“WE REALLY HAD A GREAT WEEK TOGETHER, DIDN’T WE?”: **The Development of Questions in Texts Written by Adult Learners of English as a Second Language**

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Toisen kielen kehityksen tasoja on tutkittu jo vuosikymmenien ajan ja kysymyslauseet ovat olleet yksi alan keskeisimpiä tutkimuskohteita. Pienemannin, Johnstonin ja Brindleyn vuonna 1988 esittelemä kysymyslauseiden kuusiportainen kategorisointi niiden kehitystason mukaisesti on vaikuttanut todella suuresti alalla tehtyyn tutkimukseen aina tähän päivään saakka. Myöhemmissä tutkimuksissa, esimerkiksi Lightbown ja Spada (1993), on selvitetty että uusien tasojen oppiminen tapahtuu järjestelmällisesti ja että kielen oppija ei voi hypätä minkään kehitystason yli. Uusi kehitystaso ei myöskään korvaa aiempia tasoja vaan liittyy niiden jatkeeksi.

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli jatkaa kysymyslauseiden kehitystasojen tutkimusperinnettä tutkimalla aikuisten englanninkielen oppijoiden muodostamia kysymyslauseita Yleiset Kielitutkinnot – materiaalista. Tutkimuksen aineisto koostui kolmen eri kirjoitustehtävän teksteistä kolmelta eri vaativuustasolta. Yleisten Kielitutkintojen materiaali on arvioitu kuusiportaisen järjestelmän avulla ja tässä tutkimuksessa tutkittiin tasoja kaksi, kolme ja neljä (vastaa EVK tasoja A2-B2). Kehitystasojen lisäksi tutkimuksessa tarkasteltiin myös kysymyslauseiden rakenteita.

Tutkimuksessa vastattiin seuraaviin kysymyksiin: 1) Mitkä ovat aikuisten A2-B2-tasoisten englanti toisena kielenä kielenkäyttäjien tyypillisimmät kehitystasot koskien kysymyslauseita kirjallisissa töissä? 2) Mitkä ovat näiden kysymyslauseiden rakenteet? Kysymyksiin vastattiin poimimalla valituista 105 tekstistä kaikki 261 kysymyslausetta ja jaottelemalla ne sekä niiden kehitystasojen mukaisesti hyödyntäen Pienemann et al (1988) luomaa kategorisointia että kieliopillisten rakenteiden mukaisesti.

Tutkimuksessa selvisi, että suurin osa kysymyksistä sijoittui kehitystasoille kolme ja neljä. Kehittyneemmillä kielenkäyttäjillä hajonta oli laajempaa. Verratessa tuloksia koululaisilla suoritettuun samankaltaiseen tutkimukseen (Roiha 2008) ne olivat todella samansuuntaiset. Rakenteista yleisimpiä olivat kyllä/ei-kysymykset ja *wh*-alkuiset kysymykset. Tutkimus antoi suuntaviivoja aikuisten kielenkäyttäjien tuottamista kysymyslauseista, mutta lisätutkimuksia kaivattaisiin laajemmalla aineistolla.

Asiasanat – Keywords
CEFR, writing in a second language, developmental stages

Säilytyspaikka – Depository
Kielten laitos

Muita tietoja – Additional information

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1 INTRODUCTION

One of the fundamental questions concerning language research has been *How does one learn a new language?* This question has been widely addressed by academics for many decades especially in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) and language development. Studies have been conducted in various languages, but due to its popularity and lingua franca status in our western culture, English has been among the most researched languages. One of the results of these studies has been that all language learners learning English go through a series of developmental stages that are similar regardless of age, background or other qualities of the learners (Dulay et al. 1982, Pienemann et al. 1988, Lightbown and Spada 1993).

After the first recognition of these developmental stages in second language acquisition in the early 1970s, the subject of language development has gained growing academic interest and scrutiny. The stages were studied and tested by looking into various grammatical features that were present in all of the stages, and interrogatives were among the first features researched in these studies (Ellis 1994: 15-16). Among the many academics, Manfred Pienemann has been credited for being one of the most influential names in the field and for formulating the development stages in English question development that remain in academic use in studies conducted even today.

Many features of the acquisition of English language by English as a second language learners have been studied in Finland, however, the order of acquisition and the development of writing have for one reason or another not been one of them. According to the Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland SUKOL (2011), English remains the most studied language in Finland: in 2009 more than 90 per cent of pupils in schools all around Finland chose English as their primary second language. Taken into account the enormous popularity of English in Finland, I believe that there is a definite academic need for research concerning the acquisition order of English. Furthermore, in the vast field of second language acquisition there have been a variety of studies conducted on the subject of language acquisition in oral communication, however, written communication is yet to receive similar academic interest. In addition to this, in a great deal of studies in the field the focus has been on children of different ages and the studies have been mainly conducted in schools. Thus there appears to be a definite gap in the research in the field of written communication concerning adult learners of English.

The purpose of this study was to answer this academic need and venture into this less researched fields of written communication of adult learners of English as a second language. This was done by following the footsteps of studies conducted mainly abroad in the field of language development, especially concerning developmental stages, with the attempt to gain insight on how questions in English are learned by Finnish adult English as a second language -learners. In the present study the language competence of these language learners was studied concerning the use of questions in written assignments in English from the National Certificate of Language Proficiency (NC) examination material. The texts had already been graded on a scale similar to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), which also has had a major influence on the Finnish education system along with its National Curricula. The questions featured in these texts were categorized according to the developmental stages formed by Pienemann et al. (1988) and according to their structure in order to gain knowledge of the linguistic capabilities of the participants from three different grade levels.

In addition to answering to an academic need, another motivation for the present study was that by gaining knowledge about Finnish adult learners of English concerning the stages of development in the formation of questions, it would not only benefit those who teach adults but also those who teach children. By knowing possible problems in the language use of adult learners of English, teachers may wish to give more emphasis on these areas knowing that for some they are still problematic even in adult age. In addition to this, gaining more knowledge about the possible similarities and differences in second language development between children and adults can also shed new light in the process of language development itself.

The outline of the present study will be the following. I will begin the second chapter by briefly introducing the key terms of the present study and some of the basic characteristics of questions in general. After this I will move into presenting the different ways to categorize the structures of questions, including the functions of questions in relation to them, and present the categorization used in the present study. Near the end of the chapter I will present developmental stages of questions as defined by Pienemann et al. (1988) used in the present study and some of the most important previous studies conducted on questions and question development in SLA. In the third chapter I will briefly introduce the Cefling project and the National Certificate of Language Proficiency (NC) examinations and how they are connected to the present

study. In the same chapter I will also define my research questions and the methods I have used in the analysis, and present in more detail the data from the NC material that was used in this study. The fourth chapter will consist of the results of the study, organized and divided according to previously defined two research questions. In the fifth chapter I will then discuss these results and also compare them to previous studies in the field. In the final chapter I will present the conclusions that can be drawn from this study and give suggestions to further studies.

2 USE OF QUESTIONS IN ENGLISH

I will begin this chapter by defining the noun *question* and introducing the key terms of the present study. Then I will introduce the main characteristics of questions and how they are used in second language learning in general. After this I will move on to exploring in more detail the structures of questions in the English language followed by a closer look at the development of the developmental stages and how they are connected to and used in the present study. Finally near the end of the chapter I will take a look at the previous studies conducted in the field and show why the present study is a significant and a needed addition to the field.

Before going on to presenting the use of questions in second language learning, it is important first to define what is meant by them. The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language (2004) defines the noun 'question' as follows: 1) An interrogative sentence calling for an answer; an inquiry. 2) A subject of inquiry or debate; a matter to be decided; a point at issue; problem. 3) A subject of dispute; a controversy; difference: A *question* rose about it. 4) A proposition under discussion in a deliberative assembly. 5) Objection raised or entertained; doubt: a statement accepted without *question*. 6) Interrogation; the act of asking or inquiring.

In the present study the word *question* is used to refer to the previously mentioned first definition of the noun question. In addition to this, in the present study a phrase bearing the structure of a question is considered as a question despite the fact that it may serve other functions than a mere inquiry. The structures and possible other functions of questions are discussed in more detail in chapters 2.3 and 2.4.

Next I will proceed into presenting the key terms of the present study.

2.1 Key terms

In this subchapter I will briefly go through the key terms of the present study, some of which are clarified in more detail later. The key terms are second language acquisition, language development, learner language, interlanguage, and developmental stages.

The term **second language acquisition (SLA)** is far from being exact and clear. Ellis (1994: 15) states that "second language acquisition is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon and it is not surprising that it has come to mean other things to other people." Griffiths (2008: 4) also distinguishes this complexity of the term and how it is not always clear when to speak of a second language or a foreign language, and also presents various other terms that can be used to refer the matter such as non-native, non-primary, non-English-speaking-background, additional, additive, and target language. However, since the focus of the present study is not in SLA, I will not go through these various terms nor take a stand in the on-going dispute of the correct term. Also for the purposes of the present study it is irrelevant whether the language acquisition has occurred in a naturalistic or an instructional setting. Due to its popularity I have chosen to use the term second language acquisition synonymously with terms such as second language learning (SLL) and it is used to refer to the linguistic competence of a learner in a language that plays an institutional and social role in the community; in this case English in the Finnish society.

The term **language development** is an umbrella term that includes a number of terms related to learning a language such as ESL, EFL, SLA, ESOL, L1, and L2. It is commonly used to refer to the development of a language that does not differentiate between learning taken place by means of conscious study and in a naturalistic environment, and it can refer to all types of language: first language, second language, foreign language, and so on. The present study falls under the category of language development since, as mentioned before, it does not distinguish between the learning or acquisition of English and whether for the language learner it is in fact a second or a foreign language. (Griffiths 2008: 4-5)

According to Ellis (1994: 17-18) second language acquisition can be divided further into four areas: learner language, learner-external factors, learner-internal mechanisms and individual learner differences. Out of these four areas, the present study focuses on the area of **learner language**. Learner language provides information on how the acquisition of language takes place and can be divided further into four

areas: errors, acquisition orders and development sequences, variability, and pragmatic features. Out of these four areas, the present study will focus on acquisition order and development sequences. (ibid.)

The term **interlanguage** is closely entwined with second language acquisition and was coined by Larry Selinker in 1972. It is used to refer to a partly separate language system that bears elements both from the language that is being learned (L2) and from the native language of the learner (L1). The errors made by the learner are considered natural attempts to learn the structure of the target language instead of mere attempts to transfer old patterns from their native language to the new language. In the present study interlanguage can be used to explain some of the incorrect question structures used by the participants, however, since the focus of the study is not in errors this will only be mentioned briefly. (VanPatten and Benati 2010: 100)

Finally, the term **developmental stages** refer to certain steps that all language learners have to go through in order to learn a new language. They are one of the central key terms of the present study and will be clarified more thoroughly in chapter 2.5. The term developmental stage was first used in first language acquisition, but in the present thesis the term is used to refer to the developmental stages of questions specifically in second language acquisition. (VanPatten et al. 2010: 80)

Now that I have briefly introduced the key terms of the present study, in the next subchapter I will move on to present some of the basic characteristics of questions in English.

2.2 Characteristics of questions

In this subchapter I will shortly present some of the basic characteristics and the formation of questions from the English grammar. In the English language there are three major types of main clauses and they are declarative, imperative and interrogative. Declarative clauses are the most usual form of clauses and they generally used to make statements. Declarative clauses are identified having a tensed predicator and a tensed subject. *Jim will post these letters* and *There is a red house* are examples of declarative clauses. Imperative clauses are used to give orders and commands. The imperative clause is identified by the omission of a subject and having a tenseless predicator. The imperative can be thought to be derived from the declarative by omitting the subject *you*

and the verb phrase *will* or *must*. Thus the declarative clauses *you must listen to me* and *you will run to the shop* are transformed to the imperative clauses *listen to me* and *run to the shop*. (Leech et al. 2006: 90-92)

Interrogative clauses are mainly used in questions, but can also be used for example in indicating politeness. The interrogative clause is identified by having both a tensed predicator and a tensed subject. The interrogative clauses can be divided into two types: the yes/no -interrogative and the *wh*-interrogative. The yes/no -interrogative is used to ask for a yes/no -answer and it contains a tensed operator that carries the contrast between the negative and the positive affirmation. The yes/no -interrogative is formed by placing the operator *have* before the subject in the clause eg, *Have you seen the latest blockbuster?* If the declarative clause does not have an operator, an auxiliary *do* is used with the corresponding interrogative and followed by an infinitive. Thus the declarative clause *he squeezed her hand* is transformed to the interrogative clause *did he squeeze her hand?* Also in the interrogative clause the verb phrase is split into two parts when the phrase *he is always making things difficult* is transformed into the interrogative clause *Is he really making things so difficult?* (ibid.)

