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# Syntactic Aspects of Learner English

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## Syntactic Aspects of Learner English

- **Various syntactic properties of learner English**
- **The data are drawn from a new corpus of learner English (ULEC: Uppsala Learner English Corpus)**
- **Currently 136,000 words**
- **The structure of clauses and sentences**



## Syntactic Aspects of Learner English

- Table 1. Distribution of essays across level of English course in the senior high school data

•English	Girls	Boys
•A	29611 (118)	51649 (244)
•B	14054 (55)	17917 (74)
•C	1226 (5)	3332 (14)
•Total	44891 (178)	72898 (332)



## Syntactic Aspects of Learner English

- **The corpus currently has three "user groups":**
  - **Trainee teachers working on their degree projects (the actual compilers of the corpus)**
  - **Researchers**
  - **Teachers wishing to find out more about learner English and error analysis**



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- The Uppsala Learner English Corpus (ULEC) is a web-based collection of student essays by Swedish junior and high school students aged between 14 and 19.
- The material is collected as part of trainee teachers' degree projects. The essays are written in a web window, and when an essay is finished, it is saved on a server.
- An essay topic including introductory instructions for the students is set by the trainee teachers of English. They also enter information on school level, high school program, and categorize the writing tasks as 'argumentative', 'descriptive' or 'narrative'.



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**A quick look at the corpus**





## Syntactic Aspects of Learner English

Sample 1 from the corpus:

<D 20061123><G DESC><Y 1><K A><P Y>  
<S M><A 16>

**My first day at my dream job was fantastic. I'm carpainter and that is very fun, but i don't paint no car today but I wolk a ronde ther and look at the aduors people's some work ther to, it was a guy he was very good at painting car, he paint a dragon on the hud on the car it was grenn and red and he stading on fire.**



## Syntactic Aspects of Learner English

Sample 2: <D 20061123><G DESC><Y 1><K  
A><P Y><S M><A 16>

**My first day at my dream job should be in a garage. I would make cars going faster and change bumpers and all sort of styling, inside the car and outside the car and painting. It would be tools on every wall except one wall. That wall should be a big mirror. A stair in the middle of the big hall should go up to the room there all the designers and mechanics eat. I like to do the most of the job in the engine. My garage should take in all sort of cars, old as new, ugly and nice cars. My first day at the job: I'm on my way to my new garage.**



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Sample 3: <D 20080310><G DESC><Y 1><K  
A><P Y><S M><A 16>

**Im gona describe one of my oldest friend ho  
i have known sens i was a little boy. He is  
quite tall and is 17 years old. He lives in the  
house next to me and we have went in the  
same class forever. My friend has short hair  
and big foots. This person is my friend  
beacuse he is so nice to me and he is kind to  
everyone. We met because our parents was  
frineds. We use to play football and floorball  
together and drink on the weekends.**



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Sample 4: <D 20061208><G DESC><Y 1><K A><P S><S M><A 16>**My dream vacation was when me and my family went to Australia for three weeks. My sister was already there as an exchange student so me my mum and my dad came after half a year. My sister was staying at a place called Mildura, a small place near the desert. But we started our trip in Melbourne, one of the biggest cities i've ever been in. We took a bus to an island south of Melbourne and stayed there for three days, then we rented a car and started driving along the great ocean road. The great ocean road is said to be the most beautiful road in the world, it's along southern Australia all the way from Melbourne to a place called Warrambool (I think).**



## Syntactic Aspects of Learner English

Sample 5: <D 20061121><G DESC><Y  
2><K A><P Y><S M><A 18>

**When I whos a child. I had a terebull  
bike crach so i don't remember mutch.  
so i have a big memmore lost. somfing i  
do remember is the furst day at scool. I  
whos six yers old and i whos verry  
happe when i started. But son it became  
boring. my furs lesson in swedich and  
had teckt my books end pucht on. I reely  
wanted to hold on my furst day att  
scool.**



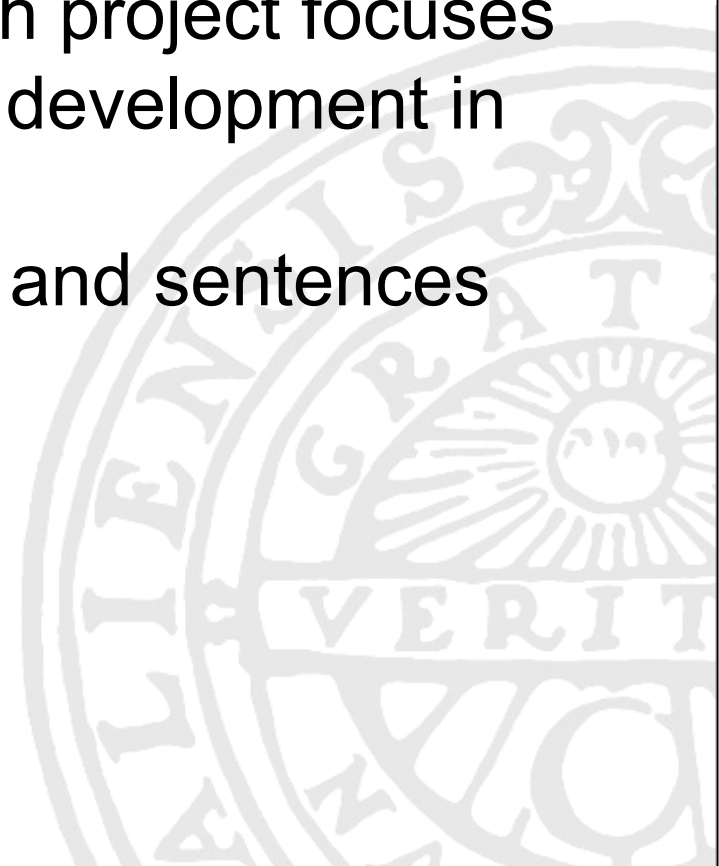
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## Syntactic Aspects of Learner English

