, I aim to find answers to the following questions:

1. When should the progressive verb form be taught in school and who should make that decision?
2. Is it possible to observe the progression of a more accurate use of the verb form and to what extent?
2. Second Language Acquisition

When starting the research, I soon discovered that different terms were used regarding the same topic: second language acquisition. Four different terms were found and defined as follows.

First, there are the terms SLA (Second Language Acquisition) and second language acquisition or L\textsubscript{2} acquisition. Ellis (2008) makes a distinction between them and states that SLA is the term for the discipline, while both second language acquisition and L\textsubscript{2} involve the process of acquiring second languages. However, there is also the term ‘foreign language’. Ellis (2008, pp.5-6) claims that although a second language “is generally used to refer to any language other than the first language”, there is a clear distinction between a second and a foreign language: whereas a second language “plays an institutional and social role in the community” a foreign language does not. Thus, English learnt in Sweden is defined as a foreign language. However, Crystal (2003) emphasises that the distinction between second and foreign languages must not be too simplified, as there is a difference in them in both eloquence and aptitude.

Since it became a research field in the 1960s, researchers of SLA have been interested in how people learn a second language. There are a variety of different issues to consider in order to understand how a language is learnt; it is a complex cause of action. Hence, researchers from different disciplines have contributed to the position in which the field stands today. However, due to the fact that both linguists, psychologists and sociolinguists have put their mark on the research “[t]his has raised questions as to whether SLA research constitutes a coherent field, with identifiable goals and methods of enquiry” (Ellis 2008:4).

Ellis (2008:41) states that it was not until the 1960s that research into second language acquisition really began. This initial period focused on the study of competing theories, and exploration of how second language pedagogy might be improved. Up until this point, the dominant theory was behaviourism, which regarded imitation and memorizing to be the answer to learning languages. At the start of the 1970s, it started to lose ground to the innatist perspective.
The innatist perspective claimed that the process of acquiring a second language is innate. In this way it uses the same “principles of Universal Grammar (UG) [which] permits all children to acquire the language of their environment during a critical period of their development” (Lightbown and Spada 2006:35). However, as this critical period was believed to end during adolescence (White:2003), it was soon understood that as to adult second language learners, the new theory could never be applicable. Rather, it only proved to explain the acquisition of first languages.

In the early 1980s, Stephen Krashen introduced his ‘monitor model’. Within this model, Krashen introduced five different assumptions, which later were much challenged. Among other things, he separated the expressions ‘acquire-learn’. He compared ‘acquisition’ to how humans learn to speak their native language without being concerned by grammatical rules, as he claimed was the case with the contrasting expression ‘learning’. Furthermore, Krashen believed language learners to have an “affective filter [...] a metaphorical barrier that prevents learners from acquiring language even when appropriate input is available” (Lightbown and Spada 2006:37). Accordingly, “[a] learner who has generally negative attitudes towards learning English will have a high affective filter and the task for the teacher will be substantial” (Hedge 2000:21).

Building on Krashen’s model, researchers moved towards a more cognitively based theory. In so doing, they tried to explain how “information [was] stored in the memory, and particularly how new information [was] acquired” (O’Malley and Uhl Chamot 1990:17). Thus, this new view of how the language learning process was performed gave both a new insight into how the mind works and how language learners could develop their abilities and learning strategies.

Today, SLA researchers disagree on how learning is achieved (Ellis:2008). Researchers studying explicit learning are interested in the learner’s actual involvement in the learning process and his or her attentiveness during learning. On the other hand, researchers studying implicit learning are interested in learners being unaware about the learning process.
They also believe that learnability is only possible to achieve before the critical period, (see following table). Hence, since researchers disagree, it is questioned “whether any learning is possible without some degree of awareness” (Ellis 2008:7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Implicit knowledge</th>
<th>Explicit knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Learner is intuitively aware of linguistic norms.</td>
<td>Learner is consciously aware of linguistic norms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of knowledge</td>
<td>Learner has procedural knowledge of rules and fragments.</td>
<td>Learner has declarative knowledge of grammatical rules and fragments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systematically</td>
<td>Knowledge is variable but systematic.</td>
<td>Knowledge is often anomalous and inconsistent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>Knowledge is accessible by means of automatic processing.</td>
<td>Knowledge is accessible only through controlled processing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of L2 knowledge</td>
<td>Knowledge is typically accessed when learner is performing fluently.</td>
<td>Knowledge is typically accessed when learner experiences a planning difficulty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learnability</td>
<td>Potentially only learnable within ‘the critical period’.</td>
<td>Learnable at any age.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Key characteristics of implicit and explicit knowledge (Ellis 2008: 418)

Since researchers have different points of interests, no coherent theory is yet to be found in SLA research. However, for the last twenty odd years a cognitivist and developmental approach has been embraced and this gives the direction for further research in this field. According to Lightbown and Spada (2006:39) cognitive psychologists “see second language acquisition as the building up of knowledge that can eventually be called on automatically for speaking and understanding”. In this view, acquiring a second language develops much the same way people learn anything: progressively.
2.1 The order of second language acquisition

There is a consensus among linguists about the general order of English second language acquisition. According to Lightbown and Spada (2006:82) “[s]econd language learners [...] pass through sequences of development: what is learned early by one is learned early by others”. These “[d]evelopmental patterns can be established by looking at either the order in which different target structures emerge or are mastered, or the sequence of stages through which a learner passes en route to mastery of a single TL\(^1\) structure” (Ellis 2008:111).

Thus, the learners’ progression can be described in a sequence of four different stages. According to Brown (2007:267) the first stage consists of ”experimentation and inaccurate guessing”. At this stage, the learner makes mistakes randomly since he or she is not concerned about any systematical order.

The second stage still includes making errors, and the learner might still not be able to correct himself. However, at this stage the learner is beginning to understand grammatical rules. Rules can after a while be forgotten and the learner might go back and forth between stage one and stage two. This inconsistency can also be referred to as “backsliding”. At stage three, a more consistent language production can be found. Now, error correction is more automatized than before.

Finally, at stage four, the learner makes very few errors and those made are self-corrected. Language production at this stage tends to be stable; however, this process might be too quickly, which in turn may lead to the production of errors that are overlooked. If this happens, errors can stabilize and fossilize, i.e., reoccur time after time, even among much talented learners.

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\(^1\) TL = Target Language (my own comment).
2.1.1 The order of grammar acquisition

To fully grasp how pupils acquire grammar in a second language is not easy. As Lightbown and Spada (2006:84) claim, “researchers have not found a single simple explanation for the order”. However, Cook (2008:26) states that children, in general, learning a second language display the same order of acquiring English grammar. In particular, he refers to an investigation (Dulay and Burnt:1973) in which the level of difficulty concerning the acquisition of certain elements of grammar was studied. The result shows that grammatical morphemes like the progressive ‘-ing’ was the third easiest element to learn, while on fourth place “came the auxiliary forms of ‘be’ with ‘-ing’ yielding ‘Girls are going’”.

Hedge (2000:pp.146-148) writes that more recent research has on the other hand demonstrated “that acquisition involves a number of processes”. According to these studies, the order of grammar acquisition starts with learners noticing and distinguishing certain components of the language. While acquiring these components and using them frequently, the learners try to understand how they can apply them to what they already know. Thus, analysing the language is of great importance to language learners.

Having reasoned and analysed, the learners start “structuring and restructuring” (Hedge 2000:148). Discerning how the newly learned components might fit into the already established language, they now “work out new rules, [which] have to be integrated into the representation of English grammar they hold in their minds”. An overgeneralization can occur at this stage, as well as a mother tongue influence. After that, a consistency in language use follows. This course of action is called “automatization”. The process of obtaining a correct language and practicing it successfully can be compared to how a mother tongue is acquired. However, “automatization will only occur as and when students are ready”. Cook (2001:31) argues that it is therefore necessary that teachers “should teach according to the stage their students are at”. Researchers agree upon the fact that even if implicit awareness of acquiring grammar proceeds in this way, “the explicit learning of rules can facilitate and speed up the grammar acquisition process” (Hedge: 151).
2.2 Grammar teaching from a historical point of view

From a historical point of view, teaching grammar has not always been popular. According to Thornbury (1999:14) “no other issue has so preoccupied theorists and practitioners as the grammar debate”.

Traditional grammar has been studied since the era of the learned Greeks. Celce-Murcia (in Celce-Murcia et al 2001:3) refers to both Greek and Latin being “used as lingua francas” for many centuries, when a grammar-translation approach was highly valued. Richards and Rodgers (2001:4) claim that:

“[t]extbooks consisted of statements of abstract grammar rules. Lists of vocabulary, and sentences for translation. Speaking the foreign language was not the goal, and oral practice was limited to students reading aloud the sentences they had translated. These sentences were constructed to illustrate the grammatical system of the language and consequently bore no relation to the language of real communication.”

Consequently, by using this approach, students dreaded grammar lessons and learned rules by heart, only to be able to pass their exams (Crystal: 2001).

At the beginning of the 1900s there was a new trend in teaching grammar: the Direct Method (Brown:2007). Its followers strongly desired pupils to be able to communicate without using their native language. They also believed grammar to be “learned inductively” (Celce-Murcia et al 2001:6). Consequently, texts were now read without any grammatical analysis. However, due to the fact that not many teachers were able to express themselves either effectively or sufficiently, the method was soon thought to be inadequate and was therefore abandoned. Thus, after this another period of grammar translation followed: “the Reading Approach”. Again, grammar was in focus, though this time only as much as to be able to comprehend and translate the texts in question. Having had no interest in pupils’ oral proficiency, this approach soon gave way to both “Audiolingualism” and the “Oral-Situational Approach”. Behaviourist drills were common in which pupils were asked to imitate and produce sentences with a flawless pronunciation and grammar.
From having had a more or less central position in language teaching until around 1975, the emphasis on grammar then changed and a focus on communicative skills and a descriptive grammar emerged. Hedge (2000:143) states that this was due to an “anti-grammar movement, perhaps influenced primarily by Krashen’s (1982) idea that grammar can be acquired naturally from meaningful input”. A period now ensued in which the popularity of teaching grammar rapidly declined.