In the *wh*-interrogative the clause is used to inquire about one of the clause elements: subject, object, complement or adverb or in some cases part of the phrase. This is done by using a *wh*-word. There are three types of *wh*-words: *wh*-determiners (what, which and whose), *wh*-pronouns (who, whom, whose, which and what) and *wh*-adverbs (where, when, why and how, despite the spelling of the latter). In the *wh*-interrogative the operator *do* is normally placed before the subject and the *wh*-word before the operator. *What did she say? Where has she hidden it? Whose book was she reading? How long will she be staying?* In the case where the *wh*-word is the subject of the clause, the dummy operator *do* is unnecessary and the word order is kept similar to declarative clause. *Who ate that sandwich? Which window was broken?* (ibid.)

Now that I have briefly presented the basic characteristics of questions and how they are formed in English, I will move on to explore in more detail the different types and structures of question in the following subchapter.

2.3 Structures of questions

In this subchapter I will go through some of the different ways to categorize the structures of questions in English and how they would fit into the purposes of the present study. Asking and answering questions is one of the most prevalent and readily identifiable features of talk to the extent that it is difficult even to imagine a conversation without questions and responses. While from the surface questions appear to be a straightforward feature of communication, deeper analysis at functional, structural and textual levels show that they are in fact a very complex and multifaceted phenomenon. Hawkins and Power (1999: 235) go as far as declaring that "to ask a question is to apply one of the most powerful tools in communication". Questions can take several forms, be one of a number of possible types and serve a range of intended purposes. Questions can also be formed non-verbally and the act of asking a question can be signalled with tone pitch or by facial expressions such as raising eyebrows, however, in this chapter I will focus only on questions formed in writing. The reason for this is that the present study focuses on written language where there are no non-verbal communication cues available.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are two main types of interrogative structures in English: the yes/no -interrogative (polar) and the *wh*-interrogative (non-polar) (Downing and Locke 2006: 180). Beyond this broad distinction shared by many researchers, there is no one commonly agreed typology according to which types of questions could be neatly categorized. There appears to exist as many methods to categorize the different types of questions as there are sources that aim to do so and it is not always clear whether the types of questions are divided according to their structure or according to their function. Next, I will present some of categorizations that have been used to define the different types of questions.

Dickson and Hargie (2006: 122) state that questions can be divided blatantly to be interrogative (*Where did you leave the key?*), declarative (*You appreciate what this will mean?*) or imperative (*Tell me more?*). Beyond this division among the most common subtypes of questions are: open questions, closed questions, *wh*-questions, leading questions, tag questions, process questions, multiple questions and probing questions (ibid. 127). These subtypes are, however, far from being clear and equal in the hierarchy of the subtypes. Dickson and Hargie (2006: 127) go on explaining that the variation of syntax of a question can have a significant effect on the answer. It can

reduce the choices available for response from a range of possibilities, it can limit the length of the response, it can lead the respondent to make a certain reply more likely and it can impose a particular set of underlying presuppositions for embedding the response (Matoesian 1993, Dickson and Hargie 2006: 127). The identification of open and closed questions concerns only the first two of the previously mentioned effects. An open question has the tendency of being unrestricting and leaving the respondent free to answer the question in various possible ways and at various lengths. In contrast, a closed question has the tendency to restrict the respondent to a limited range of options possibly presented in the question itself.

A closed question can be divided further into three subtypes: a yes/no -question (often used by lawyers in courtrooms), a selection question (also referred to as a disjunctive, either/or, alternative, or forced-choice question) and an identification question. The yes/no -question is the most basic type of question and can be adequately responded with a simple *yes* or *no* e.g. *Is this your car?* and *Did it rain yesterday?* In a selective question the respondent is presented with at least two alternative responses to choose from e.g. *Do you want to go there day or tomorrow?* and *Should we go by car or by train?* In the case of the identification question the response is more open-ended and the list of the possible answers is leaved unspecified in the question itself. In this case the respondent can be for example requested to identify a person (*Who did you meet last night?*), a place (*Where were you born?*), a date (*When is your sister coming to visit?*), or an event (*What party are you going to?*). (Dickson and Hargie 2006: 127-128)

An open question can be divided between broad and narrow *wh*-questions. The narrow *wh*-questions seek specific and limited information (and can be regarded as closed identification-type questions) whereas broad *wh*-questions request more general information (ibid. 128-129). These questions afford the respondent more control over the interaction in contrast to the closed question where close control of the interaction is kept by the questioner (ibid. 128-129). The list of *wh*-words connected to the *wh*-questions is identical to the *wh*-words presented by Leech et al. (2006: 90-92).

Leading questions can be divided into four types: conversational leads, simple leads, implication leads and subtle leads (Dickson & Hargie 2006: 132-135). Conversational leads are mainly used in everyday conversations to convey information indirectly and lead the interaction to a certain way and despite grammatically being questions they do not always anticipate a response e.g. *Have you ever seen a more beautiful morning?* and *Wasn't the storm terrifying?* (ibid. 133). One of the most

common simple leads are tag questions and they are used to favour a particular response, express politeness, invite conversational participation and vary the intensity of a speech act e.g. *You do smoke, don't you?* and *That's your brother, isn't it?* The formation of tag questions is explained in more detail in the following subchapter. Other simple leads include negative questions (including the word *not*) and double-negative questions (including the word *not* twice). Implication leads also referred to as complex leading questions are commonly used in arguments by presenting a choice of following the lead or implicitly accepting the embedded negative implication within the question e.g. *Can I take it that, like all other civilised people, you oppose capital punishment?* Subtle leads, also referred to as directional questions, introduce bias into the question in the framing of the question or in the forming of the words making it less obvious. Studies have shown (Harris 1973) that asking *How long was the movie?* instead of *How short was the movie?* will provide longer estimations for the running time of the movie. (Dickson and Hargie 2006: 132-135)

Questions can also be divided according to their cognitive demands as recall questions and process questions. Recall questions, also referred to as lower-order cognitive questions, involve recalling previously given information and do not require higher mental processing e.g. *What is the capital of Finland?* Process questions, on the other hand, do require higher mental processing capabilities by analysing, synthesising or evaluating known information to arrive at an interpretation or opinion e.g. *What would Finland be like today had it not joined the European Union in 1995?* (Dickson and Hargie 2006: 135-136)

Probing questions, also referred to as secondary questions, are often follow-up questions to an initial or primary in order to access more in depth information in a certain area of interest. Probing questions can be further divided according to the purposes they serve and include clarification or informational probes (e.g. *Could you tell me again what happened after you left the building?*), justification probes (*Why did you take the car?*), relevance probes (*How does that fit into our previous conversations concerning the matter at hand?*), exemplification probes (*What was the round item you were carrying in your purse at that time?*), extension probes (*And what happened next?*), accuracy probes (*So you saw no one leave the building?*), restatement probes (*And you are sure you saw no one there?*), echo probes (*So in your words it was too dark to see?*), consensus probes (*So at this moment we can all assume that you were at*

the scene of the crime?), and non-verbal probes (e.g. raising eyebrows). (Dickson and Hargie 2006: 136-137)

In addition to the previously mentioned types of questions, two more types of questions can be identified: rhetorical questions and multiple questions. Rhetorical questions, similar to conversational leads, are not genuine requests for information but rather questions intended to be answered by the questioners themselves or even not to be answered at all e.g. *Is this the road we wish to choose in the future?* Multiple questions involve two or more questions phrased as one and often comprising of an open question followed by a closed question narrowing the focus e.g. *How is your wife? Still making fabulous Italian dishes?* (ibid. 138)

The question categories provided by Dickson and Hargie (2006) can be thus stated as follows. A question can be from the category of closed questions (that includes three subtypes: yes/no -question, selection question and identification question), open questions (that include both broad and narrow questions), leading questions (that includes the four subtypes of conversational leads, simple leads, implication leads, and subtle leads), or probing questions (including the subtypes of clarification probes, justification probes, relevance probes, exemplification probes, extension probes, accuracy probes, restatement probes, echo probes, consensus probes, and non-verbal probes). In addition to these categories a question can be a rhetorical question or a multiple question, or judged by its cognitive demands either a recall question or a process question. The categorization of the different types of questions by Dickson and Hargie (2006) is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The categorization of questions according to Dickson and Hargie (2006).

Question category	**Subcategory**
Closed questions	Yes/no -questions Selection questions Identification questions
Open questions	Broad open questions Narrow open questions
Leading questions	Conversational leads Simple leads Implication leads Subtle leads

Probing questions	Clarification probes Justification probes Relevance probes Exemplification probes Extension probes Accuracy probes Restatement probes Echo probes Consensus probes Non-verbal probes
According to their cognitive demands	Recall questions Process questions
Other questions	Rhetorical questions Multiple questions

Despite being a thorough categorization and providing good information concerning the different types of questions, it remains somewhat complex and sizeable for the purposes and the relatively small amount of data of the present study that also focuses more on the structures of questions. The overlapping of the question categories would also prove to be a negative characteristic of the categorization in the analysis phase.

In the following subchapter I will present more categorizations of the structures of questions also in relation to their functions.

2.4 Functions related to various structures of questions

In this subchapter I will continue presenting the different kinds of categorizations of the structures of questions and also how they are connected with some of the functions of the questions. According to the English grammar (Downing and Locke 2006: 201) depending on the motivation of the question, they can function as rhetorical questions, preliminaries and leading questions of various types. Rhetorical questions are used to make a comment or an exclamation and do not expect a response e.g. *Why bother?* and *Do you expect me to wait here all day?* Preliminaries are mainly yes/no -questions that rather than seek information serve as a preliminary to an expansion of the current topic

e.g. *Have you read this article?* and *Have you already heard the news?* The various types of leading questions are similar to the ones described by Dickson and Hargie (2006). In addition to these Downing and Locke (2006: 203) identify a specific type of leading question known as declaratives that seek confirmation to their assumptions. Examples of declaratives, also referred to as *queclaratives*, are questions such as *You are seeing my daughter?* and *You don't mind if I stay?*

Downing and Locke (2006: 202-3) go on stating that questions expressed by yes/no -interrogatives can be biased with an assumption of a positive, negative or neutral answer. An assumption of a neutral answer is gained by using a non-assertive form with a positive interrogative e.g. *Do you know anyone in London?* An assumption of a positive answer is gained by using an assertive form with a positive interrogative e.g. *Do you know someone in London?* And an assumption of a negative answer is gained by using a negative form with a positive interrogative e.g. *Do you know no-one in London?* (Downing and Locke 2006: 202-203) Taking the topic assumptions even further Dickson and Hargie (2006: 131) state that all questions in fact have embedded set of assumptions and presuppositions and by their wording can entice respondents toward expected or desired responses. In everyday communication this is also referred to as *putting words in one's mouth*. On one level, also described by Ulijn and Verweij (2000), the act of asking a question has the embedded implication that the recipient of the question would for one reason or another is willing to give the requested information. On another level, for example the question *Are you my brother?* includes the following presuppositions: 1) the recipient is male, 2) the questioner has a brother, 3) the recipient is in the position to give the answer (Dickson and Hargie 2006: 131). In addition to these, the question also bears the following implications: 1) the questioner is uncertain of one's familiar relationship, 2) the questioner truly seeks this information, 3) the questioner would believe the answer, and 4) the questioner is willing to listen to the response (Dickson and Hargie 2006: 131).

According to Dickson and Hargie (2006: 132) the questions in the previous paragraph can also be referred to as misleading questions or suggestive questions. However, it is not a very clear category considering that all questions bear certain embedded implications within them. These suggestions can be done subtly or even unintentionally and for this reason even seemingly straightforward questions can be interpreted differently from what the questioner had intended. The anticipated answer can be implied or assumed within the question e.g. *Aren't you my brother?* which

assumes a positive response; and asking *Don't you just love the autumn?* sets up an affirmative response rather than the neutral form of asking *How do you feel about the autumn?* (Dickson and Hargie 2006: 132). Clayman and Heritage (2002: 762) go as far as declaring that "no question is neutral in an absolute sense, but questions do vary in the degree to which they manage to express an opinion on the subject being inquired about, thereby portraying one type of answer as expected or preferred."

Quirk and Greenbaum (1973: 191-2) distinguish three major categories of questions when divided according to the type answer they expect: yes/no -questions that expect only either affirmation or rejection (e.g. *Have you finished the book?*), *wh*-questions that expect an item of information in their reply (e.g. *What is your name?*), and alternative questions that expect the reply to consist of one of two or more options explicitly presented in the question (e.g. *Would you like to go for a walk or stay at home?*). The formation of the yes/no -question was explained in detail in chapter 2.2.

