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The Early Bird Catches the Worm

The Impact of English Playschool on English Acquisition at Elementary School in Enkki-class

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ABBREVIATIONS

CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
FL	First Language
MS	Macrosyntagm
SL	Second Language

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ABSTRACT:

Työssäni olen tutkinut vieraskielisen opetuksen linjalla (Enkki-luokka) opiskelevien ensimmäisen ja kolmannen luokan oppilaiden suullista englannin kielen taitoa. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli selvittää, ovatko oppilaat, jotka olivat ennen koulun aloittamista käyneet Englantilaista leikkikoulua vähintään vuoden verran, lahjakkaampia englannin kielen suullisessa taidossa kuin oppilaat, jotka aloittivat englannin opiskelun vasta ensimmäisellä luokalla. Testasin oppilaat yksilöllisesti tammikuussa 2010. Heidän tehtävänä oli kuvailla englanniksi keittiökuvaa, joka oli Richard Scarryn kuvakirjasta Iloinen esikoulu. Teemat kuvasta olivat tuttuja molemmille luokille englanninkielisiltä tunneilta. Nauhoitin oppilaiden vastaukset, minkä jälkeen vertailin ja analysoin ryhmien tuloksia. Apunani tuloksien analysoinnissa käytin Loman & Jörgensenin makrosyntagmianalyysia.

Tulokset osoittivat, että kolmanteen luokkaan mennessä erot suullisen englannin kielen tuottamisessa olivat tasoittuneet kahden ryhmän välillä. Kolmasluokkalaiset molemmista ryhmistä tuottivat suurinpiirtein yhtä paljon makrosyntagmeja englanniksi. Suurimmat erot englannin kielen tuottamisessa voitiin nähdä kahden ryhmän välillä ensimmäisellä luokalla. Ensimmäisen luokan oppilaat, jotka olivat käyneet Englantilaista leikkikoulua vähintään vuoden verran, tuottivat yhtä paljon makrosyntagmeja kuin kolmasluokkalaiset. Ensimmäisen luokan oppilaat, joilla ei ollut Englantilaista leikkikoulutaustaa, tuottivat huomattavasti vähemmän makrosyntagmeja. Ryhmä, jolla oli taustalla Englantilainen leikkikoulu, lausui englanninkieltä sujuvammin kuin ryhmä, joka ei ollut käynyt Englantilaista leikkikoulua. Tutkimuksen perusteella voidaan todeta, että erot suullisen englannin kielen tuottamisessa tasoittuvat kouluvuosien myötä, mutta ne oppilaat, jotka ovat käyneet Englantilaisen leikkikoulun, puhuvat ja lausuvat englantia sujuvammin.

KEYWORDS: clause, clause fragment, incomplete clause, incorrect clause, immersion, macrosyntagm, second language

1 INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the search for new effective ways of learning a second language has improved the quality of language teaching. Language immersion programs have become increasingly popular during the last two decades as they have successfully proved that it is possible to teach children the same syllabus, which in normal schools is taught in one language, in immersion teaching in two languages. The immersion children receive the same type of education as they would in the regular majority language education program, but the medium of instruction, the language through which the material is presented and discussed, is their second language. Therefore the second language is being taught without jeopardizing the position of the first language.

The status of the English language is high in Finland as the language is widely spoken and heard there. Moreover, it is recognized as a global language which further enhances its status. A language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country. In order to achieve such a status, a language has to be taken up by countries around the world. (Crystal 1997: 2-3). The English language is spreading fast as a lingua franca and it is, for example, the main language one hears on TV in Finland. As a result, the demand of English immersion programs has increased and, for example, Vaasan englantilainen leikkikoulu[1] finally got a follow-up as the project Vieraskielisen opetuksen linja[2] started at Suvilahden koulu[3] in 2007.

Language immersion is a method of learning that has gained considerable attention in the recent decades, and it has interested many researchers. The first immersion program started in Vaasa 1987. Although many studies have been conducted concerning the pupils' acquisition of written language, there have not been many studies about the

[1] The official name is Vaasan englantilainen leikkikoulu (Vaasa English Playschool) which is hereafter referred to as the English playschool.

[2] The official name is Vieraskielisen opetuksen linja (Foreign language teaching program) which is hereafter referred to as the Enkki-class.

[3] The official name is Suvilahden koulu which is hereafter referred to as Suvilahti school.

spoken language skills so far. Studies about language immersion in Finland have mostly concentrated on the acquisition of the first language, which is usually Finnish, and the second language, which is usually Swedish. There is, therefore, a need for more research into English as a second language. The present study concentrates on children's oral skills of English as their second language. I analyzed the spoken skills of the first and the third graders in the Enkki-class by comparing the material produced by the pupils with English playschool background to the material produced by the pupils with no English playschool background. The aim of this study was to find out whether the pupils with English playschool background were more skilled in spoken English than the pupils who started learning English in the first grade. The assumption behind the research question was that the pupils with English playschool background had started learning English younger and would therefore perform better in spoken English.

Nowadays children in Finland can already start orientation towards a particular educational system early. The school system in Finland starts at the age of seven, which is rather late and, therefore, the orientation towards a particular system can be started earlier. There are Steiner kindergartens, where the teaching method aims at responding to the developmental needs of children. There are kindergartens where children attend to, for example, music classes, and also those that provide children with an opportunity to acquire a second language. The majority of the immersion kindergartens in Finland usually teach Swedish as a second language. However, there are also kindergartens that provide English speaking immersion and one of them is the English playschool in Vaasa. The method used in the playschool is early total immersion where the staff uses only English with the children and with each other.

The aim of the study is testing a common assumption which is that the younger one starts learning a second language the better. The assumption probably also has motivated the decision that from fall 2010 only children with English playschool background are able to gain admission to Enkki-class which provides partial English immersion education. Some scholars have indeed given support to the assumption. For example, Lenneberg (1967: 179) states that the crucial period of language acquisition ends around the age of 3–5 years. He claims that if no language is learned before then, it

could never be learned in a fully functional sense. This means that it is difficult to gain a native-like fluency in a second language after the critical period. Moreover, according to Towell & Hawkins (1994: 14-15) the major factor determining degree of success in second language acquisition is the age at when the learner is first constantly exposed to a second language. In their study they found out that the children who had started to acquire the second language before the age of seven, made as few errors on the test as did the native speakers. In the present study the-sooner-the-better hypothesis will be re-tested. The hypothesis is that the children with English playschool background are more skilled orally in the English language than the children with no English playschool background in Enkki-class. For this purpose 15 pupils were tested from the total of 16 first graders and 10 pupils were tested from the total of 14 thirds graders. Unfortunately not all the parents gave permission for their children to attend the test, and, therefore, I was not able to test everybody. The pupils were shown a picture, and they were asked to describe it. The descriptions were recorded for accuracy. The descriptions by the children from the English playschool were compared with those of no English background. The pupils' answers were analyzed by using Loman & Jörgensen´s (1971) analysis of macrosyntagms, a method for analyzing spoken text: how many clauses each pupil produced and what kind of clauses were produced. Thus the focus of the study was on the productiveness of the pupils as well as on the quality of the clauses they produced.

It is good to remember that all children are exposed to some English language from an early age. However, in the present study only English playschool background is considered to be their exposure to English before the school age. The influence of TV, music, and, for example, brands of toys were not being taking into consideration because the English that surrounds the children does not prepare them necessarily for these particular skills to acquire a second language.

In this chapter the material and the method of the study are presented in more detail. I will also discuss the factors that need to be taken into consideration when interviewing children. A brief introduction to the English playschool and the Enkki-class is given in this chapter as well. In the second chapter I will discuss language immersion and

describe the method used for SL teaching in the Enkki-class. In the third chapter the theory of macrosyntagms created by Loman and Jörgensen (1971) is presented. In the fourth chapter the present study and the findings from the test are discussed. Finally the conclusions are drawn with regard to the findings and suggestions made for further study.

1.1 Material and Method

The primary material in the present study consisted of the recordings made at Suvilahti School[4] in Vaasa in January 2010. Two classes took part in the recordings which were made individually in a separate room. The first and the third graders from the Enkki-classes were divided into groups of A and B. Group A consisted of pupils who had attended the English playschool at least one year and, thus, had started acquiring English before they started school. All the children with no English playschool background belong to group B. In all, there were 25 pupils who attended the test; 15 who belong to group A and 10 who belong to group B.

The pupils were numbered and marked by gender and class. For example, A1b1 indicated that the pupil was part of group A and he was in the first grade. "b" stood for a boy and the last number was an individual number for each pupil. B3g1 indicated that the pupil was part of group B and she was a third grader. "g" stood for a girl and the last number indicated that she was the first girl in her group.

The colored picture used in the test was a size of two A4 pages and it showed a kitchen of a cat family (Appendix 1). Mother is cooking an omelet at the stove while father is sitting at the kitchen table enjoying his breakfast. The children are preparing breakfast and a neighbor is waving in the window. There are many details in the picture that provided an opportunity for the children to find things to discuss. The themes in the test picture are kitchen, numbers and colors. Besides the themes, there is also a calendar on

[4] Combines the primary and secondary level education.

the wall in the picture. Both classes have a calendar moment every morning at school and they discuss with the teacher what month and weekday it is and what the weather is like. The calendar, thus, provided the children with a familiar topic to discuss. The picture was chosen in such a way that the activities in the picture were familiar to both classes as they had studied them at school. It was taken from the children's book *Iloinen esikoulu* (*The Best First Book Ever)* written by Richard Scarry (1979). Since Scarry's books are educational, there are always name tags on the items, but I had covered them, and there was no text in the test picture.

The method in the present study was comparative. The aim was to assess the syntax of pupils' spoken second language using Loman & Jörgensen´s (1971: 123-125) analysis of macrosyntagms. In their analysis, which originally was created to study spoken Swedish language, the text is seen as a sequence of segments that are called *macrosyntagms*. A syntactic analysis of spoken text presupposes a segmentation of the text in syntactic units that may serve as a basis for further analysis. According to Loman & Jörgensen, the concept of macrosyntagm is used of such sequences of words that may be distinguished within a long utterance. For example, "Maybe it's in a/ it's so hot/ so there's cold water or some juice in there" (A3b1), there are three macrosyntagms that form a larger unit together which is a *combination macrosyntagm*. "Maybe it's in a" is a correct *incomplete* clause while "it's so hot" and "so there's cold water or some juice in there" are *complete* correct clauses. Macrosyntagms consist of complete sentences, and of other kinds of syntactic sequences, such as syntactically isolated *interjections* or *fragmentary sentences* of different kinds. The utterances of the spoken text are divided into sentences which are analyzed further into different categories of clause and clause fragment macrosyntagms. In the present study the concentration was on the productivity and also on the quality of the clauses.

After testing the children, the material, the children's interviews, was transcribed. The material was analyzed one clause, clause fragment or interjection at a time by using the method based on the theory of macrosyntagms. If a macrosyntagm was a clause or a clause fragment it was classified as a complete or an incomplete clause. If the clause or the clause fragment was incorrect it was placed under the error of effort, syntactic

correction or a word left out. The number of different types of macrosyntagms was calculated for each pupil. The method was comparative as the results of two groups were compared to find out whether group A (the pupils with English playschool background) produced more macrosyntagms and correct clauses than group B (the pupils with no English playschool background). I also analyzed the error types pupils made in the test.

This particular method was chosen because it measures well the quantity as well as the quality of clauses. The productivity was measured by counting the number of clauses the pupils produced. The quality of the clauses was measured by categorizing macrosyntagms into clause and clause fragment categories and examining the number of correct and incorrect clauses. The theory of macrosyntagms will be presented in detail in chapter three.

Since I took part in the interview that was testing the children, the research method was ethnographic. By going to where the action is, the field researcher pursues an intimate familiarity with the world of the other and is getting close to the dilemmas, frustration, routines, relationships, and risks that are a part of everyday life (Grills 1998: 4-5). In this case it meant that the tests were executed at the children's school. Moreover, this closeness to the social world is the fieldwork's most profound strength as the researcher comes to known the world of the other through direct involvement it (Grills 1998: 5).