The communicative approach applied to a number of approaches, one of which was the Natural Approach (Brown 2007:79). Teachers following this approach expected their pupils to speak in a relaxed and unforced manner, after having been introduced to and acquired a beginner’s knowledge and understanding of the second language. In that way the Natural Approach allowed pupils to be silent up to the point in which they believed themselves ready to speak. The method was later questioned and criticized due to the fact that pupils could in reality be silent much too long, and this could consequently, in turn, stall their language development.

2.2.1 Grammar and teaching today

Today, there are still different opinions on how grammar should be taught. Two schools of thought are according to Chaudron (1988:164) either by “instructional input or focus” or by “natural exposure”. Thus, some linguists still believe an increasing knowledge in grammar to be crucial when trying to learn another language, claiming that “[g]rammar is the most unique aspect of language” (Cook, 18). Brown (2007:77) on the other hand, supports the idea that grammar is secondary to communication, stating that “[i]t appears that contextualized, appropriate, meaningful communication in the second language seems to be the best possible practice the second language learner could engage in”. This opinion is strongly supported by Krashen (1981:3) who declared that pupils “do not generally have time to think about and apply conscious grammatical rules”.

However, even with the teacher’s best intentions, some pupils not only find it difficult to succeed in acquiring a more accurate form of language, but also have difficulties in communicating. In investigating these phenomena, researchers contrasted successful learners with unsuccessful learners and found which factors generate a good language learner and why
some pupils have difficulties succeeding in acquiring linguistic skills. Table 2 characterizes the good language learner.

Table 2.

A good language learner:

| a. is a willing and accurate guesser |
| b. tries to get a message across even if specific language knowledge is lacking |
| c. is willing to make mistakes |
| d. constantly looks for patterns in the language |
| e. practices as often as possible |
| f. analyses his or her own speech and the speech of others |
| g. attends to whether his or her performance meets the standards he or she has learned |
| h. enjoys grammar exercises |
| i. begins learning in childhood |
| j. has an above-average IQ |
| k. has good academic skills |
| l. has a good self-image and lots of confidence |

(Lightbown and Spada 2006:55)

Given these factors, what about pupils who do not enjoy grammar or look for patterns in the language? What characterises these pupils and which factors may interfere with their learning process? According to Brown (2007:169) studies show that having difficulties succeeding in learning a second language might have to do with lack of motivation: pupils “may be unmotivated to learn […] because [they] fail to see the rewards, connect the learning only to superficial needs”.

Furthermore, the fact that emotions can have an impact on acquiring a second language is also focused upon. Cook (2008:141) stresses that “learners who see the second language as diminishing themselves will not succeed”. Also, Brown (2007) discusses teenagers holding themselves back during adolescence, due to their fear of showing an increasing insecurity. In doing so, their communication and comprehension may be affected when being too shy to participate in learning a second language. Moreover, an implicit requirement not to stand out from the group may also have a great impact since teenagers, as opposed to adults, tend to criticize each other when not being grammatically correct. Thus, attitude towards learning a second language plays a vital role in acquiring an ability to communicate or not.
Although, in general, there is a current emphasis on communication skills, it would seem that not everyone agrees on the place of grammar in the language classroom. According to Thornbury (1999:23) the reason is that communicative language teaching has placed “more weight on being intelligible than on being correct. Hedge (2000:15) takes the discussion a step further, arguing that “there is increasing evidence that learners progress faster with meaningful language practice in a rich linguistic environment and with an informed policy of error correction on the part of the teacher”.

2.2.2 Grammar in writing
According to the Strims project\(^2\) (Malmberg et al 2000); pupils perceive grammar as being the most difficult part of learning another language. The reason being that grammar has been taught for its own sake, instead of having grammar and writing complementing one another. In so doing, pupils learn rules only, and have difficulties showing an acquired proficiency when practicing writing. Frodesen (in Celce-Murcia et al 2001:234) claims that “the weakened role of grammar in L2 writing instruction has been the widespread adoption by many second language teachers of Krashen’s (1982) stated beliefs that form-focused instruction is not only unnecessary but thwarts natural acquisition processes”.

There are however differences in how speech and texts are produced. While speech most often has a direct response and thereby is either confirmed or questioned, a text has to be more informative, clearly organized and linguistically accurate in order to be interpreted in the way the writer intended it to be. Thus, grammar needs to be incorporated in writing tasks. Richards and Rodgers (2001:64) state that there is now a general idea that “direct and in-context instruction complement one another and that direct grammar instruction equips students with the set of tools and insights they need in order to control their expression” when practicing writing. According to Larsen-Freeman (in Celce-Murcia et al 2001:255), it is thereby necessary that pupils acquire an understanding “of grammar as a skill to be mastered, rather than a set of rules to be memorized”.

\(^2\) (Strategier vid inlärning av moderna språk, Strategies used when learning foreign languages. My translation)
However, Frodesen (in Celce-Murcia et al 2001: 237) stresses that it is important to remember that “[t]he level of difficulty of a grammatical feature should not be far beyond the learners' developmental stages”. Thus, in doing so, pupils might not be afraid of constructing and using a more advanced language knowing they may produce a higher level of accuracy.
3. The Swedish school system

The Swedish school system is goal-based, and the responsibility for the education is divided between the Swedish National Agency for Education as well as municipalities (Skolverket). What kind of knowledge that is acquired and how it should be assessed are among the agency’s missions, as well as working to achieve the goals set by the Parliament and Government. In 2011, the Swedish Government implemented a new curriculum for the non-compulsory school system: Gy11. However, since pupils in year two are the focus in this study, the curriculum of 1994 (Lpf94) is still in use and will consequently be referred to. In the next section, a focus on how teaching and learning grammar is presented in the course syllabi for the non-compulsory school system is of interest.

3.1 The 1994 course syllabi for the subject of English in non-compulsory school (Lpf94)

The subject of English is divided into three courses: English A (EN1201), English B (EN1202) and English C (EN1203). The overall aim of the subject is that pupils are to continue “developing an all-round communicative ability and the language skills necessary for international contacts, and an increasingly internationalised labour market, in order to take advantage of the rapid developments taking place, as a result of information and communications technologies, as well as for further studies” (Skolverket:Lpf94). It is also stressed that the courses provide an opportunity to read for pleasure, knowledge and cultural familiarity, and that the subject should not be divided into separate parts in a specific sequence.

English A is a core course and based on primary school education. In the course plan, one of the aims mentioned speaks of the English language becoming a tool for learning, as well as the necessity of maintaining and developing the pupils’ desire and ability to learn English. Insofar as grammar is concerned, nothing is mentioned in the course plan about how and when it is going to be learned. However, one aim the school is to strive for is to ensure that pupils “develop the ability to analyse and process the language of greater clarity, variety and formal security” (EN1201). Finally, the learner’s responsibility is stressed concerning increasing his/her linguistic skills.
4. Language learning strategies

What is a language learning strategy? What role does a strategy have in the process of acquiring a language? Can learning strategies be better understood by teachers in order to aid pupils succeeding in their learning? These are some of the questions asked by second language researchers in order to better understand how learning develops.

The concept of language learning strategies is rather new, and stems from as recently as the mid-1970s (O’Malley and Uhl Chamot 1990:2). Unlike the conception in which bilingual people are perceived as having an innate sense of language learning, language learning strategies instead include the idea that both talented and less talented language learners could benefit from gaining a wider comprehension and knowledge in the English language by using the different strategies. Thus, the goal for the language learner is to use strategies in order to learn (see Table 3).

Table 3. Language learning strategies:

1. Contribute to the main goal, communicative competence.
2. Allow learners to become more self-directed.
3. Expand the role of the teachers.
5. Are specific actions taken by the learner.
6. Involve many aspects of the learner, not just cognitive.
7. Support learning both directly and indirectly.
8. Are not always observable.
9. Are often conscious.
10. Can be taught.
11. Are flexible.
12. Are influenced by a variety of factors.

Oxford (1990:9)

There are different definitions when explaining learning strategies. Wenden and Rubin (1987:19) define learning strategies as "any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information". According to Oxford (1990:8) learning strategies are “specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferrable to new situations”.

Oxford (1990:9)
Another definition declares learning strategies to be “special ways of processing information that enhance comprehension, learning, or retention of the information” (O’Malley and Uhl Chamot 1990:1). Ellis (2008:35) claims that “learning strategies help to explain why some learners learn more rapidly than others and why they reach higher levels of proficiency”.

There is consensus among linguists today that learning strategies improve learning languages. Researchers of learning strategies assert that “strategies begin as declarative knowledge that can become proceduralized with practice and, like complex cognition skills, proceed through the cognitive associative, and autonomous stages of learning” (O’Malley and Uhl Chamot 1990:85). However, what is important to remember is the fact that the strategies used, differ from one individual to another and “[e]ach of us has a number of possible options for solving a particular problem, and we choose one – or several in sequence – for a given “problem” in learning a second language” (Brown 2007:119).