In accordance to Downing and Locke (2006), Quick and Greenbaum (1973: 192-3) also note that the yes/no -question can have a neutral, a positive or a negative orientation. In addition to the different orientations of the yes/no -question, Quick and Greenbaum (1973: 194-6) distinguish three specific types of yes/no -questions: tag questions, declarative questions and yes/no -questions with modal auxiliaries. As mentioned before by Dickson and Hargie (2006: 133), the tag question is formed with adding in question tag consisting of an operator and a pronoun in the end of a declarative clause e.g. *The boat hasn't left, has it?* and *Joan recognized you, didn't she?* As seen in the example questions, usually when the superordinate clause is positive, the question tag is negative, and when the superordinate clause is negative, the question tag is positive. There are some cases, however, when both the superordinate clause and the question tag are positive. In accordance with other yes/no -questions, the tag question can also have a neutral, a positive or a negative expectation of the answer. (Quick and Greenbaum 1973: 194-5)

The declarative question is a specific type of a yes/no -question and identical in form to a statement with the exception of a rising intonation. In written language this intonation is represented by a question mark. Declarative questions are seen as a specific type of yes/no -questions for the reason that they suggest the speaker to either affirm or reject the assumption of the question. Examples of declarative questions are *You've got the explosive?* and *You realize what the risks are?* Questions containing the phrase *I suppose* are also counted as declarative questions e.g. *Frank will be there, I*

suppose? Yes/no -questions with modal auxiliaries are formed with certain shifts of meaning and limitations. Modals of permission (such as *may* and *can*) and modals of obligations (such as *must* and *have to*) are used to suggest either the authority of the listener in questions or the authority of the speaker in statements. An example of the former are questions such as *May I leave now?* and an example of the latter are questions such as *Must I leave now?* (ibid. 195-6)

Quirk and Greenbaum (1973: 1996-7) also describe the *wh*-question similar to the previously listed descriptions and list the interrogative words also known as Q-words that are used to form a *wh*-question: *who*/*whom*/*whose*, *what*, *which*, *when*, *where*, *how*, and *why*. The list is again identical to Leech et al. (2006: 90-92). Alternative questions are also similarly described to the description presented by Dickson and Hargie (2006: 128). In addition to these categories Quirk and Greenbaum (1973: 199-200) also distinguish two minor types of questions: exclamatory questions and rhetorical questions. The exclamatory question is an exclamation in the form of a question, usually in the form of a negative yes/no -question expressed with a falling tone e.g. *Hasn't she grown!* or *Wasn't it a marvellous concert!* (ibid. 199). Rhetorical questions function as a forceful statement and can either a strong negative assertion expressed with a positive rhetorical question (*Can anyone doubt the wisdom of this action?*) or a strong positive assertion expressed with a negative rhetorical question (*Is no one going to defend me?*) (ibid. 200).

The categorization of questions described by Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) appears to be the most suitable one, versatile yet clear in its presentation, for the purposes of the present study to examine the structures of questions. From this material I chose the following categorization for the structures of questions: 1. yes/no -questions, 2. alternative questions, 3. *wh*-questions, 4. tag questions, and 5. declarative questions that will from now on be referred to as *statement questions*. In this categorization exclamatory questions were categorized under the category of statement questions due to the similarity of the two and rhetorical questions were categorized under yes/no -questions due to the fact that there is no grammatical difference in the structure of the question whether it is meant to be answered by the questioner or the recipient. Yes/no -questions with modal auxiliaries were also categorized under the broader category of yes/no -questions. These choices were made also due to the reason of keeping the number of categories relatively small. In addition to these five categories I have added a sixth category of multiple questions to include sentences that consist of more than one

question (e.g. *Do you know any courses in the summer and how can I register to them?*) and also questions containing a double interrogative as described by Downing and Locke (2006: 186-7) (e.g. *Do you know what time it is?*). Despite its common use the latter question has in fact two questions embedded within itself: one being whether the addressee knows the answer to the *wh*-question and the other being the content in the *wh*-element. The type of multiple questions described by Dickson and Hargie (2006: 138) where two questions are phrased together e.g *How is your wife doing? Still looking beautiful as ever?* are treated individually in the present study as separate questions due to the fact that grammatically they are separate questions despite their obvious connection to the same topic. Similar categorizing of questions was also used by Danileiko (2005) in her thesis exploring the various types of questions used by the talk show host in Late Night with Conan O'Brien. The categorization of the structures of questions used in the present study is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The structures of questions adapted from Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) used in the present study.

Structure	**Additional information**
Yes/no -questions	Includes rhetorical questions and yes/no -questions with modal auxiliaries
Alternative questions	
Wh-questions	
Tag questions	
Statement questions	Includes exclamatory questions
Multiple questions	Includes sentences that consist of more than one question and double interrogative

In addition to the previously mentioned categorizations, there are various other ways to categorize the types of questions that are not very useful for the purposes of the present study. One of them would be to categorize questions according to Bloom's taxonomy of objectives in the cognitive domain (Alford et al. 2006) that divide questions into the following six categories. Knowledge and memory questions that require recognizing or recalling (*What is the capital of Sweden?*), comprehension questions that demonstrate understanding (*How would you describe economy in Third World countries?*), application questions that are connected to problem solving (*Using*

these rules, calculate the outcome of the election?), analysis questions that require critical thinking (*Which of these are facts and which opinions?*), synthesis questions that require original thinking (*What would Europe be like if Germany had won the Second World War?*), and evaluation questions that require judging in relation to a defined criteria (*Did the individual break the law in this situation?*). This categorizing, however, is directed to learning objectives and education purposes mainly aimed for educators to use different kinds of questions in one's teaching material and in the classroom, and thus not the best choice for the present study since second language acquisition focuses on learners and learning rather than teachers and teaching (VanPatten and Benati 2010: intro).

Now that I have introduced some of ways to categorize the types of questions and rationalized the categorization I have chosen to use in the present thesis, in the next subchapter I will present the developmental stages of questions, one of the key elements of the present study.

2.5 Developmental stages and questions in SLA

In this subchapter I will present the developmental stages of questions concerning English as a second language. It is impossible to name the exact time and by whom the term *developmental stage* was first discovered, however, researchers such as Corder, Braine and Krashen both in the fields of first and second language acquisition have since the late 1960s made claims that one cannot teach a learner something that he is not ready to learn. Many recommendations from one extreme to another were made concerning teaching sequences on the basis of these observed "natural sequences" in language acquisition. For example Newmark (1966) proposed to replace the language-based curriculum with a content-based curriculum where the acquisition of linguistic form and structure would be left to take care of itself. (Lightbown 1985: 101)

Other researchers, such as Pienemann, avoided such extremes with pedagogical recommendations based on these natural sequences. Pienemann (1985) concluded that there are aspects of language that can be learnt at any point of the developmental cycle and that there are aspects that seem to follow apparent universal development patterns. Pienemann (ibid.) claimed that latter aspects could be taught most successfully if presented in the similar sequence that those L2 learners who do not receive formal

instruction appear to acquire them. Other researchers, such as Lightbown (1985: 102), have criticized such proposals reminding of the danger of yet another new rigid scientific approach to language teaching neglecting the needs of an individual learner.

On the basis of the recognised natural sequences of language acquisition, Dulay Burt and Krashen (1982: 127) were one of the first to present a table of developmental stages for the learning of questions in English for a second language learner. Questions were the first logical step being one of the first features of language studied in second language acquisition. Dulay et al. identified four stages in the development of questions (ibid.). The first stage was identified by the learner placing a simple *wh*-word in the beginning of a sentence. On the second stage auxiliaries such as *is*, *are*, *can* and *will* appeared in the sentences. On the third stage the sentences were regularly inversed. And on the fourth and final stage auxiliaries such as *has*, *been* and *am* appeared in the sentences, the sentences were regularly inversed and the sentences included a subject.

After Dulay, Pienemann continued studying the predictive framework for SLA and formed the Teachability Hypothesis (Pienemann et al. 1988: 225) which stated that "the course of second language development cannot be altered by factors external to the learner". The hypothesis was empirically supported by teaching experiments and it showed that stages in second language development could not be skipped with instruction. The logic behind the hypothesis was that speech the processing prerequisites formed an implicational hierarchy where the required language devices from each stage formed the necessary building blocks for the next stage. The hypothesis did not, however, suggest that instruction had no influence on SLA.

Later Pienemann, Johnston and Brindley (1988: 226) constructed a 16 stage developmental schedule of a number of morphological and syntactic structures in the acquisition of English as a second language. These indicators of development are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The 16 stage developmental schedule of morphological and syntactic structures in acquisition of ESL (from Pienemann et al. 1988: 226)

Stage	**Structure**	**Example**
1	single words, formulae	How are you?
2	SVO, SVO?	*The tea is hot?
3	ADVERB PREPOSING	**Yesterday* I work
4	DO FRONTING	**Do* he work?

5	TOPICALIZATION	*This* I like
6	NEG + V (don't)	*He *don't* eat meat
7	PSEUDO-INVERSION	Where is my purse?
8	YES/NO-INVERSION	**Have* he seen it?
9	PARTICLE SHIFT	*He *turned* the radio *on*.
10	V-"TO"-V	We like *to* sing.
11	3RD-SG-S	She comes home
12	DO-2ND	They *did* not buy anything.
13	AUX-2ND	Where *has* he seen you?
14	ADV-LY	They spoke gent*ly*.
15	Q-TAG	It's expensive, *isn't it?*
16	ADV-VP	He has *often* heard this.

Stage one refers to the simple phases and single words that are usually taught early on in a new language such as *How are you?* and *Why?* In stage two the SVO/SVO? -structure refers to the canonical order of the constituents (subject, verb and object) and is also used in cases where standard language would require the rearrangement of constituents. Adverb proposing in stage three refers to the possibility of adverbs and adverbials to be placed in the beginning of sentences e.g. *Tomorrow I go?* Do fronting in stage four refers to the position of the auxiliary *do* in direct questions such as *Do he work?* and *Do she like you?* Topicalization in stage five refers to the placement of objects or subordinate clauses in the beginning of sentences such as *This I like?* and *Because I know the situation I can't work here.* Neg + V in stage six refers to the position of the negator before the verb e.g. *He don't go home* and *He don't eat meat*. Pseudo-Inversion in stage seven refers to *wh*-questions with a copula where the copula and the subject must be inverted such as *Where is the station?* and *Where is my purse?* Yes/No-Inversion in stage eight refers to the preposing of the auxiliary or modal in direct questions that require a yes/no -answer such as *Have she bought this?* and *Have he seen it?* Particle shift in stage nine refers to the splitting of a compound verb (such as *plug in, turn off, switch on,* etc.) e.g. *They switched the light off* and *He turned the radio on*. V-"to"-V in stage ten refers to the verbal complement infinitive such as *She want to come* and *We like to sing*. 3rd-Sg-S in stage eleven refers to the third person singular *–s* e.g. *She comes home* and *He wins the race*. Do-2nd and Aux-2nd in stages twelve and thirteen refer to main clauses where the auxiliary and the modal are placed in the second

position of a sentence in affirmative sentences or *wh*-questions and to the verb *do* in the second position in negated main clauses and *wh*-questions e.g. *Where has he seen you?* and *They did not buy anything*. Adv-ly in stage fourteen refer to the use of the derivational morpheme *–ly* when forming adverbs from adjectives such as *They spoke gently*. Q-Tag in stage fifteen refers to question tags (such as *isn't he?* or *isn't it?*) e.g. *He's nice, isn't he?* and *It's expensive, isn't it?* Finally Adv-VP in stage sixteen refers to the placement of adverbials inside a verbal phrase such as *He has often heard this*. In the developmental schedule each stage refers only to one aspect of the sentence and other aspects and rules of English can still be violated. (ibid.)