The ethnographic method enabled the eliciting of information in a more natural way as the children were free to discuss the picture the way they wanted. However, a frame of questions was outlined, and there were six questions that were asked all the pupils. The reason for this was to make the test situation as equal as possible for everyone. The questions are discussed in the following section.

Since I have worked as a substitute teacher for the third graders and the first graders know me as a mother of one of their class mate, I was able to avoid the observer's paradox where the observation of an event or experiment is influenced by the presence of the observer. The children felt more confident using English as they knew me.

Furthermore, the test situation was more comfortable to them as they were tested individually and the place was familiar to them. Social pressure also decreased as the children did not have to perform in front of the others. The issues involved in interviewing children will be discusses in more detail in the following section.

1.2 Interviewing Children

There are many factors one needs to take into consideration when interviewing children. The adults' way of thinking is more abstract than that of children's and, therefore, the interviewer should never assume s/he is discussing the same thing as the child. Two most important issues in interviewing a child are the proper formulation of the questions and the encounter with the child. Without the cooperation with the child, it is difficult to succeed with the interview. Creating a relationship between an interviewer and a child will improve the quality of the interview as the child is probably more willing to talk. (Dovenborg & Pramling 1985: 25-27). In the present study I had already a connection with most of the children because I had worked as a substitute teacher for the third graders and the first graders knew me as a mother to one of their class mate. Having a connection with the children also enabled me to avoid the observer's paradox. The starting point for the interview was as comfortable as possible.

The right place and time are also important factors for a successful interview. The interview should take place in a quiet room in order to help the child's concentration. That is why the child should not see other children or to be disturbed in the middle of the interview. The child should have finished what s/he did so that it does not bother him or her in the interview. The interviewer should give the child enough time to think and not fill in the silent gaps. It is, however, the interviewer's responsibility as an adult to understand when the child does not want to answer a question and, therefore, s/he should not press the child to answer. It is good to start with more general questions, and only then, move into more detailed ones. The level of difficulty should also vary among the questions. It is highly recommended to use a tape recorder instead of writing down the answers as the interviewer is able to concentrate on the child and encourage him or

her with little gestures, such as nodding. (Dovenborg & Pramling 1985: 33-35). Recording interviews will also improve the accuracy of the study as the interviewer is able to listen to the tape as many times as needed.

According to Dovenborg & Pramling (1985: 35-37), children are better describing than reporting and, thus, it is important to formulate the questions in such a way that the children can describe the test picture. The younger the child is the more concrete an interview needs to be. In the present study the age of the children varied between seven and nine, which required a concrete test form, such as a test picture. Questions where children only need to answer "yes" or "no" should be avoided because they do not tell anything about what children think. The types of questions children understand easiest are the type they are asked to tell something, for example, "What have you learned?" It is important to control the content of the interview which should be more like a conversation than an interview because, the more interview-like the study is, the more unwilling children are to share their thoughts. Through asking the child to tell something s/he has learned, the interviewer gets the child to describe something.

The ethnographic method enabled the eliciting of information in a more natural way as the children were free to discuss the picture the way they wanted. However, a frame of questions was outlined in order to make the test situation as equal as possible for everyone. There were six questions that all pupils were asked. If a child was able to answer a question, more detailed questions about the same subject could be asked. For example, if a child answered the question: "What is there on the table?" by listing things that were lying on the table, this could be followed by: "Why do you think they are on the table?" If a child was not able to answer the question, the next question was asked. The six questions that were asked everyone were:

1. What happens in the picture?
2. What is there on the table?
3. Why is the fridge door open?
4. What happens if you leave a fridge door open for a long time?
5. Why is Mr. Pig behind the window?

6. What is the little cat doing/ saying?

The first question “What happens in the picture?” made it possible for the pupils to express themselves freely and tell what they see in the picture. To the second question: “What is there on the table?” the pupils were able to list things that they saw on the table in the picture. They did not need to form a complete clause when answering the question as it was natural to answer by listing things. After all, it is common in spoken language to avoid unnecessary repetition. The third question “Why is the fridge door open?” was rather difficult because the pupils needed to come up with a reason why the door was open in the picture. After the third question it was natural to ask an elaborating question about the refrigerator: “What happens if you leave a fridge door open for a long time?” Like the third question, this one required logical thinking as the pupils needed to explain why the refrigerator’s door was left open in the picture. The fifth question “Why is Mr. Pig behind the window?” required the use of imagination from the children. In the sixth question: “What is the little cat doing/ saying?” the pupils were expected to describe what the little cat was doing or what he was saying to the worm who was sitting in the soup in the picture. In the next section the English playschool and Enkki-class will be presented.

1.3 English Playschool and Enkki-class

Vaasa English Playschool is a private playschool which was founded already in 1968. It is managed by a parent´s support association. The staff consists of two native speakers of English and two Finnish kindergarten teachers and a practical nurse. There are daycare places for some 50 children in two different groups; 3 to 4-year-old children belong to the junior group and 5 to 6-year-old children to the senior group. The playschool also offers an opportunity to enter the preschool at the age of six. At preschool, the children are taught in Finnish one hour a day in order to prepare them for school. (Vaasa English Playschool 2009). English is used to everything else. The method used in the playschool is early total immersion where the staff uses only English with the children and with each other. However, children may use both Finnish and

English. They learn English through games, songs as well as craft and music lessons. They are, thus, acquiring English though action which is for under school aged children the most effective way of acquiring a second language (Carrasquillo & Hedley 1993: 4). The children are encouraged and guided to speak English in everyday situations through examples. The teachers give children examples how to express something in English. For example, the teacher says: "Thank you for the lunch" giving children an example which they will repeat. After a while the children know how to thank for the lunch without hearing the example first. Routines are developed and considerable repetition is used so that children know what to expect. This creates a sense of security, lowers anxiety and boosts learning.

The Enkki-class is a language program which continues though lower comprehensive school of Suvilahti through to the upper comprehensive school in Merenkurkku school (official name Merenkurkun yläkoulu). The class started in 2007 because there had been an increasing demand for a follow-up to the English playschool and also a need for an English immersion program at the elementary level in Vaasa. The program does not require earlier knowledge of English although the children who come from English playschool are given priority to enter the program. If there are places left, children with some other English background, such as experience of an international school abroad, and also children who have an elder sibling in an Enkki-class may apply to the program. If there are still unfilled places, other children can also gain admission to the Enkki-class[5].

Each Enkki-class has two teachers; one teaches the subjects in Finnish which is the pupils' first language (FL), and the other in English which is the pupils' second language (SL). It is important to notice that the teachers consistently use one language only. Teaching will happen side by side in Finnish and in English. The languages form together a complex which can cross the borders between school subjects. With the help

[5] From fall term 2010 only children who have attended English playschool are able to apply to the Enkki-class.

of the method, one can also strengthen the positive attitude towards learning a SL. The teaching method is CLIL which will be discussed in more detail in chapter two.

The Enkki-class follows the same curriculum the entire Suvilahti school does which is based on the national curriculum from 2004. However, the goals of teaching and learning the SL are based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. In the first grade there are 10 weekly hours of teaching in Finnish and 10 in English. In the second grade there are 12 hours of teaching in Finnish and 8 in English. Finally, in the third grade, there are 15 hours of teaching in Finnish and 8 in English. The distribution of classroom hours is presented in Table 1:

Table 1 Classroom hours[6]

Class / Subject	FIN **1** ENG		FIN **2** ENG		FIN **3** ENG	
Finnish & Literature	6	1	6	1	5	1
Mathematics	11/2	11/2	11/2	11/2	2	2
Environmental Education / Geography	1/2	1/2	1	1	11/2	11/2
Religious Education	1	1	1		1/2	1/2
Music	1/2	1/2		1	2	
Art	1/2	11/2	1/2	1/2		1
Craft		1		2	2	
Physical Education		2	2		2	
Total hours in both languages	10	10	12	8	15	8
Total hours	**20**		**20**		**23**	

[6] The table is modified from the table provided Suvilahti school.

In the first grade there are six weekly hours reserved for Finnish and Literature in Finnish and one hour in English. The reason why this subject is taught mostly in Finnish is the fact that pupils are taught to read and write first in Finnish. Only after the first graders have accomplished a certain level in reading and writing in Finnish, they are allowed to start learning to read and write in English. The same division of weekly hours of Finnish and Literature continues through the second grade and as the amount of Finnish and Literature teaching in Finnish decreases in the third grade, one hour of literature in English will still remain in the timetable. Arrangement relies on the assumption that Finnish reading and writing skills have been achieved during the first and second grade. Mathematics is being taught evenly 1, 5 weekly hours in both languages in the first and second grades. In the third grade the number of hours goes up to 2 in both languages. The first graders´ Mathematics book is written in English, but the subject is taught in both languages by two different teachers who use the same book. The teacher who teaches in Finnish uses the book in Finnish and the other teacher in English. In this way the pupils learn mathematical terms in Finnish and in English, and they will be able to calculate in both languages. That is why the division of this particular subject is carried out evenly throughout from the first to third grade.

Environmental Education and Geography are divided in such a way that in the first grade the students learn 0, 5 weekly hour in Finnish and in English. In practice this means that one week there is a lesson of Environmental Education or Geography in Finnish and the next week in English. In the second grade there is one weekly hour of these subjects in both languages and in the third grade 1, 5 weekly hours also in both languages. Religious Education has one weekly hour in both languages in the first grade, but one hour only in Finnish in the second grade. In the third grade Religious Education is taught 0, 5 hour in both languages per week meaning that one week there is a lesson in Finnish and the next in English. These subjects are taught both in Finnish and in English as it is important to learn the terms in both languages.

In the first grade the pupils learn music 0, 5 weekly hour in Finnish and also in English. In the second grade Music is being taught one hour per week only in English. However, in the third grade Music is being taught only in Finnish for two hours a week. Art is

divided in such a way that in the first grade there is 0, 5 weekly hour in Finnish and 1, 5 weekly hour in English. In the second grade the division is even as there is 0, 5 weekly hour in both languages. In the third grade Art is being taught only in English for one hour per week. Craft has one weekly hour only in English in the first grade and two weekly hours in English in the second grade. Contrary to that, in the third grade Craft is being taught in Finnish for two hours per week. Physical Education is being taught 0, 5 weekly hour in Finnish and 1, 5 hours in English in the first grade. In the second grade Physical Education is divided in such a way that both languages have 0, 5 weekly hour, and in the third grade Physical Education classes are taught only in Finnish for two hours a week. For children acquiring a second language trough action is easier than learning in formal teaching and that is why school subjects such as Music, Art and Physical Education, which involve action, are mostly taught in English in the first grade.

As can be seen from the table all subjects are being covered with both languages in order for the pupils to master them bilingually. Since the teaching and learning will happen through content, the themes used in teaching will cross several subjects. Using themes will provide pupils a better chance to grasp the content, which will be divided into smaller portions in teaching. Routines and repetition are also used in the Enkki-class in order for the pupils to know what to expect. This creates a sense of security, lowers anxiety and will boost learning as the pupils are able to concentrate on the content better. Language immersion programs and the method used in SL teaching in the Enkki-class will be discussed in chapter two.

2 LANGUAGE IMMERSION

Instead of using terms native tongue, mother tongue, foreign language and primary language, the present study will use the concepts of first and second language. The first language (FL) is a language that is chronologically first even though it may be that the first language is later forgotten and never used. The second language (SL) is acquired after the first language becomes the individual's main language. In the case of children who are exposed from birth to bilingual speech, the term bilingual children is the most logical one. The acquisition of two languages is simultaneous, while in the case of children who are first exposed to a FL and then later to a SL, the acquisition is successive. McLaughlin (1984: 10) has suggested that the cut-off point is three years; the children who have been exposed to two languages before the age of three are seen to acquire two languages simultaneously. The children who are introduced to a SL after they have turned three are said to be successive acquirers of two languages (McLaughlin 1984: 10). Children can attend the English playschool after they have turned three, and, therefore, even those who have attended the playschool as young as possible, are acquiring the SL successively. The children in the Enkki-classes are, thus, acquiring English successively as they are exposed to the SL after the age of three. The language immersion program used in the English playschool is total while in the Enkki-class it is partial. In this chapter language immersion is discussed first in general and then the language immersion programs are presented. Finally, the teaching method used in the Enkki-class is discussed.