According to cognitive psychology, learner strategies can be categorized in three classifications: metacognitive, cognitive and social or affective strategies. These three classifications are furthered explained in table 4 below. They will also be referred to and discussed further on in this investigation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generic strategy</th>
<th>Representative strategies</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Metacognitive strategies</strong></td>
<td>Selective attention</td>
<td>Focusing on special aspects of learning tasks [...].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Planning for the organization of [...] written [...] discourse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>Reviewing attention to a task, comprehension of information that should be remembered, or production while it is occurring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Checking comprehension after completion of a receptive language activity, or evaluating language production after it has taken place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive strategies</strong></td>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td>Repeating the names of items or objects to be remembered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Grouping and classifying words, terminology, or concepts according to their semantic or syntactic attributes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inferencing</td>
<td>Using information in text to guess meanings of new linguistic items, predict outcomes, or complete missing parts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summarizing</td>
<td>Intermittently synthesizing what one has heard to ensure the information has been retained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deducing</td>
<td>Applying rules to the understanding of language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imagery</td>
<td>Using visual images [...] to understand and remember new verbal information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>Using known linguistic information to facilitate a new learning task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elaboration</td>
<td>Linking ideas contained in new information, or integrating new ideas with known information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social/affective strategies</strong></td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>Working with peers to solve a problem, [...] check notes, or get feedback on a learning activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Questioning for clarification</td>
<td>Eliciting from teacher or peer additional explanation, rephrasing, or examples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-talk</td>
<td>Using mental redirection of thinking to assure oneself that a learning activity will be successful or to reduce anxiety about a task.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(O’Malley and Uhl Chamot 1990:46)
5. Verb forms

Since English and Swedish are closely related, much of their grammar is alike. However, when it comes to verb forms, Davidsen-Nielsen and Harder (in Swan and Smith et al 1996:31) state that the Swedish language has “no progressive verb forms”. Thus, while the present and past tense in English can be expressed by using both the simple and the progressive verb form, the Swedish language only uses the simple verb form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb form</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Swedish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>simple present</td>
<td>Pia plays football every week</td>
<td>Pia spelar fotboll varje vecka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>simple past</td>
<td>Pia played football</td>
<td>Pia spelade fotboll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>progressive present</td>
<td>Pia is playing football</td>
<td>Pia /håller på och/ spelar fotboll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>progressive past</td>
<td>Pia was playing football (all day long)</td>
<td>Pia spelade fotboll (hela dagen)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whereas the English language expresses an ongoing action using the progressive verb form, the Swedish language must do this either by adding duration or inserting ‘håller på och’ to the simple verb form (see above).

As to expressing what happens in the future, there are different ways of showing this in both languages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb form</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Swedish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Future tense</td>
<td>I will go home</td>
<td>Jag kommer att åka hem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am going to buy a car</td>
<td>Jag ska/tänker köpa en bil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Viberg (2000:pp.65-66) “kommer att […] denotes a pure prediction or assumption about what will be happening in the future. Ska is used mainly when the wishes (or intentions) of the subject or some other person affect what will happen”:

- will = kommer att
- is going to = ska/tänker

In the next section, an attempt to clarify the use of the English simple and progressive verbs forms, and the differences between them, is made.
5.1 Simple verb forms

Simple verb forms are used when wanting to describe either “something permanent or a habit” (Estling Vannestål 2007:191). In the table that follows, the areas of their use can be viewed.

Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of use</th>
<th>Simple present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describing a habit</td>
<td>I usually have breakfast in the morning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describing something typical, or a timeless statement</td>
<td>Birds of a feather flock together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describing a relation</td>
<td>He has two children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describing an action only lasting for a short moment</td>
<td>The cow jumps over the moon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing an action by saying something</td>
<td>I leave the puddings somewhere cool overnight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking or giving directions</td>
<td>How do I get to the library?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking about the future (something that is definite and specified in time)</td>
<td>The train arrives at noon on Wednesday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The historic present</td>
<td>It is 1492 and Columbus sails for America.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Estling Vannestål 2007:pp.191-197)

According to Svartvik and Sager (2003:pp.157-158) the action verbs play, read, talk, walk, work can, however, be used in either the simple or the progressive verb form, and it is the context that determines which verb form is chosen. The simple verb form is in this way used referring to an action or happening that is finished, whereas the progressive does not have to be completed: I have read that book/I am reading the book. Furthermore, the simple verb forms are also used when something is considered to be terminated, with an expected result as an outcome: What have you done?. 
What also must be accounted for is the fact that certain verbs are normally only to be found in the simple verb form, i.e., verbs referring to states (Svartvik and Sager 1996: pp.89-91). These verbs can be classified according to three different states: sensory (group A), attitude to the clause (group B) and relations of different kinds (C):

Group A. feel, hear, see, smell, taste.
   I hear a strange noise in the engine.

However, some of these verbs may also be used in the progressive form when describing an ongoing action:
   - We’ve been seeing the tourist attractions of Copenhagen.

Group B. agree, believe, desire, detest, expect, forget, know, like, love, remember, suppose, think, understand, want, wonder.
   I think you’re right.

The progressive verb form may be used here when there is an ongoing action:
   - She is expecting a baby.

C. have, own, possess: He owns several large factories.
   become, fit, suit: That dress suits you very nicely.
   belong to, border on, comprise, contain, depend on, hold: The box contains ammunition.

The progressive verb form may be used here when there is an ongoing action:
   - He is having an affair.

5.2 Progressive verb forms

The progressive verb forms are used to describe “that something is going on (‘at progress’) at the moment of speaking, was going on at some other point in time in the past, or will be going on some time in the future” (Estling Vannestål 2007:191). In order to create the progressive verb form the auxiliary verb ‘be’ in the present, past and future tense is needed and the –ing form is added to the main verb. In the table that follows, the areas of their use can be viewed.

Table 5.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of use</th>
<th>The present progressive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describing something going on for a limited period of time, happening at the time of speaking</td>
<td>As I write these words, a tiny ant is running back and forth across my typewriter, unable to figure out how it got there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describing something going on for a limited period of time, happening around the time of speaking but not exactly at the same time</td>
<td>I am reading a very obscure novel right now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describing a change in progress</td>
<td>Free access to scientific results is changing research practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describing something temporary (rather than permanent)</td>
<td>Lucy Christopher is working temporarily in the education department of a women’s prison.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describing an irritating habit, often including an expression like always or constantly</td>
<td>Everytime I ask him a question he’s biting his nails.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking about the future, especially with verbs expressing motion, something that has been planned or to express uncertainty</td>
<td>Tomorrow, we’re having a baby!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing politeness</td>
<td>I am wondering if I could have permission to use the article on my site.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Estling Vannestål 2007:pp.191-197)

The progressive verb form is also used at other times; in the past tense describing “background information as a kind of framework for something new that happens” (Estling Vannestål 2007:195): *I was reading the paper when the phone rang*. Furthermore, it will also occur together with adverbials such as; *for a long time, for several hours, now*:

- Now we’re doing 55 miles an hour (Svartvik and Sager 1996:86).
6. Method
A qualitative research method was chosen for this investigation. According to Dörnyei (2007:40) qualitative research and the “data obtained from participants’ experience can widen the scope of our understanding and add [...] depth to the analysis of a phenomenon”. What is more, “instead of seeking a generalizable ‘correct interpretation’, qualitative research aims to broaden the repertoire of possible interpretations of human experience”. How this is reflected in this investigation will be presented eventually.

6.1 Subjects
Sixteen students, aged 17-18, and studying at a vocational upper secondary school, in a small town of Sweden, were of interest in this study. No account was taken of either gender or ethnicity. This might, however, be considered in future studies. The pupils, who are anonymous, knew they were participating in a study. On the other hand, they did not know its aim due to the fact that this might affect the result (Dörnyei:2007).

6.1.1 Material
At first I planned to evaluate both the pupils’ coursebook Read and React (Augutis, Byström and Whitlam:2007) and their exercisebook English Grammar Check (Plith:2007) as part of this investigation. This material is either used in the class as part of instructed teaching or given to the students to use independently for homework. On investigation the textbook was found to be completely devoid of any information or instructions concerning the progressive verb forms. Despite this, in each chapter pupils are still asked to translate a short text, containing certain grammatical features. Each of these features is numbered and students are encouraged to practise them in their exercisebook. The exercisebook in contrast to the coursebook does, however, contain some instructions on language use. The information on how to use the progressive form reads as follows:

“The progressive form is formed with be+ing-form on the following verb. When the verb ends in a silent e, the e is dropped (write-writing). When the verb ends in a consonant after a stressed vowel, the consonant is doubled (begin-beginning). The progressive form is used to indicate that something is going on (What is he doing now?) or was in progress at a certain moment in time (What was he doing when she came in?).” (Plith 2001:24)³

³ My translation.
However, as the instructions concerning the use of the progressive verb forms were not found to be sufficiently informative, the explanations used by Estling Vannestål (see table 5.1-5.2) were instead chosen as the basis of this investigation.

The primary data consisted of 32 essays, written by 16 pupils on two different occasions. This was then analysed to see how well the students had used the progressive forms and what strategies they had used when choosing verb forms.

6.1.2 Introducing language learning strategies
I started this investigation in week 39 2011 (see table 6) by asking the 16 pupils in my English class to fill in a Student Background Questionnaire (see appendix 1). This was done approximately 5 weeks after the start of term. Although I did not actually teach the class during the first five weeks, I made sure that the teachers who took the classes, both for Swedish as well as English, introduced the students to learning strategies and got them to discuss the importance of setting both short-term as well as long-term goals, in order to improve their language proficiency. As the basis of the discussions, the teachers used the classification defined by O’Malley and Uhl Chamot (see table 4), emphasised the value of using learner strategies and explained how the strategies could facilitate, as well as enhance the pupils’ language learning. The pupils discussed what strategies they used or anticipated themselves using in different tasks, both written and spoken. The pupils worked both on their own as well as together on this assignment.

Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>week</th>
<th>Schedule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>School starts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-36</td>
<td>Students are introduced to language learning strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Reminding students of learner strategies and presenting 'Student Background Questionnaire'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Introducing and working with the progressive verb form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Writing task 1, assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Writing task 2, assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Interviewing pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Transcribing and analysing interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In week 39, when I took over, I began by reminding the students of learner strategies. Then I handed out the Student Background Questionnaire. After having read the questionnaire out aloud in class and clarified a couple of questions, the pupils were asked to fill it in. After this a group discussion followed with a focus on the following three questions:

- What does it mean to be able to speak a language?
- When and how do you learn best?
- What do you do when it gets difficult?

In presenting the questionnaire and discussing these questions, I believed I had stimulated the pupils into further reflection on their learning.

6.1.3 Introducing the progressive verb form

During week 40, the progressive verb form was introduced. At first, I had planned to use the pupils’ textbook; *Read and React* (Studentlitteratur) when introducing, discussing and working with the progressive verb form. However, since I did not find the instructions concerning the progressive verb form to be sufficiently informative (*see* 6.1.1) the explanations used by Estling Vannestål (*see* tables 5.1-5.2) were instead chosen and implemented.

Since I am not a native speaker of the English language, I was, however, also aware that verbs used in both simple and progressive form (*see* 5.1) might display that I was not completely confident using the verb forms to their perfection. This, in turn, could affect the pupils’ production.
After having explained the different situations and areas where the progressive verb form, in contrast to the simple verb form, ought to be used, the pupils were asked to translate sentences, similar to those developed of Estling Vannestål’s (2007:pp.194-196) from Swedish to English:

_Jag läser en spännande roman just nu - I’m reading an exciting novel right now._

_Vi tittade på TV när någon plötsligt knackade på dörren - We were watching TV when all of a sudden someone knocked on the door._

_De spelade tennis – They were playing tennis._

The pupils worked in groups and were asked to present their translations both orally and in writing on the whiteboard. In the occurrence of any misinterpretations, the contrasts between the verb forms were further discussed in order to make sure that all pupils were clear about the use of the verb form. This procedure was repeated during a second lesson. After this the first writing task was introduced.

**6.1.4 Writing task 1**

During week 41 I introduced the first writing task, which was to write a text to the teacher about something personal; either an interest or a hobby or about something the pupil had done during the summer holiday (see appendix 2). The pupils were implicitly expected to use the progressive verb forms as no explicit instructions were given. The pupils’ abilities to use the progressive verb forms were then studied, corrected and assessed.

**6.1.5 Writing task 2**

The second writing task was introduced to the pupils during week 45 and they were asked to write about a memorable event, which might have had some sort of impact on the writer (see appendix 3). No further instructions were given in order to detect any progression made, concerning the progressive verb forms. The pupils’ abilities to use the verb forms were then studied, corrected and assessed.
6.1.6 Interviews

After the assignments had been corrected and assessed, semi-structured interviews followed during week 47, in which the pupils, one at a time, were given feedback and asked to discuss their text. By using semi-structured interviews “the interviewer provides guidance and direction […] but is also keen to follow up interesting developments and to let the interviewee elaborate on certain issues” (Dörnyei 2007:136). Also, an introspective approach was taken. According to Dörnyei (2007:pp.147-151) this approach aims “at helping the respondents to vocalize what is/was going on through their minds when making a judgement, solving a problem or performing a task”. Dörnyei also refers to an investigation by Kormos (1998) who found that introspection “can also increase to a considerable extent the reliability of the data analysis”.

The interviews were carried out in English and recorded. Recording the pupils was necessary as, on the one hand, it would have been very difficult to both do the interview and take notes. On the other hand, the recording made the analysis easier in that it offered repeated listening opportunities.

During the interviews, special attention was paid to the pupils’ use of the progressive verb forms. Pupils were also asked to reflect on what kind of learner strategies they thought they had adopted when choosing the verb forms, since “the verbal reporting of the informant is expected to parallel the thought processes” (O’Malley and Chamot 1990:91). While interviewing the students, I did not want to reveal my purpose since the result then might have been affected.

During week 48 a sample of the interviews were transcribed and analysed. The sample was selected on the basis of a successful or unsuccessful incorporation of progressive verb forms in the written assignments, in which the level of accuracy was of special interest.
7. Results and analysis

The overall result displays that there was an increase of an accurate use of the progressive verb form between assignments. In the first assignment, 10 out of 17 sentences were found to be accurate (58 %), compared to 11 out of 14 sentences (78.5 %) in the second assignment. In class, six out of sixteen pupils (37.5%) used the progressive verb form acceptably in the first assignment and seven pupils out of sixteen (43.8%) in the second assignment.

7.1 Writing task 1 - Most frequent progressive verb form

The results obtained from the first assignment demonstrate that the progressive verb form was used most frequently in order to describe an action that will be going on in the future, i.e.; Tomorrow, we’re having a baby! (5.2). Four out of ten pupils (40%) used the progressive verb form in this way (see table 7).

Table 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupils</th>
<th>Assignment 1</th>
<th>Level of accuracy</th>
<th>Area of use</th>
<th>T=teacher’s comment</th>
<th>P=pupil’s comment</th>
<th>Learning strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 2</td>
<td>Next summer holiday I’m not going to work there.</td>
<td>Accurate use.</td>
<td>Describing an action that will be going on in the future.</td>
<td>T: Look here, you have a correct use of the grammar here. Can you tell me how you do this, does it come easily or...?</td>
<td>P: I don’t know...I guess I practiced when we did the exercise. It’s not hard....</td>
<td>Metacognitive: (Selective attention, monitoring) Cognitive: (elaboration, transfer, deducing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 4</td>
<td>I’m going to tell you about the best summer ever.</td>
<td>Accurate use.</td>
<td>Describing an action that will be going on in the future.</td>
<td>T: Look here, you have a correct use of the grammar here. Do you remember working with the progressive form?</td>
<td>P: Yeah, ... I remember we talked about it, but.... T: Can you tell me how you do this, does it come easily or ?</td>
<td>P: I don’t know... I guess so... don’t think about when I write.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 11</td>
<td>My family are going there this month to see our older relatives again.</td>
<td>Accurate use.</td>
<td>Talking about the future, especially with verbs expressing motion.</td>
<td>T: So, we worked with the progressive form some time ago, do you remember? P: Yes. We practised a lot. T: Yes, that’s right. Are you sure how to use it or what do you think? P: I guess so. I remember the rules anyway.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Metacognitive: (selective attention, planning) Cognitive: (rehearsal, deducting, transferring, elaboration)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 15</td>
<td>These sport events are going to get really big, I think.</td>
<td>Accurate use.</td>
<td>Talking about the future, especially with verbs expressing motion.</td>
<td>T: We worked with the progressive form some time ago, do you remember? P: Yes, I remember. T: You have a correct use here; can you tell me some thing about why you chose to write in this way? P: I want to have a good grade...you know...and so I study hard...</td>
<td></td>
<td>Metacognitive: (selective attention, planning, monitoring) Cognitive: (elaborating)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comment on Table 7: My interpretation is that all pupils in this group are conscious and confident language learners. They are focused and motivated, i.e. good language learners (Lightbown and Spada:55). In the light of this, I believe that their use of the progressive verb form about a future happening is something they learnt as younger learners, and that they thereby did not stretch any boundaries. The question is why not? In this way they do not fit in to the grammar acquisition process Hedge (2000) discusses, as commented on in 2.1.1. Instead, they have fallen into a rut, and have not allowed themselves to integrate newly learnt grammar. All pupils but one (pupil 15) admitted finding it easy to learn languages. Although I cannot detect the same easiness within pupil fifteen, this pupil mentioned studying hard and I interpret this too, as a combination of both metacognitive and cognitive strategies.

7.1.1 Writing task 1 - Second most frequent progressive verb form

The second most frequent use was to describe something going on for a limited period of time, happening around the time of speaking, i.e.; As I write these words, a tiny ant is running back and forth across my typewriter, unable to figure out how it got there (5.2). Two out of ten pupils (20%) used the progressive verb form in this way, see table 8.

Table 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupils</th>
<th>Assignment 1</th>
<th>Level of accuracy</th>
<th>Area of use</th>
<th>T=teacher’s comment</th>
<th>P=pupil’s comment</th>
<th>Learning strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 5</td>
<td>You probably think I’m referring to hooligans, when I say such a thing but I’m not.</td>
<td>Accurate use.</td>
<td>Describing something going on for a limited period in time, happening around the time of speaking.</td>
<td>T: Look here, you have a correct use of the grammar here. Do you remember working with the progressive form?</td>
<td>P: Yes and dad and me practised ... he is also an English teacher so he helped me a little bit.</td>
<td>Social/affective: (cooperation, questioning for clarification) Metacognitive: (selective attention, monitoring) Cognitive: (elaboration)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 8</td>
<td>At first I’m going to tell you about how we celebrate Easter.</td>
<td>Accurate use.</td>
<td>Describing something going on for a limited period of time, happening around the time of speaking.</td>
<td>T: You said it was difficult to use the progressive form in the beginning, but what about now,... is it the same or what do you think? P: Me and X studied together and she helped me a lot. I think I know it much better now. T: That’s really good! Can you try to explain what you mean by “knowing it better”? P: Yeah... well I have tried to practise a lot at home ... I don’t know, it’s easier...don’t know.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Social/affective: (cooperation, questioning for clarification) Metacognitive: (selective attention, monitoring) Cognitive: (elaboration, transfer, deducing)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comment on table 8: Here, I am not surprised that the pupils addressed me directly as a reader, as a commentary phrase (pupil 8: *At first I’m going to tell you...*), as it is something they will have been exposed to throughout their school years as it is a formula for constructing discourse. Thus, expressing themselves in this way is not new. I could then conclude that these pupils have yet to reason out how the newly learned grammar might “fit into their existing knowledge of the language” (Hedge:146). Both pupils have used metacognitive, cognitive as well as social/affective learner strategies.