Some of the aspects of English as a second language development presented in Table 3 were rare in the interviews conducted by Pienemann et al (1988: 228, Pienemann & Johnston 1987) that they excluded and combined certain stages to create a more useful tool for analysing the acquisition of English. The idea was to create a practical method for assessing the proficiency level of an English as a second language - learner that would not require detailed linguistic analysis and could be easily conducted also by people who had not studied linguistics. The modifications led to two similar six staged observation forms of a small selection of linguistic features that could be used for corresponding stages of acquisition. An adaptation (similar to the one used by Roiha, 2008) from these two forms is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The six Developmental Stages in English Questions (adapted from Pienemann et al. 1988: 231-233)

Stage	**Structure**	**Example**
Stage 1	Single words and formulae	*How are you?*
Stage 2	SVO with rising intonation	*The tea is hot?*
Stage 3	*Do*-fronting *Wh*-fronting Other fronting	*Do he work?* *What the boy is throwing?* *Is the boy beside the bus?*
Stage 4	Pseudo-inversion *Yes/no* -questions with auxiliary inversion	*Where is my purse?* *Have you car?*
Stage 5	Auxiliary second *Do* second	*Where can he go?* *Why didn't he understand?*
Stage 6	Tag questions	*He's Polish, isn't he?*

On the first stage the questions are formed by single words or memorised short formulaic constructions. An example from this stage is the ready-made phrase *How are you?* In the second stage the sentences include a subject, a verb and an object, and instead of a grammatical rearrangement of the constituents question is indicated with a rising intonation. Examples from this stage are simple SVO sentences such as *The tea is hot?* and *Dog is home?* In the third stage direct questions are formed by placing the auxiliary *do* or with a *wh*-word in beginning of the sentence e.g. *Do he work?* and *Who come here?* The fourth stage includes both direct *wh*-questions with a copula where the copula and the subject must be inverted and direct yes/no -question involving the preposing of the auxiliary or modal e.g. *Where is my car?* and *Have he seen it?* In the fifth stage the auxiliary and modal verbs are placed in the second position in the sentence such as *Where can he go?* and *Why didn't he understand?* In the sixth and final stage question is indicated with tag question e.g. *He was nice, wasn't he?* and *It's cold, isn't it?*

The described six staged observation form was designed to provide information on the learner's interlanguage grammar for a range of developmental features by observing the previously mentioned linguistic features. This information would be then used as indicators for the corresponding stages of acquisition as a shorthand version comparable with profile analysis (Pienemann et al. 1988: 233). Despite never been aimed specifically at the development of questions, this procedure turned out to be remarkable for development research on ESL especially concerning questions as it provided a clear and easy classification of the stages, and has been used in the majority of studies conducted in the field ever since. Due to the practicality and popularity of this classification, making it thus easy to compare with other studies including Roiha (2008), it was also used in the present study as method to analyse the developmental stages of questions.

Now that I have briefly gone through the development of the developmental stages in second language acquisition and presented the Pienemann et al. (1988) six staged classification of linguistic features used in the present study, I will move on to present some of the most important previous studies in the field.

2.6 Previous studies on questions in SLA

In this subchapter I will present and discuss some of the most important previous studies conducted in second language acquisition concerning questions connected to the present study. I will begin by looking broadly into the major themes of SLA research and how they are connected to the present study. After this I will present some of the most influential studies in the field beginning with Ravem (1974a, 1974b) and ending with the contemporary study conducted by Roiha (2008).

In the development in SLA over time three principal characteristics can be found: *stage-like development*, *ordered development*, and *variation and variability*. Stage-like or staged development refers to the sequences that can be found in the acquisition of a linguistic feature especially in the realm of sentence structures. Whereas staged development refers to the acquisition of a particular structure, acquisition orders concern the relative order in which different structures are acquired over time e.g. feature A precedes feature B that both precede feature C etc. The third principal characteristic of variation and variability refer to the free or systematic variation of two or more formal features that are used to perform the same function within a developmental stage. (VanPatten and Benati 2010: 27)

In second language acquisition research staged development has been considered to be an integral part of SLA and has been documented since the early days of contemporary research in the 1970s, widely studied in both classroom and non-classroom contexts. These developmental stages, also referred to as developmental sequences, have been discovered in various features not only in English but in various other languages as well. In English they have been found in negation, question formation and other sentence structures; in German they have been found in negation and sentence word order; in French in direct object pronouns; and in Spanish in copular verbs only to mention a few. One of the best known developmental sequences in English is the previously mentioned negation which can be divided into four stages: negation external to the sentence, negation moves inside the sentence, appearance of modals and attachment of negation, and appearance of analyzed ‘do’ with negation attached. Within the field of staged development one of the most important findings has been the acknowledgement that instruction cannot alter the natural developmental sequences and neither can it be used to skip a single stage (Lightbown and Spada 1993). In other words, both learners who receive grammatical instruction and those learning

language in a natural environment must pass through the same developmental stages. Another finding has been that the stages are not neat and that learners will occasionally produce structures from the previous and the next stage, and that it is the preponderance of the structure that determines the stage the learning is currently on. The present study also focuses on this first principal characteristic of SLA research. (VanPatten and Benati 2010: 27-8)

In addition to these stages of development of particular structures also relative orders of acquisition have been found concerning the different structures over time. Acquisition order is also concerned with the notion that learners begin to perform correctly most of the time. For example in English verbal inflections the following order has been firmly attested: progressive *–ing*, regular past tense, irregular past tense; third-person *–s*. At any given time, the behavior of a learner exhibits both staged development and acquisition order. As the learner enters a new stage, they are most likely to demonstrate variations in their performance. The variations can be either *free*, referring to seemingly random use of two or more features in the same linguistic context, or *systematic* referring to two or more features that while on the surface appear to perform the same function actually perform different linguistic functions. (VanPatten and Benati 2010: 28-9)

In the early days of SLA research in the late sixties and seventies that main question guiding the research was what learners actually acquired when learning a second language. The motivation for the question came from the notion that in their failed attempts to produce correct sentences in the target language learners displayed markedly deviant language from that of native speakers. Ellis (1994) explains the means that were used to explore this question:

> In order to answer this question, researchers collected samples of learner language and tried to describe their main features. For example, the language samples that learners produced were inspected for errors and these were then classified. Alternatively, recordings of learners communicating with native speakers or other learners were transcribed, specific grammatical features such as negatives or interrogatives were identified in the data, and descriptions of the 'rules' which could account for learners' productions were developed. The aim of this research, then, was essentially descriptive – to document what kind of language learners produced, to try to establish whether it manifested regularities of some kind or other, and to find out how it changed over time. (Ellis 1994: 14)

Ellis (1994) goes on explaining, as also mentioned by VanPatten and Benati (2010), that it is not always clear where one level ends and another begins, and that acquisition can

mean several things. There are researchers such as Bickerton (1981) who consider that a feature of language is acquired the first time is appears in the language of the learner and those such as Dulay and Burt (1980) who have taken the stand that in order to be acquired, a feature must be used to a certain predetermined accuracy. The required accuracy can be different according to the researcher, however, usually 90 per cent accuracy is considered to be enough. This can make the comparison between results difficult. In the present study this will not cause a problem since for the purposes of this study it is irrelevant whether a feature has been acquired or not since each occurrence of a developmental stage was analyzed separately. (Ellis 1994: 14-15)

Now that I have briefly presented some of the broader themes of the development of SLA research and how it is connected to the present study, I will move on to present some of the important research conducted in the field. One of the pioneers in the area and first to focus on question formation was Ravem (1974a, 1974b) who studied the acquisition of English syntax on Norwegian children living in an English-speaking environment. With data consisting mainly of taped interviews Ravem addressed two similar yet different topics: questions and negative sentences requiring a *do*-transformation (1974a) and the development of *wh*-questions (1974b). The first topic was chosen on the basis of having syntactic similarities with the Norwegian language including an inversion of subject noun phrase and verb.

Ravem (1974a) explored the first topic on a single 6-year-old child and, in addition to declarative, negative and interrogative sentences, was especially concerned with the acquisition of *do* as a tense-marker since it differed from the other modal auxiliaries that had equivalent auxiliaries in Norwegian. In the studies he discovered that the development of the tense marker *do* had four stages: 1) *do* occurred only in the elliptical sentence *Do you?* 2) *do* appeared integrated in the word *you* in the sentence *What d'you like?* 3) *do* clearly occurred as a tense carrier in sentences such as *What d'you do to-yesterday?* and *What you did in Rothbury?* 4) *do* appears clearly as a separate element in both present and past tenses (Ravem 1974a: 130-1).

The purpose of Ravem was not to test any hypotheses related to language learning but rather to "find out something about the developmental sequence as compared with first language learners" (Ravem 1974a: 132). One of the conclusions of the study was that the process of second language learning in an environment where there is no formal instruction does not differ greatly from that of first language acquisition. He also concluded that linguistic competence in the first language greatly

facilitates the learning of a second language. Instead of giving answers Ravem (ibid. 133) aroused interesting questions in the field of second language acquisition and concluded that it is still unknown whether second language acquisition of children can be "speeded up" with exposure to selected and linguistically graded language patterns.

Exploring the second topic of *wh*-questions Ravem (1974b: 139) studied two Norwegian children aged six and three in a similar setting and by similar means as the first topic. The results showed that the development of *wh*-questions bore striking similarities with L1 learners and not all of them could be traced back to Norwegian. In his conclusion Ravem (ibid: 155) urged for the necessity of "a more comprehensive language learning theory, which also takes into account general cognitive factors and not only linguistic mechanisms". In these studies Ravem laid important first steps for future studies about the development of questions but with an extremely small number of participants (only one or two) the results would require confirmation from other researchers using larger amounts of data. Other factors, including being the father of one of the subjects, also lead to the subjectivity of the studies to be questioned.

Another pioneering study in the field was conducted later by Cancino, Rosansky and Schumann (1978) who studied the natural acquisition of questions in English as a second language by native Spanish speakers. The number of participants was slightly larger than that of Ravem (1974a, 1974b) with data collected from two children, two adolescents and two adults, yet still relatively small for generalization purposes. The transformational rules for *wh*-questions were studied on three stages: on the first stage known as *base* the *wh*-word was placed in the end of the sentence (e.g. *He is going where?*); on the second stage known as *preposing* the *wh*-word was moved in the beginning of the sentence (e.g. *Where he is going?*); and on the third stage known as *inversion* the auxiliary was moved in front of the subject (e.g. *Where is he going?*) (Cancino et al. 1978).

Among other results one of the main observations of the study was the discovery of a developmental sequence concerning the acquisition of *wh*-questions that could be divided into two stages: on the first stage the learner did not distinguish the difference between simple and embedded *wh*-questions and on the second stage the learner acknowledged the difference. Two developmental stages were also discovered in the development of yes/no -questions: on the first stage no inversion occurred and questions were formed with a rising intonation, and on the second stage inversion gradually occurred. The studies conducted by Cancino et al. (1978) are considered one of the key

studies in early research concerning the developmental stages of questions, however, with a relatively small number of research subjects with heterogeneous backgrounds and exposure to the language, the results were far from being generalized.

Continuing in the footsteps of Ravem (1974) and Cancino et al. (1978) the studies conducted by Pienemann et al. (1988) are still considered one of the most influential works in the field of question development research. As mentioned in chapter 2.5, Pienemann et al. (1988: 217) are credited for the formation of the groundbreaking six-degreed table of the development stages of questions in English (presented in Table 4), despite in their study it was created only as a side-product in their aim to produce and test "an observation procedure for assessing the syntactic and morphological development of adult learners of English as a second language". The research was grounded on the Teachability Hypothesis previously put forward by Pienemann, which states that external factors connected to the learner cannot alter the course of second language development (ibid: 225). For more information about the Teachability Hypothesis, see Pienemann (1986).

The subjects in the study conducted by Pienemann et al. (1988) were a total of 16 Polish and Vietnamese adult ESL learners that were studied through natural speech samples. The results of the test run showed that "it was possible to establish the general viability of the observation task on which the procedure is based" or in other words it appeared that the same criteria were used in the linguistic observation as in the linguistic analysis (ibid: 240). Although being remarkable for the development of ESL research the study itself was not without weaknesses. Since it was only a trial run of the procedure it become clear that the assessors would require to be more thoroughly briefed and trained concerning the observation criteria and that the chosen linguistic structures would require revising. The number of participants in the study remained quite small and thus the results can hardly be said to be generalizable. In addition to this and concerning the present study, since the focus of the study was on the morphological and syntactic structures in the acquisition of English as a second language focusing on spoken language, the research gave very little information about the acquisition of questions that would benefit the present study.

After the identification of the developmental stages in the acquisition of questions in ESL, various studies were conducted using the newfound classification system. Among the most known are the studies conducted by Spada and Lightbown (1993) who studied the development of English questions on francophone learners of

English subjected to form-focused instruction and corrective feedback. The subjects were two classes of children (about a total of 50 children) aged 10-12 participating in an intensive L2 program in Canada and the focus was on two aspects of spoken language: accuracy and developmental stage. In their results Spada and Lightbown (ibid.) discovered that the comparison group outperformed the experimental group both in terms of accuracy and developmental stage. These results were explained by the superiority of the teacher in the comparison group. Despite failing in its attempt to show the positive effects of form-focused instruction in question development, the study was still able to give new insights on the field of question development research. As the study concentrated on oral production the results were not compared with the results of the present study. Later Spada and Lightbown (1999) continued researching the L2 acquisition of francophone children of the same age focusing on the developmental readiness of the learner, however, I will not go into the results of these studies due to the fact that they are not connected to the focus of the present study.