Language immersion is a model of teaching a SL through content, using language in its natural context and in meaningful situations. Although immersion programs became popular in Finland in the early 90's, bilingual education has been adopted elsewhere during the past 40 years. According to Lambert & Tucker (1972: 2), the first immersion program originates from Canada where the immersion program began on the initiative of a group of parents in the 1960's. Some English-speaking parents who were living in the French-speaking province of Quebec considered that the economical survival in the province required a high level knowledge of French. In the past the methods of teaching French had been rather inefficient, and, thus, the parents started to study different

methods of teaching a SL. At the end, a program was proposed where monolingual English-speaking children would be instructed entirely in French from kindergarten through to the elementary school. Finally the parents' proposition was implemented, and in the 1965, the first immersion program began. Despite various difficulties at the start, the immersion program turned out to be successful, and after spreading around Canada, it was accepted as a way promoting bilingualism also in Europe.

The central idea in an immersion program is to simulate situations that resemble everyday life as much as possible. This means that "the SL is acquired in much the same manner as children acquire their FL, by interacting with speakers of SL in authentic and meaningful situations" (Swain & Lapkin 1982: 2). Furthermore, children can develop their language skills at their own pace. That is, they are given more freedom than in traditional teaching programs, but they are also expected to take more responsibility for their work and development. At the beginning of an immersion program, pupils are allowed to use their FL, but they are constantly encouraged and guided to speak the SL. (Buss & Laurén 1996: 15, 23-25).

Language immersion as a teaching method has been found to be an efficient way of teaching children a SL. One of the reasons for the success of language immersion has been the positive attitude of the majority of the language speakers towards the minority language which is the target language of the teaching (Swain & Lapkin 1982: 85). The children who speak the society's majority language study or receive their teaching at school in the minority language of their society. The pupils receive the same type of education as they would in the regular majority language education program, but the medium of instructions, the language trough which the material is presented and discussed, is their SL. In the kindergarten this happens through using the language as a tool in all activities within the daily program.

Immersion teaching is easy to implement in bilingual countries such as in Finland and Canada. Several different types of language immersion programs have been developed over the years where many types of language immersion programs offer a greater amount of SL exposure than traditional language teaching. Also the age range when

children are exposed to a SL in an immersion program varies considerably. On the basis of the age at which immersion has started, the programs can generally be divided into three categories: *early immersion, delayed immersion* and *late immersion*. Early immersion begins in the kindergarten when children are between three and six years old, while delayed immersion begins at the junior primary school, and late immersion begins as late as in grade seven at the age of 13. On the basis of the amount of SL exposure in the immersion programs, two categories can be identified: *total immersion* and *partial immersion*. In a total immersion program, pupils are taught entirely in the SL, and, naturally, all the other activities are also conducted in the SL. In partial immersion program, merely a certain part of the curriculum is taught in the SL. Thus the language immersion programs can vary in two major aspects. (Laurén 2000: 40-41). At the English playschool in Vaasa, the program is early immersion as the children taught there are between three and six years old. Moreover, it is also total immersion as the kindergarten teachers and practical nurses talk only English to the children. However, the Enkki-class program is partial immersion as about one half of the teaching is in English and the other half in Finnish. The teaching method used in teaching at the Enkki-class is Content and Language Integrated Learning. It will be discussed in detail in the following section.

2.1 CLIL as a Teaching Method in the Enkki-class

The teaching method used at the Enkki-class is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) which involves using a language that is not a pupil´s FL as a medium of instruction and learning for primary, secondary and/or vocational-level subjects such as Mathematics, Natural Science or Art (Mehistö, Marsh & Frigols 2008: 11). In the Enkki-class, the pupils do not study the English language; instead they study school subjects in English. Furthermore, the role of a content teacher is central as s/he needs to support the learning of those parts of the SL that pupils are lacking which may prevent them from mastering the content. When giving instructions in the Enkki-class, the teacher needs to pay attention that everyone understands what was being said. The teacher repeats the message several times and also shows concretely what the pupils are

expected to do. CLIL is, thus, a tool for the teaching and learning of both the content and language. The essence of CLIL is integration which has a dual focus. The first goal is to include the language learning in the content class, for example, in Mathematics, History, Geography etc. This basically means repackaging the information in a manner that helps understanding. Charts, diagrams, drawings, hands-on experiments, and the drawing out of key concepts and terminology are all common CLIL strategies. (Mehistö, Marsh & Frigols 2008: 11-12). For example, the teachers in the Enkki-class use often drawings to illustrate the topic they are teaching. Every morning the pupils in the Enkki-class gather around their teacher at the back of the classroom to talk about what day it is and what the weather is like. There is a calendar on the wall which illustrates different dates and weather conditions. A concrete wall calendar eases the learning process of dates and weather condition, and a constant repetition helps the pupils to remember the terms.

The second goal is that the content of school subjects is used to serve language learning as well. Pupils learn the language and discourse patterns they need to understand as the teacher, working together with teachers of other subjects, incorporates the vocabulary, terminology and texts from those subjects into the subject s/he teaches. The pupils need to understand and use the content that also, then, motivates them to learn the SL. Thus, even in the language classes, pupils are likely to learn more if they are not simply learning the SL for the language's sake, but using it to accomplish concrete tasks and learn new content. The method makes learning a SL more meaningful for the pupils. Finally, CLIL enhances and supports the development of learning skills which contributes to the achievement of content language goals. (Mehistö; Marsh & Frigols 2008: 11-12). For example, it is easier for the pupils in the Enkki-class to learn a third language than for the pupils who have not attended a language immersion program. Furthermore, the CLIL method can give young people the skills required to continue to study or work on the SL, that is, their CLIL language (Mehistö, Marsh & Frigols 2008: 11-12). Spoken skills of a SL can be measured by analyzing the quantity and the quality of the spoken text. Loman & Jörgensen´s (1971) method of analyzing spoken texts was chosen to analyze the material of the present study. The method will be discussed in the following chapter.

3 SIGNIFICANCE OF MACROSYNTAGMS FOR THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Several scholars (e.g. Lenneberg 1967, Towel & Hawkins 1994) have suggested that it is better to start acquiring a SL before the school age in order to achieve complete proficiency in that particular language. The critical period is the age of 3-5-years-old. If no SL is learned before that, it can never be learned in a fully functional sense, that is, it is difficult to gain a native-like fluency in that particular language (Lenneberg 1967: 179). For example, Towell & Hawkins (1994: 14-15) found in their study that children who had started to acquire the SL before the age of seven made as few errors in a language test as native speakers after two years. In another study of learning French as a SL, children who had attended early immersion program did orally better than the late immersion children (Harley 1986: 90-92). There was also some evidence to back up the critical period hypothesis; the acquisition process was not the same for the early and late immersion pupils as it was less natural for the latter (Harley 1986: 115). It can, therefore, be assumed that children who start acquiring a SL before the school age are orally better in the tests than the ones who have started acquiring the SL later.

Loman & Jörgensen´s (1971) method of analyzing macrosyntams (MS) was chosen because it has been developed for the study of spoken texts, and it measures well how productive the pupils are. Furthermore, it also measures the quality of the language the pupils produce. By using the method it was possible to find out whether group A (the pupils with English playschool background) was more skilled and productive in spoken English as was argued in the hypothesis: the younger one starts acquiring a SL the better.

The method of analysis has been developed at the University of Lund by a group of researchers who studied the syntax of spoken texts. It was developed to study modern spoken Swedish, but later it has been applied to spoken Finnish as well. However, since Swedish and English are more similar languages than Swedish and Finnish, it can be assumed that this particular system of analysis is suitable for the analysis of spoken English as well.

In the analysis, the text is seen as a sequence of segments that are called *macrosyntagms*. The segments are internally kept together by a network of syntactic relationships and, externally, separated by the absence of such relationships between adjacent segments. A syntactic analysis of spoken text presupposes a segmentation of the text in syntactic units that may serve as a basis for further analysis. Moreover, the segments are syntactic units which are internally linked by different relationships in the syntax. The word macrosyntagm is used of such sequences of words that may be distinguished within a long utterance. (Loman & Jörgensen 1971: 123). For example, "The family is eating breakfast" (A3g3) is a *complete correct clause* which is one macrosyntagm taken from an utterance that may consist of several clauses, such as "Mommy is doing food and dad is maybe eating." (A3g3). The macrosyntagms consist of complete sentences and of other kinds of syntactic sequences, such as syntactically isolated interjections or fragmentary sentences of different kinds (Loman & Jörgensen 1971: 124). "Yeah!" (A3b2) is an example of an *interjection* and "There is a…" (A1g2) is an example a *fragmentary sentence*. The macrosyntagms of a text can differ greatly from each other in length as they can be long sentences or simply one interjection (Loman & Jörgensen 1971: 18, 123-124). The different types of macrosyntagms are discussed later in this chapter in their own subsections.

There are three categories of macrosyntagms; clauses, interjections and address term macrosyntagms. Moreover, the category of clause macrosyntagms is divided into clauses and clause fragments. A MS can include features from more than one of previous categories. In that case they are called combination MS's. (Loman & Jörgensen 1971: 18). The different types of macrosyntagms are presented in Figure 1.

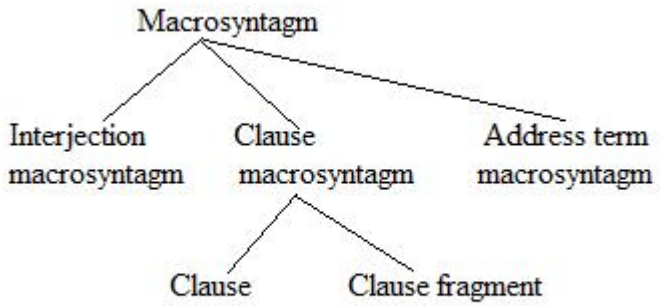


Figure 1 Different Types of Macrosyntagms

The first category is an interjection macrosyntagm which is a syntactically separate unit in a clause or a clause fragment. For example, “Yeah!” (A3b2) is an interjection which is not connected to the other units of the clause or clause fragment and is, thus, a separate unit. The second category is a clause macrosyntagm which is divided into clause and clause fragment macrosyntams. If a MS has a finite verb, it is considered a clause MS which can be analyzed further into complete or incomplete, and independent or dependent clauses. For example, “He wants to eat, too” (A3g2) is a complete clause. It is also an independent clause. If a clause MS is lacking a finite verb it is a clause fragment which can be analyzed further into a complete or incomplete clause fragment MS. For example, “Mommy cat” (A3b3) is a complete clause fragment as an answer to the question: “Who is there?” In spoken language there is no need to repeat the question, and, therefore, the answer to the question is a complete clause fragment. The reason why it is a clause fragment and not a clause is the fact that it is lacking a finite verb. The sub categories of the clauses and clause fragments are discussed in detail down below. The third category is an address term macrosyntagm which literally means that one addresses someone in his/her speech. In the present study there were no address terms in the material, and, therefore, this category will be discussed here only briefly. The reason why there were no address term macrosyntagms in the material is the fact that in the test situation the pupils were discussing the picture and not directly speaking to someone.