7.1.2 Writing task 1 - Third most frequent progressive verb form
The third most frequent use was either to give a background as a kind of framework for something new that happens, i.e.; *I was reading the paper when the phone rang* (5.2), to describe something going on at some other point in time, i.e.; “They were laughing” (Estling Vannestål 2007:197) or to describe an irritating habit, i.e.; *Everytime I ask him a question he’s biting his nails* (5.2) One out of ten pupils (10%) used the progressive verb form in either way (see table 9).

Table 9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupils</th>
<th>Assignment 1</th>
<th>Level of accuracy</th>
<th>Area of use</th>
<th>T=teacher’s comment</th>
<th>P=pupil’s comment</th>
<th>Learning strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Pupil 1 | I had not been living there for a long time when I met him at that concert. ............................. Well it was raining in Sweden when our holiday started. | Accurate use. | Background information as a kind of framework for something new that happens. Background information as a kind of framework for something new that happens. | T: Look here, you have a correct use of the grammar here. Can you tell me how you do this, does it come easily or ......?  
P: Yeah, I’m not sure... I think I just do it.......or...well, I just write....I think.... | No specific strategy can be detected. |
| Pupil 4 | And then friends came up to see what we were doing. | Accurate use. | Describing something going on at some other point in time. | T: Look here, you have a correct use of grammar here. Do you remember working with the progressive form?  
P: Yeah...I remember we talked about it, but...  
T: Can you tell me how you do this, does it come easily or...?  
P: I don’t know...I guess so... don’t think about when I write. | No specific strategy can be detected. |
| Pupil 8 | *My sister is always waking me up early.* | Accurate use. | Describing an irritating habit. | T: You said it was difficult to use the progressive form in the beginning, but what about now...... is it the same or what do you think?  
P: Me and X studied together and she helped me a lot. I think I know it much better know.  
T: That’s really good! Can you try to explain what you mean by “knowing it better”?

P: Yeah... well I have tried to practise a lot at home .... I don’t know, it’s easier...don’t know... | Social/affective:  
(cooperation, questioning for clarification)  
Metacognitive:  
(selective attention, monitoring)  
Cognitive:  
(elaboration, transfer, deducing) |
Comment on table 9: I believe that in this group all pupils were making an effort in applying newly learned grammar. Whereas two pupils did not share any information about what kind of strategies they might have used, the third pupil admitted having cooperated as well as having used both metacognitive and cognitive strategies. The first two pupils are generally not very talkative, and I feel they were a bit shy. However, in hindsight I feel that I should have been more proactive and asked more questions to better picture what was going on inside them. However, this could also be a precarious situation since they might have felt the pressure to say just anything. According to Chaudron (1988:134) “[i]n a cognitive view of learning […], the function of feedback is not only to provide reinforcement, but to provide information which learners can use actively in modifying their behaviors […] to confirm, disconfirm, and possibly modify the hypothetical, “transitional” rules of their developing grammars”. In the light of this, I now know that in my next pupil response of this kind, if such a situation occurs, I will extend the discussion in order to emphasise the value in using strategies.

7.1.3 Writing task 1 - Inaccurate use of progressive verb form

One pupil (pupil 8) out of sixteen (0.06%) demonstrated both an accurate (table 8 and 9) as well as an inaccurate use (table 10) of the progressive verb form in the first writing task. Three pupils (18.8%) demonstrated an overall inaccurate use in the first writing task (table 11), while six pupils (37.5%) did not use the progressive verb form at all.

Table 10. (an accurate as well as an inaccurate use in first writing task).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupils</th>
<th>Assignment 1</th>
<th>Level of accuracy</th>
<th>Area of use</th>
<th>T=teacher’s comment P=pupil’s comment</th>
<th>Learning strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 8</td>
<td>Every time a lot of people usually are sleeping over in tents. The person who is having the gathering for the year is serving breakfast.</td>
<td>Inaccurate use.</td>
<td>Describing a habit=simple verb form should be used.</td>
<td>T: You said it was difficult to use the progressive form in the beginning, but what about now…… is it the same or what do you think? P: Me and X studied together and she helped me a lot. I think I know it much better know. T: That’s really good! Can you try to explain what you mean by “knowing it better”??? P: Yeah..well I have tried to practise a lot at home … I don’t know, it’s easier..don’t know.</td>
<td>Social/affective: (cooperation, questioning for clarification) Metacognitive: (selective attention, monitoring) Cognitive: (elaboration, transfer, deducing)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comment on table 10: I interpreted this pupil as being in the process of “structuring and restructuring” (Hedge:148). In so doing, this pupil was in a transitional stage, trying to “work out new rules”. Admitting the new grammar to be somewhat difficult in the very beginning, I realised this pupil had been cooperating while studying and used different strategies in order to succeed. However, I also noticed that there was a slight hint of uncertainty in the answer, which lead me to conclude that there might still be some inconsistency or “backsliding” (Brown: 267) in the near future.

Table 11. Writing task 1 - inaccurate use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupils</th>
<th>Assignment 1</th>
<th>Level of accuracy</th>
<th>Area of use</th>
<th>T=teacher’s comment</th>
<th>P=pupil’s comment</th>
<th>Learning strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 3</td>
<td>As I was writing in the beginning, it was really a good summer.</td>
<td>Inaccurate use.</td>
<td>Describing an action only lasting for a short moment = simple verb form should be used.</td>
<td>(The pupil had an incorrect sentence in first assignment and a correct sentence in the second.)</td>
<td>T: You have two sentences here and one is not correct. Do you know which one or can you have a guess? P: No.... I think it looks ok. What do you mean?</td>
<td>No specific strategy can be detected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 9</td>
<td>We wake up and then we going to his house, to pick him up.</td>
<td>Inaccurate use.</td>
<td>Describing an action only lasting for a short moment</td>
<td>(The pupil had an incorrect sentence in first assignment, and a correct as well as an incorrect sentence in the second.)</td>
<td>T: You said it was difficult to use the progressive form in the beginning, but what about now...... is it the same or what do you think? P: It’s difficult. T: In what way is it difficult, do you think? P: When must I use it? I don’t remember when I must use it....why can’t we just write?</td>
<td>No specific strategy can be detected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 14</td>
<td>In my family we are not doing any thing special at Easter, not anymore.</td>
<td>Inaccurate use.</td>
<td>Describing a habit=simple verb form should be used.</td>
<td>(The pupil had an incorrect sentence in first assignment and a correct sentence in the second.)</td>
<td>T: You said it was difficult to use the progressive form in the beginning, but what about now...... is it the same or what do you think? P: I tried to study and I tried to remember the rules...</td>
<td>Metacognitive: (selective attention, monitoring) Cognitive: (rehearsal, deducing, transfer, elaboration)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comment on table 11 - inaccurate use: In this group, in which all pupils used the progressive form inaccurately, I observed that pupil 3 had not yet reasoned out how to integrate new grammar into the already acquired language. Furthermore, no motivation was found nor any strategies. When pondering on and listening again to the answer, I noticed that a somewhat defiant attitude might be detected in the voice. I then concluded that some kind of uncertainty within the pupil might have slowed down the language acquisition. As to pupil 9, a lack of motivation was also here noticed. I agree with Brown (2007:169) who states that pupils “may be unmotivated to learn [...] because [they] fail to see the rewards”. Pupil 14 admitted studying hard in order to remember the rules. In this case I would suggest that both metacognitive as well as cognitive strategies were used. Having produced an inaccurate verb form in writing task 1, we will in writing task 2 see an accurate verb form being used. The pupil admitted having studied hard and by saying this, although I believe that the pupil in question might have found the grammar acquisition somewhat difficult, they were still motivated.
7.2 Writing task 2

The results obtained display that the progressive verb form was used most frequently in order to describe an action that will be going on in the future, i.e.; *Tomorrow, we’re having a baby!* (5.2). Five out of eleven pupils (45.5%) used the progressive verb form in this way (see table 12).

### 7.2.1 Writing task 2 - Most frequent progressive verb form

**Table 12.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupils</th>
<th>Assignment 2</th>
<th>Level of accuracy</th>
<th>Area of use</th>
<th>T=teacher’s comment P=pupil’s comment</th>
<th>Learning strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 1</td>
<td><em>At Christmas all the family are coming to celebrate with us.</em></td>
<td>Accurate use.</td>
<td>Talking about the future, especially with verbs expressing motion.</td>
<td>T: Look here, you have a correct use of the grammar here. Can you tell me how you do this, does it come easily or? P: Yeah, I’m not sure... I think I just do it...or... well, I just write...I think......</td>
<td>No specific strategy can be detected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 5</td>
<td><em>And in some weeks she will be going to Mallorca.</em></td>
<td>Accurate use.</td>
<td>Describing an action that will be going on in the future.</td>
<td>T: Look here, you have a correct use of the grammar here. Do you remember working with the progressive form? P: Yes and dad and me practised ... he is also a English teacher so he helped me a little bit.</td>
<td>Social/affective: (cooperation, questioning for clarification) Metacognitive: (selective attention, monitoring) Cognitive: (elaboration)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 9</td>
<td><em>When the Olmpic games are running on TV I will be stuck there, it’s an old tradition in our family.</em></td>
<td>Accurate use.</td>
<td>Talking about the future, especially with verbs expressing motion.</td>
<td>T: You said it was difficult to use the progressive form in the beginning, but what about now...... is it the same or what do you think? P: It’s difficult. T: In what way is it difficult, do you think? P: When must I use it? I don’t remember when I must use it....why can’t we just write?</td>
<td>No specific strategy can be detected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 14</td>
<td><em>That was my best summer so far and I’m going to remember it for the rest of my life.</em></td>
<td>Accurate use.</td>
<td>Talking about the future, an action which will be in progress again and again, in the mind.</td>
<td>T: You said it was difficult to use the progressive form in the beginning, but what about now...... is it the same or what do you think? P: I tried to study and I tried to remember the rules...</td>
<td>Metacognitive: (selective attention, monitoring) Cognitive: (rehearsal, deducing, transfer, elaboration)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Comment on table 12:** I noticed that as well as in assignment 1, the most frequent progressive verb form in assignment 2 was used to describe a future happening (see comment on table 7). As to pupil 9, this pupil did not reveal any specific strategies but demonstrated some kind of resignation which might have slowed down the language acquisition. I agree with Brown (2007:169) who states that pupils “may be unmotivated to learn [...] because [they] fail to see the rewards”. However, this does not apply to pupil 5, whose answer demonstrated both motivation and strive to reach set goals. Therefore, I believe pupil 5 has not yet internalized all the rules concerning the progressive form and, since they are not yet integrated with already learned grammar, there will still be some time before this is automatized (Hedge:149). It could also be that the grammar might be too difficult. I agree, however, with Cook (1998:17) who claims it is vital for pupils when learning grammar to “encounter examples of structures they do not produce themselves; otherwise there is no reason for them to go beyond their current stage”.