One of the most recent studies conducted on the use of questions in SLA was done by Roiha (2008) who studied the use of questions in openly written texts in English from material collected in the Cefling project. The subjects were Finnish 7th and 9th graders (aged from 13 to 16) from two comprehensive schools with the total number of 93 participants. She studied both the developmental stages of the questions and what kind of errors was presented in them. In her results concerning the first topic she found out that on both groups the majority of the questions were from stages 3 and 4. On stage 3 the most common questions were formed with a *wh*-word in the beginning of the sentence but had an otherwise incorrect grammatical structure. The questions on level 4 were, however, grammatically correct and contained an inverted structure. The results also showed that very little progress was made concerning the developmental stages of questions during the three years in Finnish lower secondary school. The amount of data (a total of 935 questions) was sufficient to generalize the results, however, according to Roiha (2008) the main weakness of the study was that it did not have equal amount of products from each stage and age group. This being said, the results of the present study were compared to the results of Roiha (ibid.) for several reasons: both studies concentrated on the developmental stages of questions in written texts produced by Finnish English as a second language learners and both studies applied the Pienemann et al. (1988) six-staged classification system of the stages. The results were also

compared to gain knowledge about the differences between Finnish adult and children learners of English.

Now that I have gone through the use of questions, presented thoroughly the structures of questions, gone through the development of the developmental stages of questions and previewed the previous studies conducted in the field from the early days to today, it time to move on to the analysis part of the present thesis. In the next chapter I will present the data and the methods of analysis I have used in this study.

3 DATA & ANALYSIS

In this chapter I will take a closer look into the data I have used in my thesis. I will begin by presenting the Cefling project (www.jyu.fi/hum/laitokset/kielet/cefling) and the National Certificate of Language Proficiency (NC) evaluation system, and how they are connected to each other and to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Then I will go on to define the research questions I set out to answer in the present study and go through the methods of analysis I have used with the chosen data to find out the answers to these questions. Finally, towards the end of the chapter I will present the data that I have used in the present study and explain the choices I have made for choosing these particular texts from the vast National Certificate of Language Proficiency examination material.

3.1 Cefling and the National Certificate of Language Proficiency

In this subchapter I will briefly introduce Cefling project and the National Certificate of Language Proficiency (NC) examination system and how they connected to each other. However, before this I must briefly clear some basic issues concerning language assessment. According to Ellis (1994: 13) since the mental knowledge of a language learner is not open to direct inspection, it can therefore be inferred only by examining samples of their performance. For this reason different types of examination systems such as the NC system have been created in order to find out something about the language knowledge of a participant as a whole by means of testing certain features of language. However, these kinds of proficiency tests or examination systems should not

be mistaken with observation systems such as the developmental stages of questions. Pienemann et al. (1988: 220) make the distinct notion that the assessment procedure presented in their study, and in the present study in chapter 2.5, is not a proficiency test but rather an attempt to obtain "information about a learner's stage of grammatical development in the second language". Thus the developmental stages of questions described in the present study should not be confused with language assessment systems such as the National Certificate of Language Proficiency test, and therefore observing these developmental stages in the NC-material was not merely testing the comparability of two rating scales together but rather an attempt to gain information about the grammatical profiles of the rated participants. Now that I have cleared this possible misconception concerning the different systems and procedures, I will move on to presenting the Cefling project.

Cefling is a project funded by the Academy of Finland addressing the fundamental questions of how the language skills of a second language learner develop when moving from one proficiency level to another. The aim of the project is to provide a new theoretical model for connecting the Common European Framework of Reference descriptions of proficiency levels with linguistic characteristics compiled from actual learning data. The levels used in Cefling are equal to the ones defined by CEFR and can be used to describe the language capabilities of a second language learner in that particular language. The levels range from beginner to advanced language user on a scale from one to six and are also referred to as the CEFR scale. The data used in Cefling is gathered from learners of both English and Finnish, and focuses on their performances in writing tasks. The data for adults is taken from the National Certificate of Language Proficiency tests.

The project is a part of wide European network of second and foreign language acquisition researchers investigating common concerns about CEFR. Finland has been the pioneer in adapting the CEFR both to the National Curriculum taught in schools and to the NC program designed to measure the language skills of adults. Pioneered by Finland, other European countries are currently following the trend and adapting CEFR to their curricula, examinations and materials. For more detailed information about the Cefling project, see Council of Europe (2011) and University of Jyväskylä (2011).

The National Certificate of Language Proficiency (NC) is a nationwide Finnish examination system for adults to gain official recognition of one's proficiency in a particular language. Currently the examination can be taken in nine different languages

(English, Spanish, Italian, French, Swedish, Lappish (Sami), German, Finnish and Russian) and on three different examination levels. The levels are basic (levels 1 and 2), intermediate (levels 3 and 4) and advanced (levels 5 and 6); equivalent to CEFR levels A1–C2. On each level the language competence of the examinee is measured in the areas of *speaking*, *writing*, *listening comprehension*, *reading comprehension*, *structures* and *vocabulary*. Each area is then evaluated and graded separately on a scale from one to six, depending on the level the test was taken on, and from all the areas an overall grade is given to the examinee. (Council of Europe 2011)

After the examination the participant receives an official certificate indicating his or her language proficiency on the particular language on a scale from one to six – depending on the level the test was taken on. The criteria of the evaluation, despite never being made public, are known to bear resemblance with the Common European framework of Reference (CEFR) where the functional and communication aspects of the language outweigh strict grammatical scrutiny (Tarnanen and Mäntylä 2006). Upon taking the test the following background information is also gathered from the participants: mother tongue, age, socioeconomic status, duration of language studies, frequency of using the language and a reason for taking the test. However, answering the background information is voluntary and for this reason it is not available from all the participants.

The tests are catalogued and stored anonymously in a vast database (corpus) operated by Centre for Applied Language Studies (CALS) and intended for research, such as the present study, and teaching purposes. The database includes both spoken material (one performance from each participant) and written material (three performances from each participant) from all languages and levels. The data is also linked by the test-takers id number making it possible to conduct searches between different data. The nature of the database is dynamic and new data is added after each testing round. For more information about the National Certificate of Language Proficiency system, see Opetushallitus (2011) and Solki (2011).

Now that I have briefly gone through the main ideas behind the Cefling project and the National Certificates of Language Proficiency examination system, I will move on to define the research questions of the present study.

3.2 Research questions and methods of analysis

In this subchapter I will state the research questions of the present study and the methods of analysis I have used to find answers to them. The purpose of the present study was to gain insight about the language competence of Finnish adults concerning the use of questions in written assignments in English. This was achieved by conducting a descriptive research on the naturally occurring phenomena of question development on existing data from the National Certificate of Language Proficiency examinations. The study aimed to find out the typical developmental stages of questions in these texts produced by English as a second language -learners, and whether there were differences in the levels of questions between advanced and less advanced language users. An aim of the study was also to describe the structures of these questions. Rough figures of questions in each developmental stage were included in the results; however, a more detailed quantitative or statistical analysis was not included in the study.

The research questions for the present study were:

1. What are the typical developmental stages concerning questions in the texts of adult learners of English as a second language on levels A2-B2?
    a. How are the questions divided between the different stages?
    b. Is there any difference between the groups including advanced language users and less advanced language users?
2. What are the structures of the questions in these texts?

In order to answer the first research question, all questions found from the chosen data were analyzed according to the six development stages described by Pienemann et al. (1988). Once all the questions were categorized according to their developmental stage, numerical data for the first sub-question would also easy to present. There are two reasons for using the developmental stages presented by Pienemann et al. (1988). For one, Pienemann has been credited as one of the most influential names in the field and his work remains to be quoted in studies conducted in second language acquisition today. Secondly, due to the academic popularity of his research many other researchers have also used the same developmental stages their research and therefore the results of the present study would be comparable with previous and future studies in the field.

In order to answer the second research question, all the questions in the data were categorized according to their structure to the six categories of yes/no -questions, alternative questions, *wh*-questions, tag questions, statement questions, and multiple questions. This categorization was based on the categorization of questions by Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) and was presented and rationalized in greater detail in chapter 2.4.

After being presented, the results were compared with previous studies in the field, especially Roiha (2008) who studied the question developmental stages of children to see if there are any differences with adults and children, and in order to find out if the results are in accordance with previous research. As mentioned before, in the field of language acquisition written communication has not yet received similar academic interest as oral communication, and the purpose of the present study is to shed light on this excluded area of research.

There would have been a number of other possibilities as to how to conduct the study. The reasons for choosing the data as it was chosen are given in the following subchapter, however, different methods could have been used in the analysis. For example studying the functions of questions in addition to their structural analysis would have been likely to give more information concerning the use of questions. However, due to the absence of a clear classification of the different functions of questions and in order to keep the study more concise only some of the functions of questions were addressed as a part of the structural analysis. The question whether the background of the participant has any correlation with the developmental stages of questions used in the texts could have also been studied, however, it was excluded from the present study for the reason that the required information was not simply available from all participants.

Now that I have presented the research question of the present study and the methods I have used to answer them, I will move on to the next subchapter where I will present the data I have used in the study.

3.3 The data

The data used in the present study was written assignments taken from the National Certificate of Language Proficiency (NC) examination material. The assignments had

been graded on a scale from one to six (equivalent to CEFR grade levels A1–C2) and in the present study I chose to concentrate on levels two, three and four (CEFR A2-B2). The reason behind this choice was that the language learners on levels above this – in other words on levels five and six – were very unlikely to have problems forming question sentences and, on the other hand, the language users on level one were likely to have substantial problems forming any kind of sentences in English. For these reasons it was gathered that the most interesting data would be found in the previously mentioned levels. The choice was also influenced by the relatively small number of texts available from levels one and six.

The texts were gathered from three different types of written assignments, and each text was chosen from a different participant. This was done to achieve a broader spectrum of language users and minimize the effects of single language user in the results. The written assignments used in the present study were either guided informal emails or guided informal letters to imaginary recipients in a constructed context. These assignments were chosen for the reason that they appeared to generate the most questions in the writings of the participants, and therefore an obvious choice for the study, and that they would be similar on the different grade levels. The database also included other written assignments from the test-takers, however, those were not chosen for the present study on the account of them containing distinctly fewer questions. From each of the chosen three grade levels 35 texts from were selected from 35 different participants making it a total of 105 texts from 105 different participants from all the three levels combined.

On each level the data was collected from two different assignments. The specific forms of the assignments themselves are classified information, however, observing the answers it was possible to deduct which texts appeared to be from the same assignment. Information that was available from the assignments were *text type* (e.g. informal message), *task type* (e.g. guided), and *specified text type* (e.g. thank you card). On grade level 2 the two assignments were a guided informal email (referred to as Assignment A) and a guided informal letter (referred to as Assignment B). From the 35 texts gathered from this grade level, 24 texts were from Assignment A and 11 texts from Assignment B. On grade level 3 the first assignment was a guided informal letter (referred to as Assignment C) and the second assignment was the same as the second one on grade level 2 (Assignment B). From the 35 texts from this level, 11 texts were from Assignment C and 24 texts from Assignment B. On grade level 4 the assignments

were the same as on grade level 3, with 20 texts from Assignment C and 15 texts from Assignment B. The texts from these assignments were chosen partially randomly with the criteria that at least one question was found in the text.

From the chosen texts all questions were then gathered and numbered. The criteria that were used to determine whether a sentence would be considered a question was that it had a question mark at the end or that it clearly was meant as a question in the context (e.g. if spoken out loud it would be regarded as a question). For example clauses such as *I wonder if you know some summercurse too.* and *where we can learn more...* were considered to be questions despite the lack of a question mark and the structure of a declarative sentence. Also declarative clauses such as *I wonder if there is a more courses in the autum?* containing a question mark were considered as questions.

Using the previously mentioned criteria a total of 101 questions were found from the 35 texts on grade level two, 91 questions from the 35 texts on grade level three and 69 questions from the 35 texts on grade level four. Thus from the 105 texts from all levels a total of 261 questions were identified. These questions were then categorized in two different ways: according to their developmental stage and according to their structure. The details of these two categorizations are explained in chapters 2.4 and 2.5.