3.1 Clause Macrosyntagms

Clauses have an important role in defining the types of macrosyntagms in the text. The core of a clause is the finite verb, that is, the form of a verb that can occur on its own in a main clause and permits variations in tense, number, and mood. The other clause constituents have either a subordinate or co-ordinate relationship to the finite verb. Loman & Jörgensen (1971: 20) divide clauses into main and sub clauses according to the word order. This applies well to Swedish, whereas Finnish and English clause categories need to be determined on a different basis. In Swedish, the finite verb comes before the subject in the main clause (*bilen har han kört [the car has he driven*[7]*]*) or immediately after it (*han har kört bilen [he has driven the car]*). In the sub clause, the finite verb comes after the subject and separates itself from it by a clause adverb (*han säkert har kört bilen [he certainly has driven the car]*) or with a negative object (*han ingenting har köpt [he nothing has bought]*). (Loman & Jörgensen 1971: 20). This rule of distinguishing between the main clause from the sub clause cannot be applied to English as the word order in English is quite different, and some other definition is needed, such as that by Wright & Hope's definition of main and sub clause in English. According to them (1996: 124), subordination links two or more clauses in such a way that only one of them could stand alone. The clause considered to be able to form a meaning alone is the main clause, and the other clauses are sub clauses.

In the analysis of macrosyntagms by Loman and Jörgensen (1971) the clauses are classified in two different ways. They can be dependent or independent clauses and also complete or incomplete ones. Furthermore, complete clauses can be correct or incorrect. Three different types of errors can be made in complete incorrect clauses. An error may result from an effort to complete a complete clause, a syntactic correction or leaving out a word from the beginning or the middle of a clause. For example, the first graders can be assumed to produce many complete incorrect sentences as their grammar and vocabulary might not be sufficiently developed for them to form complete correct sentences. A classification of clauses is presented in Figure 2.

[7] Literal translation.

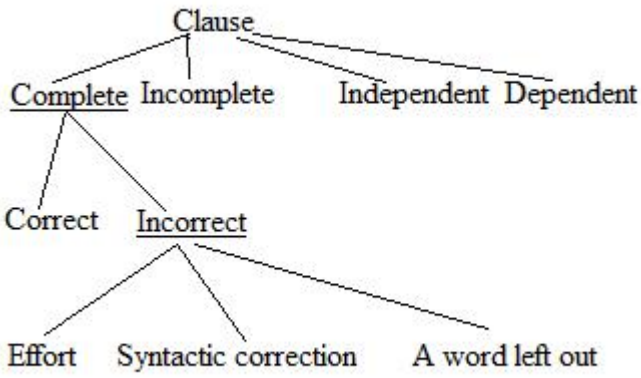


Figure 2 Classification of Clauses

The first level of clause types consist of complete and incomplete clauses which further fall into independent and dependent clauses according to their function inside the macrosyntagm. A dependent clause can therefore be a dependent unit, such as an object or an adverb inside a larger macrosyntagm or inside a dependent clause. Naturally the subordinate clauses are mostly dependent, but the main clauses can be both independent and dependent. (Loman & Jörgensen, 1971:23). In the present study, this particular aspect of clauses was not important because the material mostly consisted of independent clauses.

Clauses can also be classified as complete and incomplete. A complete clause is grammatically correct. The correctness is defined on the basis of the semantic correctness. If a clause is not semantically correct, it is an incorrect clause. Moreover, if there is a relevant clause constituent missing from the end of a clause, it is considered to be an incomplete clause MS. Loman & Jörgensen (1971: 45) point out that it is possible to decide on the clause's incompleteness by referring to the syntactic criteria. Example 1 below illustrates an incomplete clause:

Ex. 1 There is a… (A1g1)

In Example 1 a clause constituent is missing from the end of the clause. It is a common incomplete clause if a pupil does not remember the word s/he was looking for, which resulted in the clause to be incomplete.

Complete clauses are classified further into those that are formed correctly and to those that are formed incorrectly. Moreover, incorrect clauses are classified into three error types. They are an effort to complete a complete clause, a syntactic correction or leaving out a word from the beginning or the middle of a clause. However, the clauses formed incorrectly are still complete clauses, but they contain one or more errors. The examples below illustrate the three types of errors:

A) An effort to complete a complete clause.

Ex. 2 Dad is maybe eating and... (A3g3)

B) A correction in the syntax.

Ex. 3 Those…they melt. (A1g5)

C) Leaving out a syntactically important clause constituent at the beginning or in the middle of a clause.

Ex. 4 Taking the window his hat. (A1b1)

In Example 2, the pupil tried to complete a complete clause by saying “and” at the end of the clause but she was not able to finish the clause. In Example 3, the pupil started the clause with the word “those” but corrected it into “they”. In this case both alternatives would have been correct. In Example 4, the pupil has left out a syntactically important clause constituent at the beginning of the clause. The complete clauses naturally do not contain any of the above-mentioned errors, but are considered to be correct.

As illustrated in Figure 2, clauses are one of the three categories of macrosyntgms. The other two categories are interjection and address term MS's. They had a small role in the present study as there were few interjections in the material and no address terms.

3.2 Interjections

Loman and Jörgensen's (1971: 30) method of analyzing MS does not consider interjections as clause constituents in larger sentence structures as they are defined to be independent Ms's. They are syntactically separate units in a clause or a clause fragment. Example 5 illustrates a typical interjection:

Ex. 5 (What is he saying?)

"Yehaa!" (A3g3)

Interjections can be either a part of a larger sentence structure or appear alone like in Example 5. The pupil answered to the question by uttering what she thought the little cat in the picture was saying.

3.3 Clause Fragment Macrosyntagms

According to Loman & Jörgensen (1971: 34), clause fragments are defined as sequences that are neither clauses nor interjections. They are syntactic units that have a syntactic relationship, but they do not contain a finite verb. It is important to consider the context of the text as clause fragments can be understood as complete clauses, as finite verb, or the missing unit can be found in the previous clause which may, for example, be a question asked by the interlocutor. Clause fragments are further classified into those complete or incomplete ones. Complete clause fragments are either correct or incorrect. Incorrect clause fragments may contain three types of errors which may consist of an effort to continue a complete clause fragment or a syntactic correction or an omission of

a word from the beginning or the middle of the clause fragment. Figure 3 illustrates the classification of clause fragments:

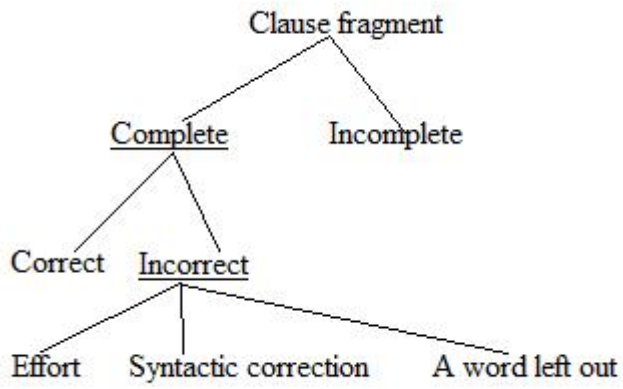


Figure 3 Classification of Clause Fragments

As can be seen in Figure 3 the classification of clause fragments is similar to the classification of clauses apart from the fact that there is no sub division of independent and dependent clause fragments**.** An incomplete clause fragment lacks the semantic or syntactic connection to the text. In the present study I asked from a pupil, "What is happening to the bread?" and the answer was, "Pencil" (B1g1). The pupil's answer had no connection to the question asked and, therefore, it had no semantic connection with the question. A complete clause fragment is seen as correctly formed if it is an answer to the question that was asked, as it is not communicatively necessary for the speaker to repeat all the words in the question. For example, the question can be answered with the following respond:

Ex. 6 (Who is there?)

Pig. (A1g3)

One word is enough to answer the question and, thus, it is a complete correct clause fragment. Such fragments are characteristics of spoken language where speakers are likely to avoid unnecessary repetition.

A clause fragment could also mean that the speaker is nervous and, therefore, unsure about how to finish the clause or the utterance. In clause fragments the missing clause constituent is usually the finite verb as seen in Example 7:

Ex. 7 Because mom walking there. (B1g3)

In Example 7 the finite verb is missing. If there had been a finite verb, for example: "Because mom *is* walking there", the clause would have been regarded as a complete correct clause.

Both syntactic and contextual criteria as well as prosodic criteria can be used distinguishing complete clause fragments from the incomplete ones (Loman & Jörgensen 1971: 34-35). Clause fragments are complete if they function as parts a clause and if they are not semantically separate from the context. Otherwise clause fragments are seen as incomplete. In the present study only the syntactic and contextual features were taken into account as prosody was an unnecessary feature when analyzing the pupils' spoken text. The reason for leaving out the prosodic criteria was the fact that it did not add a new aspect for the study.

The most common type of a complete incorrect clause fragment lacked a finite verb as seen in Example 8:

Ex. 8 (What do you do with the calendar in your classroom every morning?)

We sitting and… (B1g3)

The answer in Example 8 is lacking a finite verb, which makes it a clause fragment instead of a clause, and because there is a word missing at the end of the clause, it is an incorrect clause fragment. In the present study, no supportive questions were asked such situations because in some cases this fragment could have been a correct clause fragment. This was, of course, only possible if there was a suitable question before it.

According to Loman & Jörgensen (1971: 61-62), complete clause fragments divide up into correctly and incorrectly formed clause fragments. A clause fragment is incorrectly formed if it contains one of the following types of errors:

A) An effort to continue a complete clause fragment:

Ex. 9 (What is he saying?)

Yeah, milk and … (B1g3)

B) A correction in the syntax.

In the material of the present study there was no example of this kind of error that would have fitted this category.

C) Leaving out a syntactically important clause constituent at the beginning or in the middle of a clause fragment:

Ex. 10 There see what days. (B3b2)

In Example 9, the pupil tried to continue a complete clause fragment with the word "and". However, he was not able to finish the clause fragment which caused it to become an incorrect clause fragment. In Example 10, the pupil had left out a syntactically important clause constituent in the middle of the clause.

3.4 Combination Macrosyntagms

A combination MS is a syntagm in which another MS is embedded, and, thus, two or more separate macrosyntagms form a larger unit together. The combination can consist of any of the categories mentioned above. Moreover, the embedded MS does not have a close syntactic connection with the other MS's surrounding it. Therefore it can be

considered as an independent macrosyntagm with syntactic relationship between its units. (Loman & Jörgensen 1971: 35). This is illustrated in Example 11:

Ex. 11 The bred flies off the…/what's the…/I don't know what this is. (B3b3)

In Example 11, the combination macrosyntagm consists of two incomplete and one complete clause which is correctly formed.

Ex. 12 Maybe it's in a…/ it's so hot /so there's cold water or some juice in there. (A3b1)

Example 12 illustrates a combination MS that consists of one incomplete clause and two complete correctly formed clauses. In both examples the clauses are seen to form one combination macrosyntagm.

4 DID THE EARLY BIRD CATCH THE WORM?

The aim of the study was re-testing a common assumption which is that the younger one starts acquiring a second language the better; the pupils with English playschool background (group A) would be more skilled orally in the English language than the pupils with no English playschool background (group B) in the Enkki-class. The hypothesis is based on an assumption that children, who have been exposed to the English language at the English playschool several hours a day for at least a year, are more familiar with English and, therefore, more skilled in spoken English than the children who have started learning English only in their first grade at school. The first and the third graders from the Enkki-class were tested individually for this purpose. They were shown a picture and asked to describe it. The descriptions were recorded for accuracy. Unfortunately not all the parents gave permission for their children to attend the test, and I, thus, was not able to test everybody. However, only one pupil from the first class and four third graders did not attend the test. Altogether there were 25 pupils who took part in the test. The division of the pupils is presented in Table 2. There were 15 first graders who attended the test. Nine of them were in group A and six in group B. There were 10 third graders who took part in the test and six of them were in group A and four in group B. Altogether there were 15 pupils in group A and 10 pupils in group B.