Pupil 14 admitted studying hard *in order to remember the rules*. I noticed that both metacognitive and cognitive strategies were used here. Having produced an inaccurate verb form in assignment 1 and an accurate verb form in assignment 2, but, I believe that the pupil in question might have found the grammar acquisition somewhat difficult, they were still motivated.
### 7.2.2 Writing task 2 - Second most frequent progressive verb form

The second most frequent use was to describe four different situations (table 13). One out of eleven pupils (0.09\%) used the verb form in these ways.

**Table 13.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupil</th>
<th>Assignment 2</th>
<th>Level of accuracy</th>
<th>Area of use</th>
<th>Teacher’s comment</th>
<th>Learning strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 2</td>
<td>Christmas means a lot to me because everybody is laughing and waiting for one person: Santa.</td>
<td>Accurate use.</td>
<td>Describing something going on for a limited period of time, happening around the time of speaking but not exactly at the same time.</td>
<td>T: Look here, you have a correct use of the grammar here. Can you tell me how you do this, does it come easily or .....? P: I don’t know...I guess I practiced when we did the exercise. It’s not hard....</td>
<td>Metacognitive: (Selective attention, monitoring) Cognitive: (elaboration, transfer, deducing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 3</td>
<td>Then we will be doing the food and this doesn’t happen very often.</td>
<td>Accurate use.</td>
<td>Describing something temporary rather than permanent.</td>
<td>(Incorrect sentence in assignment 1) T: You have two sentences here and one is not correct. Do you know which one or can you have a guess? P: No..... I think it looks ok. What do you mean?</td>
<td>No specific strategy can be detected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 4</td>
<td>We had great fun while we were celebrating.</td>
<td>Accurate use.</td>
<td>Describing something going on at some other point in time.</td>
<td>T: Look here, you have a correct use of the grammar here. Do you remember working with the progressive form? P: Yeah....I remember we talked about it, but... T: Can you tell me how you do this, does it come easily or...? P: I don’t know...I guess so...don’t think about when I write.</td>
<td>No specific strategy can be detected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 8</td>
<td>I think you know what I’m talking about. But I’m going to say it out loud: I don’t care! I’ve always been hearing from my friends that I believed in Santa until I began school and it is annoying.</td>
<td>Accurate use.</td>
<td>Describing something going on for a limited period of time, happening around the time of speaking. Describing something going on for a limited period of time, happening around the time of speaking. Describing an irritating habit, often including an expression like always or constantly.</td>
<td>T: You said it was difficult to use the progressive form in the beginning, but what about now...... is it the same or what do you think? P: Me and X studied together and she helped me a lot. I think I know it much better know. T: That’s really good! Can you try to explain what you mean by “knowing it better”? P: Yeah...well I have tried to practise a lot at home ... I don’t know, it’s easier...don’t know.</td>
<td>Social/affective: (cooperation, questioning for clarification) Metacognitive: (selective attention, monitoring) Cognitive: (elaboration, transfer, deducing)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comment on table 13: In assignment 1, I noticed that pupil 3 had not yet reasoned out how to integrate new grammar into “existing knowledge of the language” (Hedge:146). However, as can be seen in table 12, the pupil later produced an accurate grammar. There was a lack of motivation though, which might further hamper any progression. Pupil 2 had a positive attitude and was seemingly motivated but did not reveal what kind of approach or strategy was used. Pupil 4 was a motivated but very silent pupil, whose answer was not very informative. What kind of strategies this pupils used might have had come forward had I been a little bit more patient during the interview. However, the pupil might also have felt pressure to say anything in order to give an answer to my question.

7.2.3 Writing task 2 - Inaccurate use
In the second assignment, one pupil (0.06%) demonstrated an inaccurate use. Two pupils (0.13%) had both an accurate as well as an inaccurate use, while six pupils (37.5%) did not use the progressive verb form at all.

Table 14. Writing task 2 - inaccurate use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupil</th>
<th>Assignment 2</th>
<th>Level of accuracy</th>
<th>Area of use</th>
<th>T=teacher’s comment</th>
<th>P=pupil’s Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 6</td>
<td>As a kid I slept till Donald Duck was starting on TV.</td>
<td>Inaccurate use.</td>
<td>The happening is completed=simple verb form should be used.</td>
<td>T: This sentence isn’t quite correct. Remember that we worked with the progressive form and when it should be used?</td>
<td>P: Ok... I don’t like to write about traditions or Christmas... it’s boring...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 1</td>
<td>When I was a little girl, I remember I was screaming “mother” when seeing Santa, I was really scared of him.</td>
<td>Inaccurate use.</td>
<td>The verb ‘remember’=simple verb form should be used.</td>
<td>T: Can you tell me how you do this, does it come easily or?</td>
<td>P: Yeah, I’m not sure... I think I just do it...or... well, I just write...I think......</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 9</td>
<td>Like I was saying in the beginning of the text, it’s not only a game it’s also about friendship.</td>
<td>Inaccurate use.</td>
<td>Describing an action only lasting for a short moment=simple verb should be used.</td>
<td>T: You said it was difficult to use the progressive form in the beginning, but what about now...... is it the same or what do you think?</td>
<td>P: It’s difficult. T: In what way is it difficult, do you think? P: When must I use it? I don’t remember when I must use it....why can’t we just write?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comment on table 14: In this group, I believe that both pupil 6 and 9 lacked motivation. These pupils did not reveal any specific strategies and I noticed that they showed some kind of resignation which might have slowed down the language acquisition. I agree with Thornbury (1999:26) who states that “[t]asks and material that are involving, [...] that have an element of challenge while providing the necessary support, are more likely to be motivating than those that do not have these qualities”. In hindsight, another way of working with the verb forms might have better suited these pupils, given that they then would have had another kind of challenge and as an effect shown another result. As to pupil 1, the verb ‘remember’ was used wrongly since it is to be found only with simple verb forms. Since pupil 1 had earlier produced accurate sentences in both assignments, I interpreted this pupil to be “backsliding” (Brown:267).

7.3 A compilation of all pupils’ examples and perceived learning strategies
To give a clearer overview of all pupils’ examples and their perceived learner strategies, a table (see table 15) follows below in which I have chosen to colour the strategies used, in order for the reader to better visualize them. The strategies are coloured as follows:

Metacognitive strategies = yellow

Cognitive strategies = blue

Social/affective strategies = green

No strategies could be detected = red
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupils</th>
<th>Assignment 1</th>
<th>Level of accuracy</th>
<th>Assignment 2</th>
<th>Level of accuracy</th>
<th>T-teacher Pupil</th>
<th>Learning strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 1</td>
<td>Well it was raining in Sweden when our summer holiday started.</td>
<td><strong>Accurate use.</strong> (Background info as a kind of framework for something new that happens.)</td>
<td>At Christmas all the family are coming to celebrate with us.</td>
<td><strong>Accurate use.</strong> (Talking about the future, especially with verbs expressing motion).</td>
<td>T: Look here, you have a correct use of the grammar here. Can you tell me how you do this, does it come easily or ......?</td>
<td>No strategies can be detected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I had not been living there for a long time when I met him at that concert.</td>
<td><strong>Accurate use.</strong> (Background information as a kind of frame-work for some-thing new that happens.)</td>
<td>When I was a little girl, I remember I was screaming “mother” when seeing Santa, I was really scared of him.</td>
<td><strong>Inaccurate use.</strong> After the verb remember the simple verb form should be used.</td>
<td>P: Yeah, I’m not sure.... I think I just do it........or......well, I just write.......I think......</td>
<td>Metacognitive: (Selective attention, monitoring)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cognitive: elaboration, transfer, deducing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 2</td>
<td>Next summer holiday I’m not going to work there.</td>
<td><strong>Accurate use.</strong> (Describing an action that will be going on in the future.)</td>
<td>Christmas means a lot to me because everybody is laughing and waiting for one person: Santa.</td>
<td><strong>Accurate use.</strong> (Describing something going on for a limited period of time, happening around the time of speaking but not exactly at the same time).</td>
<td>T: Look here, you have a correct use of the grammar here. Can you tell me how you do this, does it come easily or ......?</td>
<td>No strategies can be detected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P: I don’t know...I guess I practiced when we did the exercise. It’s not hard....</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 3</td>
<td>As I was writing in the beginning, it was really a good summer.</td>
<td><strong>Inaccurate use.</strong> (Describing an action only lasting for a short moment=simple verb form should be used.)</td>
<td>Then we will be doing the food and this doesn’t happen very often.</td>
<td><strong>Accurate use.</strong> (Describing something temporary rather than permanent).</td>
<td>T: You have two sentences here and one is not correct. Do you know which one or can you have a guess?</td>
<td>No strategies can be detected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P: No..... I think it looks ok. What do you mean?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 4</td>
<td>I’m going to tell you about the best summer ever.</td>
<td><strong>Accurate use.</strong> (Describing an action that will be going on in the future.)</td>
<td>We had great fun while we were celebrating.</td>
<td><strong>Accurate use.</strong> (Describing something going on at some other point in time.)</td>
<td>T: Look here, you have a correct use of the grammar here. Do you remember working with the progressive form?</td>
<td>No strategies can be detected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>And then friends came up to see what we were doing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P: Yeah, .... I remember we talked about it, but..... T: Can you tell me how you do this, does it come easily or ......?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P: I don’t know... I guess so... don’t think about when I write.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 5</td>
<td>You probably think I’m referring to huligans, when I say such a thing but I’m not.</td>
<td><strong>Accurate use.</strong> (Describing something going on for a limited period of time, happening around the time of speaking.)</td>
<td>And in some weeks she will be going to Mallorca.</td>
<td><strong>Accurate use.</strong> (Describing an action that will be going on in the future.)</td>
<td>T: Look here, you have a correct use of the grammar here. Do you remember working with the progressive form?</td>
<td>Social/affective: cooperation, questioning, in verification. Metacognitive: (Selective attention, monitoring)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P: Yes and dad and me practised .... he is also a English teacher so he helped me a little bit.</td>
<td>Cognitive: elaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 6</td>
<td>As a kid I slept until Donald Duck was starting on TV.</td>
<td>Inaccurate use. (The happening is completed=simple verb form should be used).</td>
<td>T: This sentence isn’t quite correct. Remember that we worked with the progressive form and when it should be used? P: Ok... I don’t like to write about traditions or Christmas... it’s boring...</td>
<td>No strategies can be detected.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 7</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pupil 8</td>
<td>At first I’m going to tell you about how we celebrate Easter.</td>
<td>Accurate use. (Describing something going on for a limited period of time, happening around the time of speaking.)</td>
<td>T: You said it was difficult to use the progressive form in the beginning, but what about now...... is it the same or what do you think? P: Me and X studied together and she helped me a lot. I think I know it much better now.</td>
<td>Social/affective: cooperation, questioning for clarification. Metacognitive: selective attention, monitoring. Cognitive: elaboration, transfer, deduction.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My sister is always waking me up early.</td>
<td>Accurate use. (Describing an irritating habit).</td>
<td>T: That’s really good! Can you try to explain what you mean by “knowing it better”? P: Yeah... well I have tried to practise a lot at home ... I don’t know, it’s easier...don’t know...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My sister is always waking me up early.</td>
<td>Inaccurate use. (Describing a habit=simple verb form should be used).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Every time a lot of people usually are sleeping over in tents.</td>
<td>Inaccurate use. (Describing a habit=simple verb form should be used).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The person who is having the gathering for the year is serving breakfast.</td>
<td>Accurate use. (Describing something going on for a limited period of time, happening around the time of speaking.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Like I was saying in the beginning of the text, it’s not only a game it’s also about friendship.</td>
<td>Inaccurate use. (Describing an action only lasting for a short moment=simple verb form should be used).</td>
<td>T: You said it was difficult to use the progressive form in the beginning, but what about now...... is it the same or what do you think? P: It’s difficult. T: In what way is it difficult, do you think? P: When must I use it? I don’t remember when I must use it...why can’t we just write?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil 9</td>
<td>We wake up and then we are going to his house, to pick him up.</td>
<td>Inaccurate use. (Describing an action only lasting for a short moment).</td>
<td></td>
<td>No strategies can be detected.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When must I use it?</td>
<td>Inaccurate use. (Describing an action only lasting for a short moment).</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When are arriving it’s still dark.</td>
<td>Inaccurate use. (Describing an action only lasting for a short moment).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We parking the car and starting to walk to the dark woods.</td>
<td>Inaccurate use. (Describing an action only lasting for a short moment).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Accurate use. (Describing something going on for a limited period of time, happening around the time of speaking.)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Pupil 10 | **My family are going there this month to see our older relatives again.** | **Accurate use.** (Talking about the future, especially with verbs expressing motion). | **T:** So, we worked with the progressive form some time ago, do you remember?  
**P:** Yes. We practised a lot.  
**T:** Yes, that’s right. Are you sure how to use it or what do you think?  
**P:** I guess so, I remember the rules anyway. | **Metacognitive:** (selective attention, planning)  
**Cognitive:** (rehearsal, deducing, transfer, elaboration) |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Pupil 11 | **In my family we are not doing any thing special at Easter, not anymore.** | **Inaccurate use.** (Describing a habit=simple verb form should be used).  
**T:** That was my best summer so far and I’m going to remember it for the rest of my life.  
**P:** Accurate use. (Talking about the future, an action which will be in progress again and again, in the mind).  
**T:** You said it was difficult to use the progressive form in the beginning, but what about now....... is it the same or what do you think?  
**P:** I tried to study and I tried to remember the rules. | **Metacognitive:** (selective attention, monitoring)  
**Cognitive:** (rehearsal, deducing, transfer, elaboration) |
| Pupil 15 | **These sportevents are going to get really big, I think.** | **Accurate use.** (Talking about the future, especially with verbs expressing motion).  
**T:** Many people will always be watching TV, it’s a tradition for them.  
**P:** Accurate use. (Talking about the future, especially with verbs expressing motion).  
**T:** So, we worked with the progressive form some time ago, do you remember?  
**P:** Yes, I remember.  
**T:** You have a correct use here, can you tell me something about why you chose to write in this way?  
**P:** I want to have a good grade... you know...and so I study hard... | **Metacognitive:** (selective attention, planning, monitoring)  
**Cognitive:** (elaborating) |
Comment on table 15: this table displays that metacognitive as well as cognitive strategies were far more used than social/affective strategies. Also, a few more pupils than I had anticipated did not demonstrate any use at all. This leads me to conclude that all pupils will need to have further lessons and discussions on how languages are learnt and also practise how strategies can be beneficial to their learning.

7.4 Analysis
Grammar is a field in which Swedish pupils tend to have difficulties in many areas. However, due to the scope of the study the area of interest lay only in the progressive verb forms. Other grammatical difficulties noticed were therefore omitted in terms of accuracy.

When analysing the findings, there were different answers which might explain the outcome. The overall result demonstrated that there was an increase of an accurate use regarding the progressive verb form. The result, from both assignments, displayed that instead of trying to challenge themselves the pupils used a familiar fixed expression: be going to. Lewis (1997:pp.7-8) suggests that language does not only consist of vocabulary and grammar, but also “of chunks which, when combined, produce continuous coherent text”. Thus, “certain words co-occur in natural text with greater than random frequency”. This might well explain the popular use of expressing something that will be going on in the future. In so doing, they might not yet be ready to stretch themselves any further in order to use the progressive verb form to its full. They have thereby not internalized all the rules (see 2.1.1). Hence, these pupils were still far from any kind of automatization concerning the progressive verb form.

A difference was noticed in the usage of verb forms describing something going on for a limited period of time, happening around the time of speaking, i.e.; As I write these words, a tiny ant is running back and forth across my typewriter, unable to figure out how it got there (5.2). The verb form mentioned was found to be the third most frequent in the first assignment but the second most frequent in the second assignment. The result indicated that there might be a progression made concerning the usage of this particular way of using the verb form.
According to Westergren Axelsson and Hahn (2001:8) “[m]any students prefer to interpret rules as discrete and absolute, getting confused by notions of overlapping constructions”. I can easily agree with this statement. Since the progressive is not found in the Swedish language, I understand that trying to learn all the different constructions must be confusing, and in my view, the work produced by pupil 1 could be an example of this. This could also be the case with all inaccurate sentences or not using the verb form at all also might be.

Although I have been studying English for many years, I mostly practise it in the classroom, together with my students. Since I am not a native speaker of the English language, I am, consequently, not 100 per cent confident in the use of the progressive verb form. Admittedly, grammatical errors are sometimes bound to happen. From the very start of this investigation, I have been quite aware that, should it be the case here, it might affect the result.

In hindsight, I am also aware that the result of this investigation might have been very different if had I given my pupils more time to ponder on and discuss the differences between the simple and the progressive verb forms.

Westergren Axelsson and Hahn (2001:9) claim that even advanced students “use their intuition, producing constructions that ‘feel right’ to them”. This could be the case also in this investigation; at least it cannot be ignored. I agree however with Chaudron (1988:166) who states that studies show that “a focus on form or explicit talk about grammar” enhances pupils’ proficiency in a second language. Also, Thornbury (1999:25) claims that “there are compelling arguments to support the view that without attention to form, including grammatical form, the learner is unlikely to progress beyond the most basic level of communication”. However, further research is yet to be done on how grammar lessons combined with pupils’ motivation and learning strategies possibly can have an additional gain in acquiring a second language.

Since the 1970s, an approach in which the primary goal is a focus on communicative skills has been in vogue. Savignon (in Celce-Murcia et al:pp.9-13) states that in this approach, both “[t]eaching materials, course descriptions, and curriculum guidelines proclaim a goal of communicative competence”. When it comes to acquiring grammatical competence, pupils do
not need to specify grammar rules but instead should show they have the knowledge by using rules when interpreting or expressing themselves in any way. In this way, “grammar and vocabulary are secondary, being taught not as ends in themselves, but only insofar as they help express the notions and functions that are in focus”. Obviously, the pupils’ textbook matches this approach since it does not come with a grammar section, as commented on in 6.1.1.