Using material from the National Certificate of Language Proficiency has some great advantages compared to material collected from children in schools. For one, the examination has a fee and it is usually taken for purposes of employment, thus the participants are very likely to be motivated in taking the exam. Also if a person's possible future employment depends on the outcome of this examination, it is justifiable to presume that people are more likely to try their best in the exam, to show their capabilities to possible future employers. With this in mind it can be assumed that it is unlikely that the participants' skills exceed what is shown in the exam, and therefore the exam can be seen as a relatively fair account of the current skills in English of the participants. Using language data gathered from adults will also present an excellent opportunity to compare the results with similar studies conducted with students e.g. Roiha (2008) as it is the case in the majority of studies conducted on the field.

Now that I have presented the National Certificates of Language Proficiency examination system and the Cefling project, stated the research questions of the present study and introduced the data I have used in this study, I will move on to the next chapter where I will present the results of the present study.

4 RESULTS

In this chapter I will present the results of this study. In the first subchapter I will present the data concerning the developmental stages of the questions and in the second subchapter the data concerning the structures of the questions.

4.1 Developmental stages of questions

In this subchapter I will present the results of the study concerning the developmental stages of questions. In order to answer the first research question, the questions were categorized according to their developmental stage based on the six stages of question development described by Pienemann et al. (1988) presented in chapter 2.5. In addition to these six categories an *unidentifiable* category was formed for questions that could not be clearly placed in any of the six categories. First I will present the results from the three grade levels separately and then near the end of the chapter some findings from all of them together.

On grade level 2 a typical example of a stage 1 question was the common phrase *How are you?* The structure of the question (pseudo inversion) would make it a stage 4 question, however, since it is one of the first expressions taught in an English class it was considered a formulae expression and thus stage 1. Another example of a stage 1 question was *Maybe next summer?* as a simple question formed with a few words and lacking a verb. An example of a stage 2 question containing a simple SVO structure is *I come to your place next month?* If spoken out loud the question would be indicated with a rising intonation. Typical examples of stage 3 questions formed do-fronting + SVO were questions such as *Do you know any good course in England next summer?* and *Do you remember our first boxing match in Finland?*

An example of a stage 4 question with pseudo inversion was *Is there any coure where I can practise more english after summer?* and a yes/no -question with auxiliary inversion + SV structure was *Could you say that what I must to studies now.* An example of a stage 5 question with a wh- + auxiliary + SV structure was *What would you think that I should learn more before next test in autumn?* and a do-second structure was *What do you mean that?* There were also two stage 6 questions both formed with a tag question such as *The fishing trip was great, wasn't it?* In addition to these stages

there were a few unclear and unidentified questions with either a *How about* structure regarded unidentifiable in previous studies including Roiha (2008) and a structure containing multiple levels e.g. *AND AUTUM, have you ANY COURSE in SOLKILA (SAKK), DOYOU KNOW?* In the study conducted by Roiha (2008) she identified an additional stage known as moodless *wh*-questions that included *How about* –structures, however, to be consistent also with other previous studies in the present study these structures are identified as unidentifiable. The distribution of developmental stages on grade level 2 is presented in Table 5. The majority of the questions were from stages 3 (38.6%) and 4 (24.8%).

Table 5. The developmental stages of questions on grade level 2.

Developmental stage	**Number of questions**
1	8 (7.92%)
2	13 (12.9%)
3	39 (38.6%)
4	25 (24.8%)
5	7 (6.93%)
6	2 (1.98%)
unidentifiable	7 (6.93%)
Total	101 (100%)

On grade level 3 typical examples of stage 1 questions were common phrases such as *How are you?* and *How about you?* These phrases were considered to be stage 1 questions for the same reason as on grade level 2 for being formulae expressions taught early on in English. Examples of stage 2 questions with simple declarative SVO structures were questions such as *But anyway, I suggest a meeting in June 27?* and *We stopped for a coffee at my parents house and we stayed over for a sauna instead?* The majority of the stage 3 questions were formed with do-fronting + SVO structure with questions such as *Do you know what time is right now?* and *Did I mentioned you that I have a new hobby?*

An example of a stage 4 question formed with pseudo inversion was *How is your engineering studies?* and a yes/no -question formed with auxiliary inversion + SV structure was *Would you like to meet me again.* Stage 5 question were mainly formed with a wh- + auxiliary + SV structure were the auxiliary was *do* such as *What do you*

think which is good one to me? and *What did you think about Puijo which we visited last time you were here?* Again there were only two stage 6 questions and they were both formed with a tag question such as *Quite a "babe", Isn't she:)??* In addition to these stages again there were a few unclear and unidentified questions with either a *How about* structure such as *How aboud, if we'll meet next sumer here in Finland?* and a structure containing multiple levels e.g. *I have to meet One banker over theree, so I was wondering that would we meet then?* Moving from grade level 2 to grade level 3 there was a clear increase in the number of questions from developmental stage 1 and a moderate decrease in the number of questions from developmental stage 3, which still remained the most common developmental stage. The distribution of developmental stages on grade level 3 is presented in Table 6. The majority of the questions were from stages 1 (23.1%), 3 (31.9%) and 4 (22.0%).

Table 6. The developmental stages of questions on grade level 3.

Developmental stage	**Number of questions**
1	21 (23.1%)
2	7 (7.69%)
3	29 (31.9%)
4	20 (22.0%)
5	7 (7.69%)
6	2 (2.20%)
unidentifiable	5 (5.49%)
Total	91 (100%)

On grade level 4 typical examples of stage 1 questions were common phrases such as *How are you doing.* and *How are you nowadays?* These phrases were again considered to be stage 1 questions for the same reason as on grade levels 2 and 3. An example of a stage 2 question with simple declarative SVO structures was *Maybe we could meet then?* and an example of a question made only with rising intonation such as *Maybe next summer?* Again the majority of the stage 3 questions were formed with the simple do-fronting + SVO structure e.g. *DID YOU LEAVE SOMETHING HERE?* and *Do you think of me every time you are wondering what time is it?*

The majority of stage 4 questions were yes/no -questions formed with auxiliary inversion + SV structure such as *Can you imagine how great that felt?* and *Speaking of*

which, would You like come to Solkila for a visit this summer? All the questions on stage 5 were formed with a wh- + auxiliary + SV structure e.g. *When would that be?* and *What have you been doing after the meeting of last Autumn?* There were only four stage 6 questions and all of them were formed with a tag question such as *Also the evening at the theatre was lovely, wasn't it?* and *But that's how it is in forest industry, especially with repairing harvesters, isn't it?* In addition to these there were two unclear and unidentified questions with structures containing multiple levels e.g. *We could visit you, if you are in town and if you want to see us?* Moving from grade level 3 to grade level 4 the number of questions from developmental stage 3 continued to decrease making developmental stage 4 the most commonly used stage. In addition to this, there was a significant increase in the number of questions from developmental stage 2. The distribution of developmental stages on grade level 4 is presented in Table 7. The majority of the questions were from stages 2 (21.7%) and 4 (26.1%).

Table 7. The developmental stages of questions on grade level 4.

Developmental stage	**Number of questions**
1	12 (17.4%)
2	15 (21.7%)
3	11 (15.9%)
4	18 (26.1%)
5	7 (10.1%)
6	4 (5.80%)
unidentifiable	2 (2.90%)
Total	69 (100%)

Looking at the distribution of the developmental stages of questions from all the three levels combined almost a third (30.3%) of the questions were from stage 3. The second most common stage was stage 4 with almost one out of four (24.1%) questions being from this stage. These two development stages combined covered for more than 50 per cent of the questions from all levels. After these the most frequent question types were from stage 1 with almost one out of six (15.7%) questions from this stage and stage 2 with one out of seven (13.4%) questions from this stage. Only a little more than eight per cent (8.05%) of the questions were from stage 5 and a little more than three per cent (3.07%) from stage 6. In addition to this, a little more than five per cent

(5.36%) of the questions were categorized as unidentifiable. The distribution of developmental stages from all the grade levels is presented in Table 8.

Table 8. The developmental stages of questions on grade levels 2, 3 and 4 combined.

Developmental stage	**Number of questions**
1	41 (15.7%)
2	35 (13.4%)
3	79 (30.3%)
4	63 (24.1%)
5	21 (8.05%)
6	8 (3.07%)
unidentifiable	14 (5.36%)
Total	261 (100%)

These results from the analysis of the developmental stages of questions will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5. Now I will move on to presenting the results concerning the structures and functions of the questions found from the data in the following subchapter.

4.2 Structures and functions in relation to the structures of questions

In order to answer the second research question, all the questions gathered from the texts were analysed and categorized according to their structure. In this subchapter I will first present the results of analysing the structures of the questions in the data. I will begin by presenting the results from each grade level separately and then all the grade levels combined.

Since there was no clear given categorization of the structures of questions, the questions gathered from the data were divided into the following six categories on the basis of the classification of questions by Quirk and Greenbaum (1973): yes/no -questions, alternative questions, *wh*-questions, tag questions, multiple questions, and statement questions. The reason for not using a fixed category in addition to the absence of a fitting categorization was that the intention of the present study was to describe the structures of the questions and following categorization provided the best opportunity

for this kind of analysis. In this categorization yes/no -questions refer to questions that prompt for a simple yes or no answer e.g. *Have you seen Bob today?* or *Could we meet on the 26th?* Alternative questions refer to questions that incorporate two or more alternative possibilities for the recipient to answer within the question e.g. *Should we go there today or tomorrow?* or *Shall we take the train or the bus? Wh*-questions refer to questions beginning with a *wh*-word (see complete list of *wh*-words in chapter 2.2) that require a more elicit answer e.g. *What did you think about the play?* or *Who was that boy throwing the ball?* Tag questions refer to declarative statements that were formed into questions by adding an interrogative fragment known as a question tag in the end of the clause e.g. *She was your sister, wasn't she?* or *It's a beautiful day, isn't it?* The multiple questions category consisted of two different kinds of multiple questions. The first were questions that involve two or more questions phrased as one e.g. *Where can I get one of those and how does it work?* or *I would like to ask what do you want to do?* and the second were questions that include a double interrogative e.g. *Do you know what time it is?* The previously mentioned question has two questions embedded within itself: one being whether the addressee knows the answer to the *wh*-question and the other being the content in the *wh*-element. In addition to these I have added a category of statement questions that refer to question that are not grammatically questions but rather statements or declarations that are indicated as questions only with the inclusion of the question mark. In face-to-face communication this would be indicated with a rising intonation, rising of one's eyebrow or another visual cue. Examples of statement questions are *I hope everything is well?* or *Maybe we can meet?* No category was required for unidentified questions since all the questions could be easily fitted into the previously mentioned six categories.

On grade level 2 the majority of questions were yes/no -questions. Typical examples of these were questions concerning upcoming English courses e.g. *Do you know if there's any good english-course in England this summer?* and *Do you have a new course to next august.* Other questions also concerned recalling past event such as *Do you remember our first boxing match in Finland?* or asking information about the recipient e.g. *Are you get new job yet?* Despite the fact that many of these questions were requests for more detailed information they were analysed strictly grammatical whether they would be answered with a simple yes or no answer. For example questions such as *Do you know good languages course for summer.* and *Do you know good english corse in there?* were grammatically requesting information whether the recipient

knows the answer or not, despite that in social conventions such a yes or no answer would be considered impolite.

On grade level 2 there were only two alternative questions where answer alternatives were given within the question: *Should I read articles or just repeat the text book?* and *Are you, by the way, going to continue teaching english next autumn or is somebody else going to?* Typical examples of *wh*-questions were questions concerning what to study for an English test e.g. *What I have to study before exam?* and *What you recommented to learn before test?* or concerning the well-being of the recipient e.g. *How are you now?* On grade level 2 there were only two tag questions both from the same writer: *The fishing trip was great, wasn't it?* and *That was surprise, isn't it?* In the texts there were basically two kinds of multiple questions: ones with multiple questions within a single sentence e.g. *I'm writing to your because you forgat something, and offcourse because I'd like to know how are your and how was your trip at home.* and ones with a double interrogative e.g. *AND AUTUM, have you ANY COURSE in SOLKILA (SAKK), DOYOU KNOW?* The latter sentence has two questions combined: the one beginning with *have you* and the other *doyou know?* Since both these questions were within a sentence it was considered a multiple question. Finally there were several questions that would be grammatically regarded as statements if they did not have a question mark in the end of the sentence. Examples of such questions were questions concerning wondering e.g. *I wonder is there any good language courses in England this summer?* and mere statements e.g. *I come to your place next month?*

The distribution of the structures of questions from grade level 2 is presented in Table 9. The majority of the questions were yes/no -questions (42.6%) followed by wh-questions (20.8%) and multiple questions (19.8%).