Table 2 Division of Pupils

Enkki class pupils	**Group A**	**Group B**
First grade girls	5	4
First grade boys	4	2
Third grade girls	3	1
Third grade boys	3	3
Total	**15**	**10**

As one first grader and four third graders did not attend the test the division of the pupils between different groups was uneven. However, there were at least four pupils in each group which gives a reliable basis for the study. The smallest group was B3 that contained four pupils, one girl and three boys. There were no great differences between girls and boys, who were in the same group, and, thus, the presentation of group B3 was trustworthy.

First the frame of questions is discussed. The results of group A are presented and then the findings of group B. The findings of groups A1 and A3 are discussed and analyzed as one group because the results were equal among the first and third graders who had attended the English playschool. Since there was a significance difference in the production of macrosyntagms between groups B1 and B3, the results are partially analyzed separately. After presenting the findings of both groups, they are summarized and compared to each other at the end of this chapter. The oral skills of the pupils were measured by counting the number of macrosyntagms they produced. Moreover, the quality of the clauses was measured by dividing the spoken text into sentences which were analyzed further into different categories of interjection, clause and clause fragment macrosyntagms. In order to make the test situation equal for everyone, a frame of question was outlined. There were six questions that were asked everyone.

The first question “What happens in the picture?” made it possible for the pupils to express themselves freely and tell what they see in the picture. The pupils from both A groups and the pupils from group B3 were able to answer this question with clauses, whereas the pupils in group B1 started to name things that they knew in English. To the second question: “What is there on the table?” the pupils were able to list things that they saw on the table in the picture. They did not need to form a complete clause when answering the question as it was natural to answer by listing things. After all, it is common in spoken language to avoid unnecessary repetition. Almost all the pupils named a fork, a knife, a spoon, a plate and a glass. They were the most familiar things to the pupils as they use the terms on a daily basis.

The third question “Why is the fridge door open?” was rather difficult because the pupils needed to come up with a reason why the door was open in the picture. One third of the pupils was not able to answer the question and stayed silent. A few of them said they did not know the reason and two thirds explained why the fridge door was open. The most common explanation was that the mother was cooking and needed things from the refrigerator. The second most common explanation was that somebody had forgotten to close the door. After the third question, it was natural to ask an elaborating question about the refrigerator: “What happens if you leave a fridge door open for a long time?” If a pupil was able to answer the first question about the refrigerator, s/he also answered to this one. The most common answer was that the things inside the refrigerator will get warm and melt.

The fifth question “Why is Mr. Pig behind the window?” also required the use of imagination from the children. The pupils who were able to answer to the refrigerator questions answered also to this one. The answers varied and there was no respond that would have risen above. Examples 15, 16 and 17 illustrate the different types of answer to the question:

Ex. 13 Because the window is open. (A1b2)

Ex. 14 He is playing ball game. (A1g2)

Ex. 15 Because his hat is flying away. (B3b2)

To the fifth question the pupils answered with a clause, otherwise they stayed silent. The variety of the answers to the question indicates that the pupils who answered the question have a good imagination.

The pupils found the sixth question funny: “What is the little cat doing/ saying?” There is a little cat who is stirring a bowl of soup and a worm is sitting in the soup in the picture. Since most of the pupils got excited about the funny detail in the picture, they were eager to come up with answers what the little cat was saying or doing. Example 16

illustrates an answer to the question what the little cat was saying, while Example 17 is an answer to the question what the little cat was doing:

Ex. 16 “Come away from the corn flakes!” (B3b3)

Ex. 17 It´s making maybe a porridge. (A3g3)

The pupils who were not able to produce a clause, stayed silent. At the end of the interview everyone was asked if there was something they would like to tell about the picture. 17 children out of 25 answered “No”. Eight of the pupils told more about the picture. It seemed that the third graders were keen on telling voluntarily about the picture. Not only the third graders are two years older than the first graders and, therefore, their ability to read pictures is more developed, but they are also ahead in learning English.

4.1 English Playschool Background Pupils

Method of analyzing macrosyntams (Loman & Jörgensen 1971) measures well the productivity of the pupils. Furthermore, it also measures the quality of the language they produce. The total number of macrosyntagms (MS) produced in group A was 319. The average number of MS per pupil was 21, 27. This indicates that the pupils were quite productive. Moreover, the average number of MS in group A1, that is the first graders who had English playschool background, was 20, 44 while the same average number of MS in group A3, that is the third graders who had English playschool background, was 22, 5. In productivity the first and the third graders in group A were quite even as there were only a 2, 06 difference for group A3. The small difference between groups A1 and A3 indicates that the children achieve already in the English playschool quite good proficiency in spoken English, and, therefore, the first graders in group A were able to produce almost as many MS as the third graders. The production of macrosyntagms in group A is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Production of Macrosyntagms in Group A

Production of Macrosyntamgs	A group
Total number of MS	319
Average number of MS/ pupil	21,27
Average number of MS/ First graders	20,44
Average number of MS/ Third graders	22,5
Highest number of MS/ First graders	32
Highest number of MS/ Third graders	29
Lowest number of MS/ First graders	7
Lowest number of MS/ Third graders	15

The highest number of MS in group A1 was 32 while in group A3 it was 29. It was interesting to notice that the highest number of MS was produced by a pupil (A1g2) in the first grade. She had attended the English playschool for one year before the first grade. All the third graders in group A had also at least one year experience of the English playschool before they attended the Enkki-class. The fact that the first grader had the highest number of MS indicates that the individual differences can be seen early on. The lowest number of MS produced in group A1 was 7 while in group A3 the same number was 15. This indicates that the individual differences can be seen more clearly among the first graders who had less experience of education in English compared with the third graders. Moreover, the finding also suggests that over the years the pupils will achieve more equal level of competence in English.

All in all, the results of productivity in group A were good. The pupils understood what was being asked and they were willing to answer the questions. This indicates that group A was used to speaking English and they seemed comfortable speaking it.

Moreover, they did not seem nervous in the test situation. For example, if a pupil could not remember a word s/he was looking for, s/he tried to explain it in other words or move on the next thing. This is illustrated in Example 18:

Ex. 18 (What happens if you leave a fridge door open for a long time?)

> There comes all the…because it´s so, how could I say, cold in there and if you leave it open all the cold comes out and food get, because food needs to be in cold, the food get warm and you can't eat them. (A3b1)

In Example 18 the pupil gave a thorough explanation what will happen if a refrigerator's door is left open for a long time. First he was struggling with finding the right word but instead of staying silent he tried to explain it in other words and finally he remembered the right word "cold". This indicates that the pupils who are comfortable using the English language have the confidence to try to explain things and to use the SL creatively.

The macrosyntagms in percentage in group A are presented in Table 4. Group A produced 66, 14 % complete correct clauses of the MS's they produced, 5, 02 % were complete incorrect clauses and only 3, 13 % were incomplete clauses. There were 16, 61 % complete correct clause fragments and only 2, 19 % complete incorrect clause fragments in the MS's produced by group A. They produced very few interjections (0, 63 %) and combination macrosyntagms (4, 39 %).

Table 4 Macrosyntagms in Percentage in Group A

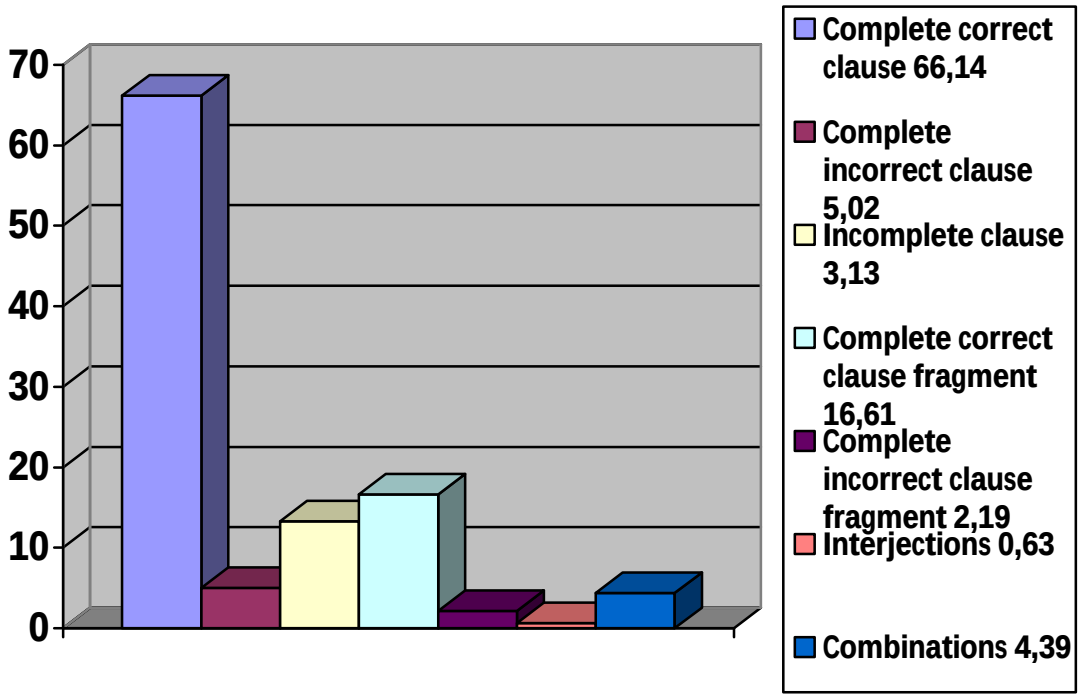


Table 4 illustrates that group A produced most complete correct clauses. The percentages of complete incorrect clauses (5, 02 %) and incomplete clauses (3, 13 %) were small. Example 19 illustrates a complete incorrect clause:

Ex. 19 (Why do you think there are a fork and a knife on the table?)

Because he eats those knife and fork. (A1g5)

In the above example, there is an important clause constituent missing in the clause and, therefore, it is incorrect. Example 20 illustrates an incomplete clause:

Ex. 20 (What happens in the picture?)

And then children are… (A3g1)

In Example 20, there is a relevant clause constituent missing from the end of the clause and therefore it is considered as an incomplete clause. The small percentages of incorrect and incomplete clauses indicate that group A produced mainly complete

clauses that were mostly correct. This supports the assumption that children, who have been constantly exposed to a second language before the age of seven, are most likely to make as few errors as native speakers of that language (Towell & Hawkins 1994: 14-15).

Group A produced clearly more complete correct clause fragments (16, 61 %) than complete incorrect clause fragments (2, 19 %). Example 21 illustrates a complete correct clause fragment:

Ex 21 (What is there on the table?)

Napkin. (A1g4)

The above example is a short answer to the question. Since there was a napkin on the table in the picture, the clause is considered a complete correct clause fragment. Example 22 is an example of an incorrect clause fragment:

Ex. 22 (What happens in the picture?)

Mom do food. (A1b3)

Example 22 is regarded a clause fragment because there is no finite verb. Moreover, it is not grammatically correct and is, therefore, considered incorrect. The percentage of clause fragments was rather small as most of the macrosyntagms group A produced were complete clauses. This indicates that group A was able to express themselves with clauses and not only with a word or two.

The percentage of interjections was marginal (0, 63 %). This is cause by the fact that the test situation did not favor the production of interjections. Example 23 illustrates a typical interjection that occurred in the material produced by group A:

Ex. 23 (What is the little cat saying?)

“Yehaa!” (A3g3)

The pupils produced combination macrosyntagms 4, 30 %, which means that group A was able to produce more than one clause unit in one MS. However, seven- and nine-year-old pupils' second language competence is not at the level where they would produce complex clauses, and, therefore, the percentage of combination macrosyntagms remained small. Example 24 illustrates a combination MS:

Ex. 24 (What is daddy cat doing?)

Putting paper on himself because he is starting to eat. (A1b1)

The above example is a combination MS that consists of two complete correct clauses linked with the word "because".