Cook (1998:10) also claims that “the vast bulk of [...] syllabuses and coursebooks around the globe show little overt influence from SLA research. The goals of education, the methods of assessment and the design of coursebooks are in many countries in the hands of ministries of education, school inspectors or publishers rather than the teachers themselves”. Since a textbook most often is the main form of teaching materials, its activities may then strongly affect pupils’ learning.

Furthermore, according to Dacheva and Sercu (2005:pp.93-95) it is only in Sweden that teachers use textbooks solely published in their own country. About 85% of the teachers can decide themselves upon which books to use, and the most favourable textbook tends to be the one that also comes with extras; a workbook or a CD. As to the content of the textbook, their investigation shows that “Swedish teachers find it important that textbooks offer a good coverage of the English speaking countries and different periods of history” rather than grammar. Since the textbook used in my class shows proof of this, I totally agree with the above statement.

In this study, I believe that both motivation and learner strategies might have enhanced comprehension as well as production. There was clearly a lack of motivation among some pupils though, which might have affected the result in a negative way. I also noticed that my pupils, on the whole, mainly worked on their own in trying to learn the progressive verb form. Therefore, in the future, I would like to better motivate them by emphasising the value and reward of working and learning together. This is a challenge for both me and the class since some students often prefer to work on their own. To better understand how my pupils think about learning, I need to repeat the concept of language learning strategies and get them to discuss what learning is about. Also, when pupils evaluate their work, I believe discussions in
class on how the pupils — and I — experienced the actual assignment; can give them an opportunity to share their views upon how we can proceed together with next assignments. Partaking in this way may increase both short-term as well as long-term goals.

Teaching is a complex act and there are plenty of situations a teacher must envisage in order to meet the students’ needs. Therefore, I believe knowing more about learner strategies is crucial for teachers in order to “take learners’ individual differences into account and to create a learning environment in which more learners can be successful in learning a second language” (Lightbown and Spada:75). Also, since the new course plan in English (ENGENG05) involves assessment on pupils’ use of learner strategies, I believe it even more important for me to learn more. In the near future, I will, therefore, suggest the headmaster provides teachers with opportunities to participate in professional development in order to learn more about learner strategies.

Cook (2008:1) asserts that “[h]elping people acquire second languages more effectively is an important task for the twenty-first century”. What also must be considered is the fact that acquiring a second language is a long process. In that respect might an investigation like this be one of several, in a longitudinal research in order to better “describe patterns of change, and to explain causal relationships” (Dörnyei 2007:79).
8. Conclusion

Among second language researchers, views still vary on how much pupils’ achievement depends upon grammar. However, it is my belief that in trying to involve pupils in the process of grammar acquisition as well as continuously discussing motivation and implementing learning strategies, all language learners will surely benefit.

Although pupils in a classroom are taught more as a group, they are individuals in which the level of ability differs. Similarly, even if the order of second language as well as grammar acquisition is found to be the same, pupils still go through stages in which backsliding, fossilization or overgeneralisation might occur. In the light of this, the teacher has to decide what methods are to be used in order for the pupils to succeed in acquiring a second language. Since the course plan in English A does not give any instructions on how grammar is to be taught, teachers are not given much assistance or guidance in how to proceed. What is more, since SLA research is neither implemented in syllabuses nor in textbooks, it could be questioned if the methods used are the correct ones. It seems reasonable to assume that in order to give the pupils the best education ever, the latest research in SLA must continuously be implemented in teachers’ professional development, in textbooks and other learning materials, and not the least, in the curriculum. This ought to be one of the main challenges for the government in the near future, if Swedish students are to maintain a high level of education.

I believe that the autonomy Swedish teachers are trusted with is appreciated. However, I also believe that by having feedback on their classroom practise, teachers might develop their knowledge and understanding of how their teaching might be improved. In so doing, teachers can support each other and explore new ways of teaching their pupils. Also, by choosing an interdisciplinary approach, teachers might give their pupils broader opportunities in reaching their goals. Further investigations on grammar acquisition, aptitude, motivation and learner strategies have to be made before the relationships between them can be better understood, evaluated and be used in future second language teaching. This might be a thesis for another essay.
References


Appendix 1

Student Background Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims to help you understand your English learning background and in that way help you to learn even better. It can also help you and your teacher to plan your course in English.

Name: ........................................ Date: ......................

I have studied English for ...........year(s) in .................................................................
                          (country/countries).

My mother tongue* is .................................................................

Apart from English, I have also studied/I also speak (some) ..........................

......................................................................................................................

I have lived in/visited a foreign country where I had to speak English:
☐ Yes, for ...........day(s)
☐ Yes, for ...........week(s)
☐ Yes, for ...........month(s)
☐ Yes, for ...........year(s)                      ☐ No, never

I have lived in/visited an English speaking country:
☐ Yes, for ...........day(s)
☐ Yes, for ...........week(s)
☐ Yes, for ...........month(s)
☐ Yes, for ...........year(s)                      ☐ No, never

Other experiences .................................................................

......................................................................................................................

* the language I speak at home, my native language
1. Do you do anything in your spare time that helps you to learn English?
   [] Yes, I .................................................................
   [] No

2. Do you think it is important to learn English?
   [] Yes, because .....................................................
   [] No, because .....................................................

3. When learning English, what language skill do you think is...
   a) most important? ................................................
   b) easiest? ............................................................
   c) most difficult? ..................................................

4. What do you think you are good at in English?
   ..............................................................................

5. What do you think you need to work more on to improve your English?
   ..............................................................................

6. How do you feel about speaking English in the classroom?
   [] I like it             [] I don’t mind             [] I prefer not to             [] I dislike it
   and / but
   [] I always try to do it                  [] I always try to avoid it
   because .....................................................
7. Are you afraid of making mistakes...
   a) when speaking English?
      □ Very much  □ A little  □ Not at all
   b) when writing English?
      □ Very much  □ A little  □ Not at all

8. What kind of mistakes do you think you make most often?

........................................................................................................

9. What strategies do you use if you get stuck...
   a) writing English?
      (Mark as many boxes as you need to. If you wish to add something, use the dotted line)
      □ I don’t do anything  □ I use another English word/phrase
      □ I use my own or another language  □ I ask a friend/teacher
      □ I use a dictionary/grammar book  □ ........................................
   b) speaking English?
      (Mark as many boxes as you need to. If you wish to add something, use the dotted line)
      □ I don’t do anything  □ I use body language
      □ I use another English word/phrase  □ I use my own or another language
      □ I ask the person I am speaking with to help me
      □ ..........................................................
10. What strategies do you use when you do not understand…

   a) something written in English?
      (Mark as many boxes as you need to. If you wish to add something, use the dotted line.)

      □ I don’t do anything
      □ I ask a friend/teacher
      □ I look it up in a dictionary or a grammar book
      □ I read it again and try to understand through the context
      □ ...........................................

   b) something spoken in English?
      (Mark as many boxes as you need to. If you wish to add something, use the dotted line.)

      □ I don’t do anything                  □ I pretend I have understood
      □ I ask the person to repeat           □ I ask the person to rephrase or explain
      □ I try to guess
      □ ...........................................

11. Are you used to having your English assessed* by

      a) your teacher?
          □ Yes, always  □ Yes, often  □ Yes, sometimes  □ No, never

      b) your classmates?
          □ Yes, always  □ Yes, often  □ Yes, sometimes  □ No, never

      c) you yourself?
          □ Yes, always  □ Yes, often  □ Yes, sometimes  □ No, never

* to assess = to judge, to evaluate, Swedish = att bedöma
12. Do you believe that you can learn English really well?
   □ Yes, because ........................................................................................................
   □ No, because ........................................................................................................

13. How much time per week are you prepared to spend on your English homework? ..................................................................................................................

14. Try to explain in what ways you prefer to learn English in school.
 ........................................................................................................................................
 ........................................................................................................................................
 ........................................................................................................................................
 ........................................................................................................................................
 ........................................................................................................................................
 ........................................................................................................................................
Appendix 2

Writing assignment 1
English A
Sjf 2
ulrika.vanmanen@tjorn.se

I’ve been telling you about myself and what I’ve been doing this summer and now I’m looking forward to getting to know you better. It would be very interesting for me to hear about what you have been experiencing during your summer holiday. I already know that some of you have been trying to take your driving licence. What was that experience like? Will you be taking more lessons or are you done? Anyway, I hope you were having a great time this summer! I guess, unlike me, you were not trying to paint your house since it was raining most of the time! However, when it was raining I tried to do something else instead. Were you visiting friends or maybe you were working the whole time? When and where was it? Was it fun, hilarious or what was it like? Remember to give details!

Maybe you would like to write about an interest or hobby of yours instead? For how long have you been interested in your hobby? How is it affecting you? Will this interest of yours still be something you’ll be doing in the future? How come? Remember, when you are writing to:

1. Pick a happening that is particularly interesting for you to be writing about.
2. Try to explain and describe your experiences with a lot of details to help the reader picture what you are writing about and how it is/was affecting you: My head was aching for a long time after that fantastic concert.

Please hand it in before Friday next week. I’m looking forward to reading it!
ulrika.vanmanen@tjorn.se
A Memorable Event

Memories might mean a lot to people. Do you have a special memory that means a lot to you? It could be a musical memory; a trip that you made, interesting people you met or perhaps a family holiday you still treasure dearly.

Your task is to write a text about a specific memorable event and to discuss what effects it had and might still have on you. What was going on around you at the time? Try to explain and describe with lots of details.

Please, remember to check spelling and grammar before handing it in!

Best of luck!