Table 9. The structures of questions on grade level 2.

Structure	**Number of questions**
yes/no -question	43 (42.6%)
alternative question	2 (1.98%)
wh-question	21 (20.8%)
tag question	2 (1.98%)
multiple question	20 (19.8%)
statement question	13 (12.9%)
Total	101 (100%)

On grade level 3 the typical yes/no -questions concerned recalling events or people such as *Do you remember that problem we talked about in Toronto?* or *do you remember her?* and suggestions about future events such as *Can you come in Finland December?* or *Are you still coming to Solkila next fall?* On this grade level there were no alternative questions. On this grade level, however, the slight majority of questions were *wh*-questions. In addition to the common *How are you?*, that accounted for 16 of the *wh*-questions on this level, the questions included asking about the recipient or about his or her whereabouts with questions such as *How is your engineering studies?* and *What is Toronto like, nowadays?* The *wh*-questions also included asking opinions of people and other matters such as *What did you think about Puijo which we visited last time you were here?* or *What do you think if I visit to you next month?* Again there were only two tag questions in the whole data from grade level 3, this time from different participants: *Quite a "babe", Isn't she:)??* and *YOU LOST YOUR WATCH, DIDN'T YOU?* There was clear decrease in multiple questions compared to the data on grade level 2 with only four instances consisting a double interrogative e.g. *I just wanted to ask how are you?* and *OR MAYBE I SHOULD ASK YOU WHAT TIME IS IT?* These six instances of statement questions included suggestions such as *But anyway, I suggest a meeting in June 27?* and mere statements most likely concerned with recalling events *We stopped for a coffee at my parents house and we stayed over for a sauna instead?*

The distribution of the structures of questions from grade level 3 is presented in Table 10. The clear majority of the questions were either *wh*-questions (44.0%) or yes/no -questions (42.9%), together covering for more than 85% of all the questions from this grade level.

Table 10. The structures of questions on grade level 3.

Structure	**Number of questions**
yes/no -question	39 (42.9%)
alternative question	0 (0.00%)
wh-question	40 (44.0%)
tag question	2 (2.20%)
multiple question	4 (4.40%)
statement question	6 (6.59%)
Total	91 (100%)

On grade level 4 the typical yes/no -questions included recalling events such as *Do you remember how scared you was the first time you got on the rouler couster?* or *Hi, remember me from that annual meeting in Toronto last october.*, inquiring about possible future visits with questions such as *So are you comming to this next symposium in London at summer?* or *Could you possibly come to Finland next summer, for example in July?* and inquiries about the recipient such as *Did you get well back home.* or *Do you think of me every time you are wondering what time is it?* On this level there was only one alternative question about sending or keeping the recipient's watch: *Should I send it to you or keep it here for your next visit?* Again a great deal of the *wh*-questions was exact or slightly altered forms of the question *How are you?* accounting for 9 of the *wh*-questions. Other *wh*-questions included inquiring about the recipient's feelings about certain matters such as *How did you find the liaison course we took apart?* or *What did you think about the ATV-safari we went through?* and activities such as *What have you been doing?* or *What have you been doing after the meeting of last Autumn?*

On grade level 4 there were a total of four tag questions concerning either companies *I think that it quiet different than the Finnish Defence Forces, is it?* and *But that's how it is in forest industry, especially with repairing harvesters, isn't it?* or recalling past events *We really had a great week together, didn't we?* and *Also the evening at the theatre was lovely, wasn't it?* It is also notable that all the tag questions were from the texts of different participants. In accordance to level 3 the frequency of multiple questions was quite low with only two instances: *PLEASE WRITE TO HOW IS YOUR JUNE AND I COULD FLY OVER TO SEE YOU, WHAT DO YOU THINK?* and *Hmm, are you busy next month, I thought maybe we could meet?* The statement questions on grade level 4 included statements where the writer expressed that he or she hoped for matters to be in a certain manner such as *So here You are, I hope You have healed of the flu You got when we where hunting moose last saturday?* or *I HOPE THAT YOUR KNEE IS IN ORDER NOW?*, short clauses without a verb such as *NEXT SUMMER MAYBE?* or *Maybe next summer?* and mere statements such as *We could meet there again?* or *NEXT TIME YOU REMEMBER TO DRIVE ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE ROAD?* The statement questions also included statements beginning with the word maybe: *Maybe we could meet then?* and *Maybe we could spend our time together here in Finland in this summer?*

The distribution of the structures of questions from grade level 4 is presented in Table 11. The majority of the questions were again either yes/no -questions (34.8%) or

wh-questions (31.9%), together covering for more than 65% of all the questions from this grade level.

Table 11. The structures of questions on grade level 4.

Structure	**Number of questions**
yes/no -question	24 (34.8%)
alternative question	1 (1.45%)
wh-question	22 (31.9%)
tag question	4 (5.80%)
multiple question	2 (2.90%)
statement question	16 (23.2%)
Total	69 (100%)

Looking at the distribution of the structures of questions from all the three levels combined, more than two out of five (40.6%) questions have the structure of a yes/no -question. The second most common question structure was the *wh*-question with almost a third (31.8%) of the questions are from this category. These two structures combined cover for more than 70 per cent of the questions from all levels. The third most popular structure was the statement structure with a little more than one out of ten (13.4%) questions from this category. After this the fourth common structure was multiple questions with a little less than one out of ten (9.96%) questions formed with this structure. In the data there were only a few tag questions covering for only a little more than three per cent (3.07%) of the questions. The most rare question structure was the alternative question structure consisting of only a little more than one per cent (1.15%) of all the questions. The distribution of the structures of questions from all the grade levels combined is presented in Table 12.

Table 12. The structures of questions on grade levels 2, 3 and 4 combined.

Structure	**Number of questions**
yes/no -question	106 (40.6%)
alternative question	3 (1.15%)
wh-question	83 (31.8%)
tag question	8 (3.07%)
multiple question	26 (9.96%)
statement question	35 (13.4%)
Total	261 (100%)

Now that I have presented the results of the present study in the next chapter I will move on to discussing these results and how they are used to answer the presented research questions.

5 DISCUSSION

In this chapter I will discuss the results presented in the previous chapter. First I will discuss the results concerning the developmental stages of the questions and then move on to discuss those concerning the structures of the questions. In this chapter I will also compare my findings with previous studies conducted in the field.

The purpose of the present study was to find out the language competence of Finnish adults concerning the use of questions in written assignments in English. This was achieved by conducting a descriptive research on the naturally occurring phenomena of question development in terms of developmental stages on existing data from the National Certificate of Language Proficiency examinations. In addition to this, the structures of the questions were also analyzed. The study had two major research questions and two more detailed research sub-questions. In this chapter I will present the answers to the research questions in the order they explicitly presented and discuss the results of the study. I will begin by discussing the results concerning developmental stages and then move on to discussing the results concerning the structures and functions in relation to the structures of the questions.

The first research question was *What are the typical developmental stages concerning questions in the texts of adult learners of English as a second language on levels A2-B2?* In order to answer this research question and the first sub-question *How are the questions divided between the different stages?*, texts from 105 written assignments from the National Certificate of Language Proficiency examinations were chosen. Texts were gathered from three different grade levels, levels 2, 3 and 4 (corresponding to CEFR A2-B2), with 35 texts from each level. All questions from these texts were then analyzed according to the developmental stages presented by Pienemann et al. (1998). The results showed that on both grade levels 2 and 3 the majority of the questions were from stage 3, 38.6% of the questions from level 2 and 31.9% of the questions from level 3. On grade level 4, however, the majority of questions were from stage 4 (26.1% of the questions). It appeared that the amount of stage 3 questions per cent wise decreased moving from lower grade levels to higher

grade levels. This could be explained by the notion that on higher levels there was more variety in the questions as the learner's skills in the language increase when in lower levels the questions mostly are formed with more simple do-fronting. Looking at all three levels combined, the majority of the questions (30.3%) were from stage 3 making it the most typical developmental stage in the group.

On grade level 2 the second most common developmental stage was stage 4 with 24.8% of the questions from this stage. On grade level 3 the second most common stage was stage 1 with 23.1% of the questions from this stage and on grade level 4 the second most common stage was stage 2 with 21.7%. Thus it appeared that there was much more variation concerning the second most common stage as each grade level produced a different stage. The popularity of stage 1 questions on grade level 3 can be explained with vast use of the popular phrase *How are you?* with slight variation as the increase of language skills appeared to increase politeness whereas on the lower level the letters and emails were more straight to the point without these kind of social gestures. Some the popularity of stage 2 questions on grade level 4 can be explained by the extensive use of level 2 questions of a single writer who contributed one third (five out of fifteen) of the questions from this level. Without the effect of this single writer, on grade level 4 the second most popular questions would be from stage 1 and stage 2 would be only the fourth most popular stage. Taking a larger amount of texts would have helped to downsize the influence of a single writer. Looking at all three levels combined the second most used developmental stage was stage 4 with 24.1% of the questions from this stage.

On grade level 2 the third most common developmental stage was stage 2 with 12.9% of the questions from this stage. On grade level 3 the third most common stage was stage 4 with 22.0% of the questions from this stage, and on grade level 4 the third most common stage was stage 1 with 17.4%. From all three levels combined the third most used developmental stage was stage 1 with 15.7% of the questions from this stage. The fourth most common developmental stage from all the three levels was stage 2 with 13.4% of the questions from this stage; only a little more than two per cent less than stage 1. After this came stage 5 with only 8.05% of the questions from this stage and least used developmental stage was stage 6 with the frequency of 3.07%. In addition to these stages, 5.36% of the questions were marked as unidentifiable concerning their developmental stage.

Comparing these results with previous studies, Roiha (2008) for example also studied the developmental stages of questions by Finnish learners of English in the written products of students aged from 13 to 16. In her study she found out that the three most typical developmental stages were stage 3 with 36%, stage 4 with 30% and stage 1 with 16%. Compared to the findings of the present study where the most typical developmental stages were stage 3 with 30.3%, stage 4 with 24.1% and stage 1 with 15.7% it can be said that the results of these studies correlate quite highly. It can be thus concluded that the division of the most typical developmental stages concerning questions in written products is very similar among Finnish students in regular classroom activities and adults in official language tests. However, the results are quite different when compared to the studies of Spada and Lightbown (1999: 13) who studied the developmental stages of questions by native French-speaking children aged from 10 to 12 studying English and in whose studies 75% of the questions were from stage 4, 21% from stage 5 and 16% from stage 1. It should be noted nevertheless that the research settings of Spada and Lightbown (1999) were very different from that of Roiha and the present study, and that their students were exposed to a high frequency of stage 4 and 5 questions through several different tasks and activities.

The second sub-question in the present study was *Is there any difference between the groups including advanced language users and less advanced language users?* As mentioned before, there was variation in the division of the developmental stages on different grade levels. On grade levels 2 and 3 the most typical developmental stage was stage 3 and on grade level 4 it was stage 4. Moving from lower grade levels to higher grade levels the dominance of stage 3 questions appeared to diminish: on level 2 38.6% of the questions were from stage 3, on level 3 31.9% and on level 4 only 15.9%. As stated before, this could be explained by the increase of the variety of questions from different stages when moving from lower level to higher levels. Looking at the variety of questions from different stages, there is a definite increase on higher levels: on level 2 a great majority of the questions are from stages 3 (38.6%) and 4 (24.8%) whereas on level 3 a majority of the questions are from stages 3 (31.9%), 1 (23.1%) and 4 (22.0%), and on level 4 the majority is divided between four stages: 4 (26.1%), 2 (21.7%), 1 (17.4%) and 3 (15.9%). Also moving from less advanced level to more advanced levels the amount of questions from stages 5 and 6 increased from 6.93% (stage 5 on level 2) to 10.1% (stage 5 on level 4) and from 1.98% (stage 6 on level 2) to 5.80% (stage 6 on

level 4), where the latter almost tripled per cent wise. This can be explained by the increase in knowledge about other forms of questions, in this case tag questions.

The amount of unidentifiable questions decreased moving from lower grade level to higher level from 6.93% on level 2 to 5.49% on level 3 and to 2.90% on level 4. This can be explained by the fact that as the language skills increase the questions become better formed and clearer. A very interesting notion in data was the decrease of questions altogether moving from less advanced users to more advanced user of language: on level 2 there were a total of 101 questions, on level 3 a total of 91 and on level 4 only a total 69 questions. Some of this decrease can be explained by the different assignment on level 2 that appeared to be specifically aimed at producing questions (Assignment A). However, this does not explain the decrease in questions moving from level 3 to level 4 where the assignments were identical on both levels. One explanation for this could be that on less advanced levels the language users have used questions in circumstances that would not necessarily require a question and on more advanced levels, as the language skills have increased, these questions have been replaced by other means of language use. An interesting further study would be to research if this is a real phenomenon or whether it was only present in the present study for one particular reason or another.