Group A produced 237 clause macrosyntams out of the total number of 319 MS. Only 4, 22 % of clause MS's were incomplete clauses and 6, 75 % complete incorrect clauses. Most of the clause MS's were complete correct clauses, 89, 03 %, meaning that not only group A produce mostly clauses, but the clauses were also for the most part correct. This indicates that they were able to produce complete clauses that were grammatically correct and, thus, the production of English was close to native-like speech. In Table 5 the clause MS's produced by group A are presented:

Table 5 Clause Macrosyntagms in Group A

Production of Clauses	A group
Total number of clause MS	237
Incomplete clauses	4,22 %
Complete correct clauses	89,03 %
Complete incorrect clauses	6,75 %

Group A produced mostly clause macrosyntagms and mainly complete correct clauses. The complete correct clauses varied from very short ones to long ones. Example 25 illustrates a short clause which is a complete correct clause:

Ex. 25 (What do you think the cat is saying?)

"This is fun." (A1g1)

The example illustrates the creativeness in the use of the English language as the pupils were able to come up with answers without naming things directly in picture. Example 26 illustrates a long clause which is also a complete correct clause:

Ex. 26 (Why there is a clock on the wall?)

Everybody can look at the clock if they don´t know what is the clock. (A1g1)

Even the longest clauses were not very long because the pupils' competence in English was not advanced enough to produce complex clauses. This is natural for the children between seven and nine years as their language skills are still developing. The most common type of a long complete correct clause was an answer to the question "What is there on the table?" as shown in Example 27:

Ex. 27 I see an egg, ham, bread, sugar and knife, spoon, a paper, some tea where you pour it from and there might be milk and bread. (A3b1)

The reason why this particular question generated long clauses was the fact that the pupils were able to list what they saw on the table in the picture. Some of the pupils listed things without forming a complete clause which made the clause a clause fragment. However, most of the answers to this question in group A were complete clauses.

Incomplete clauses occurred in cases where a pupil had left out an important clause constituent at the end of the clause. A clause constituent is important if the clause cannot be understood without it. Example 28 illustrates an incomplete clause:

Ex. 28 (What happens in the picture?)

There is a … (A1g2)

In the example the pupil had probably forgotten a word at the end of the clause and was not able to complete the clause. This caused the clause to become an incomplete one as it is impossible to know what the pupil meant with the clause. However, the fact that she started the utterance without knowing how it ends reflects the confidence the pupils in group A had.

Complete incorrect clauses are divided into three types according to the errors which may consist of an effort to complete a complete clause, syntactic correction or leaving out a word from the beginning or the middle of a clause. The most common error was leaving out a syntactically important clause constituent at the beginning or in the middle of a clause. There were 14 cases of complete incorrect clauses. Example 29 illustrates a typical complete incorrect clause:

Ex. 29 (What is daddy cat doing?)

Look at the bacon. (A1g4)

In this example, the pupil had left out a word from the beginning of the clause. The clause would have been a complete correct clause if it had been analyzed on its own without the question. However, the question required telling what daddy cat was doing, and, therefore, the pupil ought to have started the clause with a word like “daddy cat” or “he”. There was only one effort error in incorrect clauses which occurred in the material produced by group A:

Ex. 30 Dad is maybe eating and... (A3g3)

In the example, the pupil tried to complete a correct clause by adding “and” but then she could not finish the clause. This indicates that the pupil had the confidence to talk without knowing how the clause would end. The whole group had this confidence and they did not stay silent but answered all the questions.

There were only two syntactic errors in the material produced by group A. In Example 31, the pupil started the clause with the word “those” but corrected it into “they”. In this case both alternatives would have been correct. The fact that he corrected the syntax, makes the clause a complete incorrect one:

Ex. 31 Those…they melt. (A1g5)

The small number of errors and the large number of correct clauses illustrate the native-like fluency that group A had in their speech. They did not stagger in their speech but expressed themselves with confidence. Furthermore, their pronunciation in most parts was close to native-like.

Altogether, 64 clause fragments were produced by group A. The number of clause fragments was significantly smaller than the number of clauses. The reason for this was the fact that the pupils in group A were able to produce complete clauses and express themselves with native-like fluency. The majority of the clause fragments were complete correct clause fragments (82, 8 %) and there were only 7 (10, 9 %) complete incorrect clause fragments and 4 (6, 25 %) incomplete clause fragments. This can be seen in Table 6:

Table 6 Clause Fragment Macrosyntagms in Group A

Production of Clause Fragments	A group
Total number of clause fragments	64
Incomplete clauses fragments	6, 25 %
Complete correct clauses fragments	82, 8 %
Complete incorrect clause fragments	10, 9 %

The clause fragments found in the material produced by group A consisted mostly of complete correct clause fragments. The table indicates that group A produced grammatically correct speech as there were only few errors. A complete clause fragment is seen as correctly formed if it answers to a question that was asked. For example;

Ex. 32 (What is there on the table?)

Cup, paper, egg. (A3g2)

In the example, the list of things answers the question and, thus, it is a complete correct clause fragment. This feature characterizes spoken language as the speaker naturally avoids unnecessary repetition.

In the clause fragments the clause constituent missing was usually the finite verb. The example below is a complete correct clause fragment. It is an answer to a question, but it can also be analyzed on its own separate from the question and considered a complete correct clause fragment. Example 33 would only be a list if it were analyzed separately. Since Example 33 is lacking only the finite verb, without the question it is a clause fragment as well:

Ex. 33 Because mom walking there. (B1g3)

An incomplete clause fragment is defined to be a fragment which lacks the semantic or syntactic connection to the text (Loman & Jörgensen 1971: 34-35). In the present test this meant that the pupil did not understand the question and gave an incorrect answer, as in Example 34:

Ex. 34 (Why is there a worm in the soup?)

No. (A1g2)

A clause fragment is incorrectly formed if it contains one of the three errors: an effort to continue a complete clause fragment, a correction in the syntax or leaving out a syntactically important clause constituent at the beginning or in the middle of a clause

fragment. There were only 7 such incorrect clause fragments in the material produced by group A. Only one error type occurred where the pupil left out a syntactically important clause constituent at the beginning or in the middle of a clause:

Ex. 35 (What is he saying?)

"Fun" (A3g3)

In the example above, there is a word missing at the beginning of the clause and also the finite verb has been left out which makes it a complete incorrect clause fragment.

The most common tense group A used was the present. The pupils had most correctly formed clauses in the present tense. There were also some clauses that were expressed in the past tense but only two clauses that had the future tense.

Ex. 36 (Why is the fridge door open?)

Because the mom will take the food. (A3g1)

Example 36 is one of the other clauses expressed using the future tense. This indicates that the pupil is competent in spoken English as she was able to express the clause in a tense that was most suitable for it. Since mom was going to take food from the refrigerator later, the correct tense was the future.

The pupils used the imperfect and perfect tense but not the past perfect. The past tense clauses occurred in cases where the pupils needed to explain why something had happened.

Ex. 37 (Why is the egg shell on the floor?)

Mommy has dropped it. (A1g1)

In Example 37, the pupil used the perfect tense to explain why the egg shell was on the floor in the picture. She chose the perfect tense which was the most natural tense in this case. Example 38 illustrates a clause that is expressed in the past tense:

Ex. 38 (Why is the fridge door open?)

Somebody did let it open. (A3g1)

In Example 38, the pupil has used the auxiliary verb “do” to express the past tense. This was the most common way to express clauses in the past tense. The pupils were most likely to maintain the main verb in the present tense and express the past tense with the auxiliary verb “do”.

There were only 0, 63 % interjections of the total number of MS’s produced by group A. The test situation did not favor production of interjections as the pupils were asked to describe a picture. All the interjections produced were answers to the following question:

Ex. 39 (What is the little cat saying?)

“Yeah!” (A3b2)

When describing what the cat in the picture was saying, the pupils were able to use an interjection.

The percentage of combination macrosyntagms was 4, 39 %. Combination macrosyntagm is a MS in which another macrosyntagm is embedded meaning two or more separate macrosyntagms form a larger unit together (Loman & Jörgensen 1971: 35). Since the language the pupils produced were in most parts independent clauses that were usually one clause unit answers to questions, there were not so many combination MS’s in the material. A typical combination MS is illustrated in Example 40:

Ex. 40 (What else is there on the table?)

Fork, knife and spoon and some sugar and the little kitty is looking. (A1g2)

There are two MS’s embedded in a combination macrosyntagm. The first clause: “Fork, knife and spoon and some sugar” is a complete correct clause fragment as the pupil is

listing things he sees on the table in the picture. Since there is no finite verb in the clause, it is a clause fragment. The second clause: “And the little kitty is looking” is a complete correct clause. Together these two clauses form a larger unit which is the combination MS. Usually the word “and” was the linking word between different clause units in combination macrosyntamgs.

The number of correct complete clauses that group A produced was 211 while the number of correct complete clause fragments was 53. Altogether 264 MS were correct out of 319 MS. There were only 35 macrosyntagms that were incomplete or incorrect. As the number of errors was marginal, this indicates that group A is able to speak fluent English that is close to native-like fluency. Moreover, the pronunciation was close to native-like. These findings support the assumption and findings from studies which claim that children who have started acquiring English before the age of seven are more likely to gain native-like fluency in their speech and make as few errors as native speakers. The pupils in group A have learned English first in the English playschool through action which has given them an opportunity to learn English in everyday situations in a natural environment, and then at the Enkki-class which follows Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) method of teaching. It enables children, for example, to work in groups giving them courage and stimulus to speak in a foreign language. Speaking English is natural to the pupils in group A.

Group A was enthusiastic and excited about the given task. It could be noticed in the comments they made. Furthermore, they did not need much time to come up with what to say. Most of them expressed themselves with confidence, and they did not have many pauses. If they did, the pauses were not long. Based on the observations from the interview sessions, the results were just what they were expected. It is important to note that the pupils with English playschool background have stayed together in the same group for at least a year. Therefore the class environment for group A feels safe and more familiar, which could help them to be relaxed and open in their production of speech and in their behavior in the classroom in general. This could be noticed in the test situation as the pupils from group A were relaxed and confident.

4.2 No-English Playschool Background Pupils

The total number of MS produced by group B (the pupils who had started acquiring the SL in the first grade) was 145. The average number of MS per pupil was 14, 5. This indicates that the pupils were quite productive. However, the average number of MS varied as it was 21 in group B3 and 10 in group B1. This indicates that there was a significant difference between the two groups in the production of MS. The reason for this is the fact that group B1 had acquired English only about half a year, while group B3 had already acquired the SL two and a half years. The production of macrosyntamgs in group B can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7 Production of Macrosyntagms in Group B

Production of Macrosyntams	B group
Total number of MS	145
Average number of MS/ pupil	14,5
Average number of MS/ First graders	10
Average number of MS/ Third graders	21
Highest number of MS/ First graders	14
Highest number of MS/ Third graders	28
Lowest number of MS/ First graders	4
Lowest number of MS/ Third graders	15

The highest number of MS in group B1 was 14 while in group B3 it was 28. The lowest number of MS in group B1 was 4 macrosyntagms while the similar number in group B3 was 15. There was a remarkable difference between the two groups as the highest number in group B3 was significantly larger than in group B1 and the lowest number of