All in all in light of the present study it can be stated that there were in fact various differences between the groups of less advanced and more advanced language users. However, further studies with greater amounts of data are required to receive more accurate results. The present study also supports the findings of Lightbown and Spada (1993: 63) that a learner does not leave a developmental stage behind after entering a new stage, as in this study the more advanced language learners included questions from both lower developmental stages as well as questions from higher developmental stages. Thus it appeared that knowledge of new kinds of questions, from higher developmental stages, were *added* into the repertoire of questions of the language learner instead of *replacing* previous knowledge about questions. Now that I have answered and discussed the first research question along with its sub-questions I will move on to answer the second research question concerning the structures and functions of questions.

The second major research question in the present study was *What are the structures of the questions in these texts?* In order to answer this research question the questions gathered from the data were also analyzed and categorized according to their

structure. In the absence of a clear given categorization of the structures of questions fitting the purposes of the present study, the questions gathered from the data were divided into the following six categories on the basis of the classification of questions be Quirk and Greenbaum (1973): yes/no -questions, alternative questions, *wh*-questions, tag questions, multiple questions, and statement questions. In the following discussion concerning the structures and functions in relation to the structures of the questions, I will begin with discussing the grade levels first separately and then all of them combined.

The results from the categorization of the questions from grade level 2 showed that the clear majority and almost half of the questions (42.6%) had the structure of a yes/no -question. Several reasons can be found to explain these results. First of all the yes/no -question is one of the most used question structures along with the *wh*-question structure in English and therefore it was only natural that it would occur several times in the data. For example the common question in everyday life *can you tell me the time?* is structurally a yes/no -question despite that it is not used to find out whether the recipient knows the time but rather to find out the actual time. The *wh*-question *what time is is?* is transformed into a yes/no -question for the reason that it is seen socially a more polite request. In this analysis similar questions were considered yes/no -questions despite their clear function to act as *wh*-questions and for this reason the frequency of yes/no -questions became quite high. However, this is unlikely to constitute for all appearances of the structure. The language users on grade level 2 can be considered less advanced language users and it is common for less advanced users to use questions from lower developmental stages. A large number of the yes/no -questions were formed with do-fronting, that places the questions to the third developmental stage, and it is consistent with the results concerning the developmental stages of the questions where stage 3 was found to be most commonly used developmental stage among less advanced language users.

On grade level 2 the second and third most used structures were *wh*-questions (20.8%) and multiple questions (19.8%) with almost the same frequency (one out of five questions) of use in the texts. The use of *wh*-questions can be explained by the notion that they are one of the two most common structures in English. The assignment on the majority of level 2 data of asking what to study for an upcoming test without a doubt contributed to the amount of *wh*-questions since basically most of the questions used in these inquiries were *wh*-questions beginning with the word *what*. The frequent

use of multiple questions can be explained by the notion that on level 2 the test-takers appeared to have difficulties producing grammatically correct questions and also appeared to be in a hurry to produce several questions in a single sentence. These two factors led to many of these questions to be categorized under the multiple questions category. A good example of this is the following question from level 2 *What do you think about my english, what thign I would be better learn more.*

The fourth most common structure on level 2 was the statement question structure that counted for 12.9 per cent of the questions. The reason for the occurrence of the structure can also be traced back to difficulties in producing questions which led, in addition to multiple question structures, to grammatically declarative statements that were intended to be questions. The intention was signalled with a question mark. Good examples of this are questions such as *I come to your place next month?* and *I HAVE TIME TO PRACTICE IN SUMMER, IF YOU CAN RECOMMEND ONE SUMMERCOURSE IN ENGLAND?* In addition to this, several of the statement questions were formed beginning the sentence with *I wonder*. The rare occurrences of tag questions (1.98%) can be explained by the developmental stage theory in which tag questions are at the highest stage and on grade level 2 the language users are unlikely to have reached this level yet. In addition, the similar rare occurrences of alternative questions can be explained to be due to the notion that they are not an extremely common structure in English and also perhaps by the context that proved to be quite unfruitful for this structure.

The results on grade levels 3 and 4 were similar to the extent that I will discuss them simultaneously. On both levels, the clear majority of the questions were either yes/no -questions (42.9% on level 3 and 34.8% on level 4) or *wh*-questions (44.0% on level 3 and (31.9% on level 4). The high frequency of yes/no -questions on these levels can be explained by similar reasons as on level 2: the fact of being one of the most common structure and for purposes of politeness. The developmental stage theory can also be applied with these results since a language learner does not leave behind previous developmental stages upon entering a new one (Lightbown and Spada 1993: 63) and therefore questions from the third developmental stage are also found in the language of advanced users. The high frequency of *wh*-questions can also be explained by the commonness of the structure and also because of another form of politeness. As mentioned in the results, both level 3 and 4 texts included a substantial amount of the very common greeting question *how are you?* in various slightly altered forms. In

addition these reasons, the context of the texts contributed to the frequency of *wh*-questions: writing a letter to a friend abroad will most likely include inquiries beginning with a *wh*-word such as *What have you been doing?* and *How is work?*

A rapid decrease of multiple questions on grade levels 3 (4.40%) and 4 (2.90%) would support the reasoning to their existence of level 2: as the language skills improve the writer will have less difficulties in producing grammatically correct questions. The absence or highly rare occurrences of alternative questions would imply that the context of the text did not support this particular structure, rather than that the skills of the writer were poor. The frequency of tag questions remained low, however, there was a slight increase on the structure on level 4. This would imply that even the writers on level 4 had not yet quite reached developmental stage six. The only clear difference between grade levels 3 and 4 concerned statement questions: on level 3 only 6.59 per cent of the questions contained this structure whereas on level 4 the per cent was 23.2. The statement structure appears on both levels 2 and 4 but on level 3 there appeared to be a clear absence of them. This can be explained due to the notion that the statement questions are quite different on the different levels: on level 2 they were mostly due to poor language whereas on level 4 they were typical expressions on spoken language implying a more advanced language use. Examples of such expressions are *Maybe next summer?* and *ANYTHING MAJOR HAPPENED IN YOUR LIFE?* Where in the latter the omission of the word *has* from the beginning of the question is a typical feature of spoken language of native English speakers. Thus it appears that writers on level 3 have mostly ceased to produce statement questions due to poor language skills but have yet to incorporate typical expressions of spoken language to their writing.

Looking at the results of the structures from all the three levels combined the clear majority of the questions were yes/no -questions (40.6% from the whole data) and *wh*-questions (31.8%) that together constituted for more than 70 per cent of the structures of all the questions. The results partly show why there only appears to be mainly two categories of questions in English concerning their structure. To minimize the effect of single participants and to gain more accurate results more studies should be conducted with greater numbers of data gathered from different sources. These results were not compared to any other studies for the reason that other studies on the structures of questions have used various different categorizations and the comparison would bear very little fruit. Despite using the same categorization the structures of the questions, the results were not compared with the results of Danileiko (2005) for two reasons. First in

Danileiko's thesis there was no explicit quantitative material presented to compare it to and secondly because of the very different setting of the data, the questions were from mostly native Americans speaking in a talk show setting, and thus the comparison between the results of the present study and that of Danileiko's would have very little relevance.

Now that I have answered all of the four research questions I set out to answer in this study and discussed the results concerning the developmental stages and the structures of the questions, I will move onto the final chapter where I will present the conclusions drawn from this study.

6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I will present the conclusions I have drawn from the present study. I will begin by describing how the study was conducted every step of the way and then move onto how the results were found out and how they compared to other studies, and finally to the conclusions that could be made. Within this chapter I will also analyze the short-comings and successes of the study and give suggestions to further studies.

The aim of this study was to examine and find out the typical developmental stages of questions produced by adult Finnish English as a second language -learners from the National Certificate of Language Proficiency (NC) examination material. In addition to this, the study also aimed to find out the typical structures of the questions used in this material. In order to gain answers to these questions, from the vast NC material, including both written and spoken language, written assignments were chosen as the best data for the purposes of the analysis. In the data there were various different types of written assignments and from these types three assignments were chosen on the basis that they appeared to generate questions. All the chosen assignments were either informal letters or emails targeted to an imaginary recipient in an English speaking country and guided their form to some extent.

The NC examination material is graded on a scale from one to six (corresponding to CEFR levels A1-C2) and from the material three grade levels were chosen to present the typical language user: levels two, three and four (CEFR A2-B2). The reason why participant from level one were left out the study was that participants on this level would be likely to have difficulties producing any kinds of sentences in

English and would thus prove difficult to analyze. Another reason was the very small number of texts available on this level. Levels five and six were left out for the reason that participants on these were very unlikely to have problems forming question sentences and also for the small number of texts on level six. In addition to the previously mentioned reasons, only three levels were chosen in order to keep the study concise and for the ability to observe changes moving from one level to another.

From the chosen three levels 35 texts from each level were chosen as the data for the present study making it a total of 105 texts. The texts were chosen partially randomly with the requirement that each text would contain at least one question and that the assignments would be similar and thus comparable on different levels. The last requirement was, however, not totally successful due to the fact that the data was compiled from a different number of different assignments on different levels. Using the exact same assignments on each level would have provided the present study with more accuracy, however, a number of similar texts from all the levels were used and thus the different levels could be considered comparable.

A total of 261 questions from the chosen texts were then identified and analyzed in two different ways: once according to their development stage defined by Pienemann et al. (1988: 231-233) and again according to their structure including some connections to their function. The Pienemann et al. categorization (described in chapter 2.5) was chosen for the reason of being the most commonly used and academically acclaimed evaluation system in the field and that for this reason the present study would remain comparable with other studies conducted on the developmental stages of questions. Due to the lack of a universal categorization of the structures of questions, the questions were divided into the following six categories following the categorization of Quirk and Greenbaum (1973: 191-200): 1. yes/no -questions, 2. alternative questions, 3. *wh*-questions, 4. tag questions, 5. multiple questions, and 6. statement questions. The categorization was developed combining categorizations from different sources in order to suit the purposes of the present study. This decision turned out to be only half successful for reasons I will present later.

The result of the study showed that the majority of the questions from the chosen grade levels of A2-B2 were from developmental stages 3 with with 30.3 per cent of the questions from this stage, stage 4 with 24.1 per cent and stage 1 with 15.7 per cent. The results were strikingly similar to the ones conducted by Roiha (2008) on Finnish students aged from 13 to 16 in a classroom environment. The present study also showed

that there were several differences between less advanced language users (A2) and more advanced language users (B2). In the former group the majority of the questions were from developmental stage 3 whereas in the latter group the majority of the questions were from stage 4. The variation of questions from different developmental stages was clearly higher in the latter group inconsistent with the findings of Lightbown and Spada (1993: 63) who discovered that a person entering a new developmental stage does not leave previous stages behind but rather incorporates the new stage within the ones already known. The number of unidentified questions also decreased when moving from less advanced to more advanced users.

The results concerning the structures of the questions showed that an extremely clear majority of the questions were either yes/no -questions or *wh*-questions, the two most commonly acknowledged types of questions in the English language. Together these two structures constituted for over 70 per cent of the whole data. These results imply that with a different and perhaps more fitting categorization of the structures of questions in the current context, more information about the structures of questions could have been gained. Another possible explanation is that in the current context the structures of the questions were mainly limited to the two largest categories as shown in the results of the present study.

Nevertheless, I feel that despite its short-comings the present study was a successful one gaining information not only on the development of questions of adult learners of English as a foreign language, which itself is a less researched area in the field of second language acquisition, but also on how this information compares to studies conducted on children. To achieve more accurate results, greater amounts of data should be analyzed. This being said, I do feel that the present study was a small yet significant step in the vast research tradition concerned with the ultimate question of how a person learns a new language.

The greatest achievement of the present study was to discover that the developmental stages of questions by English as a second language learners appeared to be the same with adults and students in very different circumstances, which will hopefully shed more light into the process of learning a second language. Further studies should be made to gain more insight to whether the developmental stages of questions concerning children and adults learning English as a second language is in fact as similar as in this study it appeared. In the present study the texts were directed to an imaginary recipient and therefore it would also be interesting to find out to what

extent the context, whether the recipient is real or imaginary, influences the questions. Interesting further studies could also be conducted not only on the grammatical structures but on the functions the questions in the data. In addition to these, a third interesting further study would be to confirm or renounce the notion discovered in the present study that on higher grade levels the number of questions appeared to decrease.

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