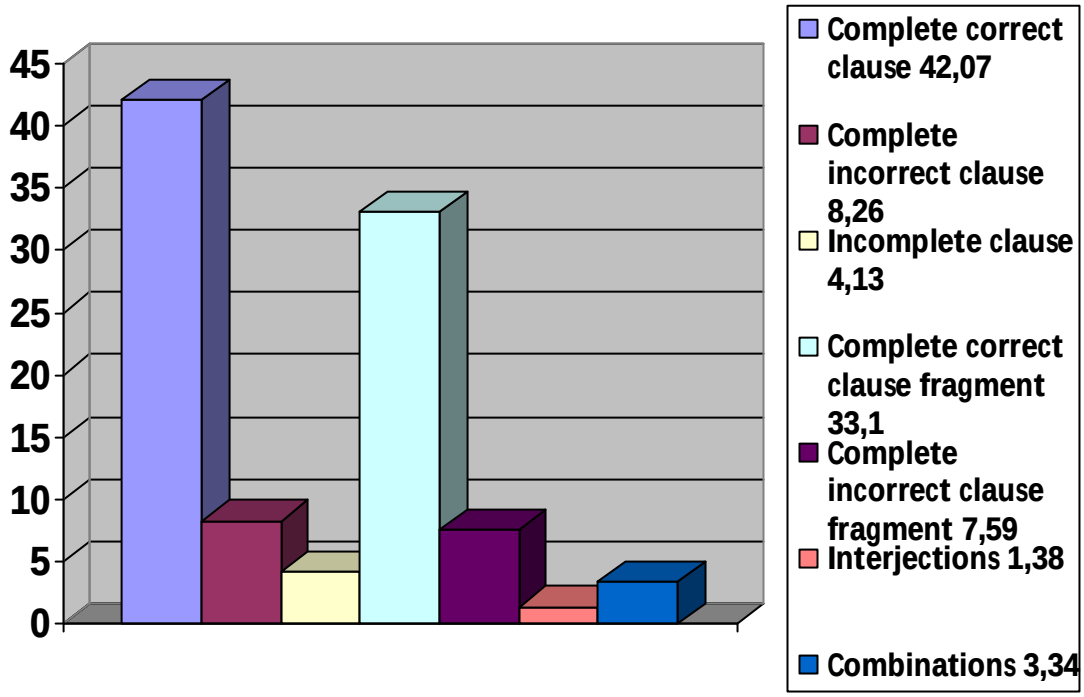
MS in group B1 was smaller than in group B3. Group B3 produced clearly more MS than group B1. This finding indicates that the competence in the English language improves over the years. In the first grade the pupils' vocabulary is rather limited and they were not able to form complete clauses, while in the third grade the pupils were comfortable talking English and they were able to produce clauses. The first graders in group B1 produced mostly clause fragments which means they mainly answered to the questions with a word or two. Moreover, the pupils in group B1 seemed nervous in the test situation. If they were not sure about the answer they stayed silent. The pupils in group B3 felt comfortable talking English and they had the confidence to express themselves although they were not always sure how to end the clause. This is illustrated in Example 41:

Ex. 41 The cat dad eats the egg and he put the…what is it… I don't know what that is in English. (B3g1)

In the example above, the pupil was trying to complete the clause. She was struggling with finding the right word but instead of staying silent, she tried to explain it in other words. This was typical for group B3 while in group B1 the pupils rather did not say anything. This indicates that the pupils who are comfortable using English have the confidence to try to explain things and they are not afraid of making errors.

The macrosyntagms in percentage in group B are presented in Table 8. Group B produced 42, 07 % complete correct clauses of the MS's they produced, only 8, 26 % were complete incorrect clauses and 4, 13 % incomplete clauses. There were 33, 1 % complete clause fragments and only 7, 59 % complete incorrect clause fragments in the MS's produced by group B. They produced very few interjections (1, 38 %) and combination macrosyntagms (3, 34 %).

Table 8 Macrosyntagms in Percentages in Group B



The table illustrates that group B produced most complete correct clauses. The percentages of complete incorrect clauses (8, 26 %) and incomplete clauses (4, 13 %) were small. Example 42 illustrates a complete incorrect clause:

Ex. 42 (What happens if you leave a fridge door open for a long time?)

Everything, everything, what is it…can go bad. (B3b3)

In the example above, there is a syntactic error in the clause and therefore it is incorrect. Example 43 illustrates an incomplete clause:

Ex. 43 (Why is it flying?)

Because this is so… (B3b1)

In Example 43, there is a relevant clause constituent missing from the end of the clause, and, therefore, it is considered an incomplete clause. Relatively small percentages of incorrect and incomplete clauses indicate that group B produced mainly complete

clauses that were mostly correct. However, most of the clauses were produced by group B3 as group B1 was not able to produce many clauses. This finding suggests that after studying in the Enkki-class for two and a half years, the pupils have gained the competence in the English language to produce complete clauses. Moreover, group B3 had a larger vocabulary than group B1. The large vocabulary enabled group B3 to use the SL creatively.

Group B produced quite many clause fragments. Most of them were correct (33, 1 %). The production of clause fragments was even between groups B1 and B3. This indicates that both groups were able to answer to the questions with a word or two. As unnecessary repetition is avoided in spoken language, group B1 was also able to produce complete correct clause fragments that did not necessarily require, for example, a verb in the clause. Example 44 illustrates a complete correct clause fragment:

Ex. 44 (What do you see here?)

Apple, bread. (B1b2)

In the example above, the pupil answered to the question by naming things he saw on the table in the picture. Since it was a correct answer to the question, it was regarded as a correct clause fragment. This was a typical complete correct clause fragment group B1 produced. Group B3 produced complete clause fragments that were more clause-like. Example 45 illustrates a typical complete clause fragment that group B3 produced:

Ex. 45 (What is mom doing?)

Doing food. (B3b3)

Example 45 is a complete clause fragment as it answers to the question. However, it cannot be considered as a clause because it is lacking a finite verb and a noun “mom” or “she” at the beginning of the clause fragment.

Group B produced more complete correct clause fragments (33, 1 %) than incorrect clause fragments (7, 59 %). The results were even between groups B1 and B3. The

percentages of incomplete and incorrect clauses and clause fragments remained small. This might be caused by the fact that the pupils in group B1 stayed silent if they were not sure about the answer. Therefore they mainly produced complete correct clause fragments. In addition, group B3 was able to produce complete clauses which were in most cases correct, and, therefore, they did not produce many incorrect or incomplete clauses or clause fragments.

The percentage of interjections was marginal (0, 63 %). This is cause by the fact that the test situation did not favor the production of interjections. Example 46 illustrates a typical interjection that occurred in the material produced by group B:

Ex. 46 (What is the little cat saying?)

"Hi!" (B3b1)

Group B3 produced all the combination MS's (3, 34 %). This means that the pupils in group B3 were able to produce more than one clause unit in one MS. However, seven- and nine-year-old pupils' SL competence is not at the level where they would produce complex clauses, and, therefore, the percentage of combination MS's remained small. Example 47 illustrates a combination MS:

Ex. 47 (Why is he there?)

The bread flies off the, what's the…I don't know what this is. (B3b3)

The example above is a combination MS that consists of two incomplete clauses (The bread flies off the/ what's the…) and one complete correct clause (I don't know what this is).

Group B produced 79 clause macrosyntagms out of the total number of 145 MS. The pupils in group B3 produced most of the clauses. The pupils in group B1 produced only a few clauses. This indicates that the pupils who had started acquiring English a half year ago had not yet achieved the competence in the SL to produce clauses. In Table 9 the clause MS's produced by group B are presented.

Table 9 Clause Macrosyntagms in Group B

Production of clauses	B group
Total number of clause MS	79
Incomplete clauses	7, 55 %
Complete correct clauses	77, 21 %
Complete incorrect clauses	15, 18 %

Group B produced mostly complete correct clauses (77, 21 %). There were significantly fewer incomplete (7, 55%) and complete incorrect clauses (15, 18 %) than complete correct ones. The clauses varied from very short ones to long ones. Example 48 is a short complete correct clause:

Ex. 48 (What happens if you leave a fridge door open for a long time?)

They smell. (B3b2)

Example 48 illustrates the creativeness in the use of the English language as the pupils in group B3 came up with answers without naming things directly in the picture. Example 49 illustrates a long clause which is a combination MS that consists of 4 complete correct clauses linked with the word “and”:

Ex. 49 (What happens in the picture?)

Bread flies in the air and the mother is doing breakfast and the egg is on the floor and spoon is on the table. (B1B1)

Even the longest clauses were not that long because the pupils’ competence in English was not advanced enough to produce complex clauses. This is natural because the children’s language skills are still developing. The most common type of a long complete clause was an answer to the question presented above.

Incomplete clauses occurred in cases where a pupil had left out an important clause constituent at the end of the clause. Example 50 illustrates such an incomplete clause:

Ex. 50 Because this is so… (B3b1)

In the example above, the pupil had forgotten a word he was looking for and, thus, was not able to finish the clause. The fact that he started the utterance without knowing how to end it reflects the confidence the pupils in group B3 had in the test situation.

Complete incorrect clauses are divided into three types according to the errors which may consist of an effort to complete a complete clause, syntactic correction or leaving out a word at the beginning or in the middle of a clause. Group B3 produced only one error type as they had nine complete clauses that were syntactically incorrect. Example 51 illustrates such a clause:

Ex. 51 (What happens if you leave a fridge door open for a long time?)
Everyone, everything, what is it… can go bad. (B3b3)

In the example above, the pupil made a syntactic correction. He started the clause with a word “everyone” which refers to persons but then changed it into “everything” which refers to things. In this case he is referring to food that would go bad in the refrigerator if the refrigerator’s door is left open.

The pupils in group B1 produced three complete incorrect clauses. They were same error type which was leaving out a word from the beginning or the middle of a clause. Example 52 illustrates such an incorrect clause:

Ex. 52 (Do you see a calendar in the picture?)
Look here is… March. (B1b1)

The pupil had left out a word in the middle of the clause and that is why it was considered a complete incorrect clause. It is difficult to understand the idea of what the pupil was trying to explain with this clause.

Altogether, 62 clause fragments were produced by group B. The number of clause fragments was smaller than the number of clauses. The reason for this was the fact that group B3 produced almost all the clauses while group B1 produced mostly clause fragments. However, since group B3 produced more MS's than group B1, they produced about as many clause fragments as group B1 did. Majority of the clause fragments were complete correct clause fragments (77, 42 %). There were 11 complete incorrect clause fragments (17, 74 %) and 3 incomplete clause fragments (4, 84 %). This can be seen in Table 10:

Table 10 Clause Fragment Macrosyntagms in Group B

Production of clause fragments	B group
Total number of clause fragments	62
Incomplete clauses fragments	4, 84 %
Complete correct clauses fragments	77, 42 %
Complete incorrect clause fragments	17, 74 %

The clause fragments found in the material produced by group B consisted mostly of complete correct clause fragments. However, quarter of clause fragments was incomplete or incorrect. Both groups produced about the same number of incomplete or incorrect clause fragments. The table illustrates that group B produced grammatically quite correct speech. However, there were some errors (22, 58 %) and, therefore, their speech was not completely fluent. Moreover, group B hesitated in their speech and there were pauses.

A complete clause fragment is seen as correctly formed if it answers to a question asked. For example, it can be as short as one word as seen in Example 53:

Ex. 53 (What else do you see?)

Cat. (B1g4)

In Example 53, one word is enough to answer the question asked. Since there are cats in the picture, the answer is considered correct and the MS is regarded as a complete correct clause fragment. There were also many complete clause fragments that were list-like as seen in Example 54:

Ex. 54 (What is there on the table?)

Eggs, salt and pepper, cups, some bacon and bread. (B3b3)

Example 54 illustrates the typical listing the pupils did when answering the question above. It is a correct answer to the question as all the things mentioned appeared on the table in the picture. By listing things without forming a clause characterizes well spoken language as the speaker avoids unnecessary repetition.

An incomplete clause fragment is defined to be a fragment which lacks the semantic or syntactic connection to the text. In the present study, there were cases among the first graders in group B that they did not understand the question asked and gave an incorrect answer. There were also many cases where the pupils in group B1 stayed silent and no answer was received. Example 55 illustrates an incomplete clause fragment:

Ex. 55 (What happens for the bread?)

Pencil. (B1g1)

In Example 55, the answer is irrelevant and, therefore, semantically incorrect. Thus, the clause fragment is incomplete as it does not answer to the question. The pupil obviously did not understand the question and named a thing randomly in the picture.

Group B had only one error type in the incorrect clause fragments they produced. The error was leaving out a syntactically important clause constituent at the beginning or in the middle of a clause as seen in Example 56:

Ex. 56 (Why is Mr. Pig behind the window?)

He looking it's not crash. (B3b1)

In the example above, there is a syntactically important clause constituent missing in the middle of the clause fragment which makes it hard to understand what the pupil tried to explain with this.

The most common tense group B used was the present. The pupils had most correctly formed clauses in the present tense. There were some clauses that were expressed in the past tense correctly. Example 57 illustrates two complete correct clauses that were expressed using the present tense:

Ex. 57 (Why is Mr. Pig behind the window?)

I know! He follows his flying hat. (B3b3)

Group B did most errors in the present tense when they needed to express the verb form in the third person as seen in Example 58:

Ex. 58 (Why is Mr. Pig behind the window?)

The pig play somebody. (B3b1)

The example above illustrates the most common error in the clauses that were expressed using the present tense. However, the pupils who used the present progressive tense formed mostly correct clauses when using the present tense.

Ex. 59 (Why is Mr. Pig behind the window?)

Because his hat is flying away. (B3b2)

Example 59 illustrates a complete correct clause that is expressed in the present progressive tense. Since the question required an explanation what had been happening, this particular tense was the most suitable one to use.

There were only a few clauses that were expressed using the past tense. Moreover, no future tense was used. Example 60 illustrates a complete correct clause that is expressed in the past tense:

Ex. 60 (Why is there an egg shell on the floor?)

Mommy cat dropped it or something. (B3b3)

In the example above, the pupil explained why the egg shell was on the floor in the picture. The most suitable tense was the past one as something had already happened. The question asked above also required the use of imagination as there was no direct answer what had happened in the picture.

There were only few interjections (1, 38 %) of the total number of MS's produced by group B. The test situation did not favor the production of interjections and that is why the percentage remained small. All the interjections produced by group B were answers to the following question:

Ex. 61 (What is the little cat saying?)

"Hello!" (B3g1)

When describing what the cat in the picture was saying, the pupils were able to use an interjection. Example 61 is a typical interjection that occurred in the material produced by group B.

The percentage of combination macrosyntagms was 3, 34 %. Since the spoken text the pupils produced was mostly independent clauses that were usually one clause unit long answers to the questions, there were not so many combination MS's in the material. Example 62 illustrates a combination MS that consists of two clauses:

Ex. 62 (What is there on the table?)

There is cup and salt and the egg to eat and he want to eat. (B3g1)

There are two MS's embedded in a combination macrosyntagm. The first clause: "There is cup and salt and the egg to eat" is a complete correct clause. The second clause: "And he want to eat" is a complete incorrect clause as there is a syntactic error in the clause. Together these two clauses form a larger unit together which is a combination MS. The word "and" was the most common linking word between different clause units.

The number of correct complete clauses that group B produced was 61 while the number of correct complete clause fragments was 38. Altogether 99 MS's were correct out of 145 MS's. There were 32 macrosyntagms that were incomplete or incorrect. This indicates that group B had an error in every fourth clause or clause fragment. Group B3 produced most of the clauses while groups B1 and B3 produced about the same number of clause fragments. This indicates that all the pupils in group B were used to hearing English and in most parts understood the questions asked. Usually the comprehension of the SL comes before the ability to produce speech in the SL, and, therefore, even first graders who had started acquiring English about a half year earlier understood most of the questions. The speech of group B was not completely fluent as they hesitated occasionally in their speech and the pronunciation was not quite native-like.

Group B3 was more enthusiastic and excited about the given task than group B1. Group B3 made some comments and seemed interested in discussing the picture. Some of the pupils in group B1 were nervous and it took a long time for them to come up with something to say. Since they were rather nervous they could not relax and discuss the picture with confidence. If they were not sure about the answer, they stayed silent, and, therefore, there were many questions that did not receive an answer.

4.3 Comparison of Findings

Group A produced more macrosyntagms than group B. However, groups A1, A3 and B3 produced about the same number of MS's per pupil, whereas group B1 produced substantially fewer MS's per pupil as seen in Table 11:

Table 11 Production of Macrosyntagms in Groups A and B

Production of macrosyntams	**Group A**	**Group B**
Production of the total number of MS	69 %	31 %
Average number of MS/ pupil	21	14, 5
Average number of MS/ First graders	20, 4	10
Average number of MS/ Third graders	22, 5	21

The total number of macrosyntagms produced was 464, and a clear majority of them, 319 (69 %) were produced by the pupils with English Playschool background (group A) and one third (31 %) by those who had started to learn English in the first grade (group B). In group A the average number of macrosyntagms produced per pupil was 21 while in group B it was 14, 5. The difference between the two groups was not so great. However, the findings are compared at the grade level, there is a substantial difference among the first graders. Group A1 produced more than twice the number of macrosyntagms of group B1, whereas groups A3 and B3 were more even and produced 22, 5 MS and 21 MS per pupil. The results by the first graders were what they were expected to be but the even results of the third graders were surprising. I expected to see a greater difference between groups A3 and B3 because the first group had had at least one year lead learning English before they started school. In the third grade, the difference between groups A and B has evened out. This indicates that over the years the competence in the English language will even out among the pupils.

In group A the highest number of macrosyntagms per one pupil was 29 (A3g1) and the lowest number was 7 (A1g3). The similar numbers in group B were 28 macrosyntagms (B3g1) versus 4 (B1g3 & B1b2). There was no remarkable difference between boys and girls in any of the groups. Gender does not appear to be significant for how productive a pupil is orally in the English language. Talking comes more naturally to all as the method of teaching in the Enkki-class is CLIL. Therefore, speaking is also more natural for the pupils, and both groups did well considering their level. Even those who had learned English only fall semester were able to express themselves and produce macrosyntagms.

The total number of the clauses was 237 in group A and in group B 79. It means that from the total number of clause MS's 74 % were produced by group A and 56 % by group B. There is a difference in the total number of clause macrosyntagms as group A produced more clause MS's than group B. Moreover, group A produced 89 % complete correct clauses and only 11 % incomplete and incorrect clauses while group B produced 77 % complete correct clauses and 23 % incomplete and incorrect clauses. Not only did group A produce more macrosyntagms than group B, but they also produced more complete correct clauses. However, when analyzing the results at the grade level, the groups were very similar. Group B1 was the least productive group that had least number of complete correct clauses. That is why the result of group B was worse than that of group A. Groups A1, A3 and B3 were in fact very similar in productivity and they produced approximately the same number of complete correct clauses.

In the production of clause fragment, group B was more productive (43 %) than group A (20 %). The pupils in group B produced 6, 3 clause fragments per pupil while the same number in group A was 4, 3 per pupil. This indicates that group A answered to the questions mostly with complete clauses while group B did it with a word or two.

The number of interjections and combined macrosyntagms was similar in both groups. Considering the fact that the pupils were between seven- and nine-years-old, it is understandable that they did not produce complex clauses but mostly independent main clauses. In the cases in which combination macrosyntagms occurred, the conjunction

“and” was the most common word to link different MS units. The test situation did not prompt the pupils to produce interjections and, therefore, the number of interjections remained small.

The pupils in group A used four different tenses in the clauses they produced, while the pupils in group B used only two. The tenses that occurred in the material produced by group A were the future, present, past and perfect tense. Group B produced only present and past tense clauses. Both groups produced the majority of the complete correct clauses in the present tense. Although both groups produced clauses in the past tense, there were differences in their use of the auxiliary verb “do”. Group A used the verb “do” as an auxiliary verb to express the past tense, while group B expressed the past tense directly with a main verb.

Groups A1, A3 and B3 were more enthusiastic and excited about the given task than group B1. Some of the pupils in group B1 were nervous, and it took a long time for them to come up with something to say. Groups A1, A3 and B3 did not need much time to come up with what to say. However, group A was more fluent in their speech than group B.

It is important to note that the pupils with English playschool background have stayed together in the same group for at least a year, while the children with no English playschool background did not know their classmates until they started the first grade. Thus, the class environment for the group A1 is more familiar, which could affect on them being more relaxed and open in their production of speech and in their behavior in the classroom in general. This could be noticed in the test situation as the pupils from group A1 were relaxed and confident, while the pupils from group B1 were reserved and rather nervous. Among the third graders (groups A3 and B3) there was no great difference in the pupils’ behavior as they had been together already for at least two and a half years.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the study was re-testing the hypothesis that is the younger one starts acquiring a second language the better; the pupils with English playschool background are more skilled orally in English language than the pupils with no English playschool background in the Enkki-class. The hypothesis is based on an assumption that the pupils (group A), who have been exposed to the English language at the English playschool several hours a day for at least a year, are more familiar with English and therefore more skilled in spoken English than the pupils (group B) who have started learning English in the first grade at school. The pupils with English playschool background have started acquiring English as a second language at least one year earlier before the beginning of school, which gives them an advantage lead as several studies (Harley 1986; Lenneberg 1976 and Towell & Hawkins 1994) suggest that it is better to start acquiring a second language before the school age in order to gain a native-like fluency as well as to make few, if any, grammatical errors in the SL. All in all, 15 pupils were tested from the total of 16 first graders and 10 pupils from the total of 14 third graders. In the test situation the pupils were shown a picture that they were asked to describe. The tests were recorded for accuracy, and the results were compared between the pupils from the English playschool with those of no English playschool background using Loman & Jörgensen´s (1971) analysis of macrosyntagms which is a method developed for analyzing spoken language. The focus of the study was on the productiveness of the pupils as well as on the quality of the clauses they produced. The number of macrosyntagms groups A and B produced were compared and the macrosyntagms were identified as clauses, clause fragments, combination macrosyntagms and interjections. Moreover, the macrosyntagms were analyzed further to find out how many of them were correct, incorrect or incomplete.

The speech of the pupils in group A was closer to native-like fluency than the pupils' in group B. This supports findings from earlier studies that the crucial period of language acquisition is before the school age. Although both groups had learned most of the words and expressions through hearing them, it was more natural for the pupils in group

A to pronounce them. Moreover, their speech was fluent, while the pupils in group B hesitated occasionally in their speech.

Group A made fewer errors than group B. This shows that the major factor determining the degree of success in second language acquisition is the age at which the learner is first constantly exposed to a SL; the children who have started to acquire the second language before the age of seven make as few errors as native speakers do (Towell & Hawkins 1994: 14-15). Group A had been constantly exposed to the English language at least a year before the age of seven and their speech was grammatically as well as idiomatically close to the native-like way of speaking English. On the basis of the findings, concerning native-like fluency and grammatical correctness, it appears that the starting age in the acquisition of a second language does matter.

Group A produced more macrosyntagms than group B. However, the difference between the two groups was not significant. Groups A1, A3 and B3 were equal in the production of macrosyntagms, while group B1, the pupils who had only started learning the SL some half a year previously, produced clearly fewer macrosyntagms. Moreover, group B1 produced mostly clause fragments, which means that they were not able to produce many clauses. However, the average number of macrosyntamgs in group B was close to the average number produced by group A. This indicates that over the years the differences in production of the second language have evened out between the two groups as the pupils, who had only started acquiring the SL in the first grade, had achieved the same competence level of production in the SL as the pupils, who had attended the English playschool. However, group A is more likely to maintain better native-like pronunciation and fluency in their speech.

The limitation of the present study was the fact that only spoken skills were tested. If the written and reading skills of the English language had also been tested, the pupils might have been more equal as all the pupils start learning to read and write in English in the first grade. However, the first graders learn to read and write in English after they have first learned to read and write in Finnish. This means that the reading and writing practices in the SL begin in the spring term. In this case the tests were conducted before

the reading and writing teaching started and, therefore, it was not even possible to test the first graders' writing and reading skills of English.

The study could be continued by testing the same groups after one year. Then all the pupils would have learned to read and write in English offering an opportunity to test every aspect of the SL proficiency. One could, for example, execute a study where oral, reading and writing skills would be tested. It would be interesting to see how the results would divide and how the pupils would have progressed in English acquisition. Moreover, it would be also interesting to study at what age the difference in SL acquisition begins to get smaller.

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APPENDIX 1