### **On-going research:**

Our most recent research project focuses on one area of syntactic development in students' writing:

The structure of clauses and sentences





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## Syntactic Aspects of Learner English

Preliminary results show that many upper secondary students use features of spoken language in their writing, such as multiple clausal coordination, sentence fragments, and discourse markers:

***The last hotel was a beach hotel and where about 50m from the beach, pretty nice to wake up and go down and sleep again.. well.. I could tell more about this trip but I think this is enough, goodbye!***



## Syntactic Aspects of Learner English

Another feature of learner English involves the use of subclauses as main clauses:

***At first i didn't wanted to sitt next to it. But i am very satisfied now when i had done it. Because the tiger was must bigger then me. So it could eat me with only one bite***



## Syntactic Aspects of Learner English

Relative clauses (well-formed):

***•I did a lot of things that aren't available in sweden due to the climate down under.***

***•It was also nice to see the country (Ø) I was born in because my parents had told a lot of stories about our house there and things like that.)***

***•The best vacation (Ø) I ever have been on was actually this summer when I was in London with my family..***



## Syntactic Aspects of Learner English

### T-units:

- (a) I like the movie we saw about Moby Dick, the white whale.
- (b) The captain said / if you can kill the white whale, Moby Dick, / I will give this gold to the one / that can do it.
- (c) It is worth sixteen dollars.
- (d) They tried and tried.
- (e) But while they were trying / they killed a whale and used the oil for the lamps.
- (f) They almost caught the white whale.



## Syntactic Aspects of Learner English

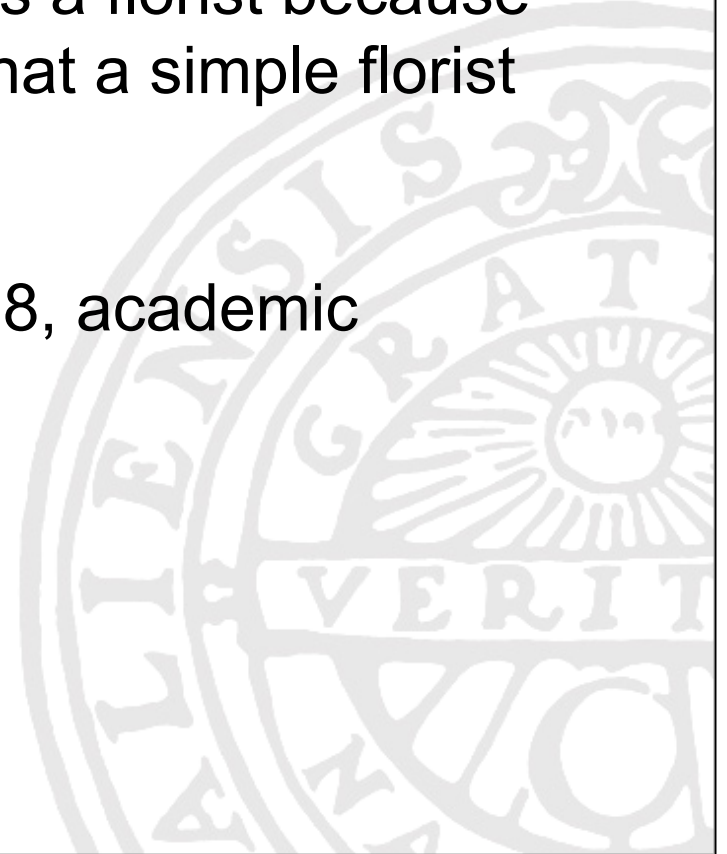
- (1) At first i didn't want to sitt next to it. But I'm very satisfied now when i have done it.  
*Because the tiger was must bigger then me.  
So it could eat it me with only one bite.*  
(female student, aged 16, vocational program)
- (2) [1 At first i didn't want to sitt next to it.][2 But I'm very satisfied now when i have done it / because the tiger was must bigger then me / so it could eat it me with only one bite.]



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- (3) [1 I will ofcourse have a second personality like all the other superheroes.]  
[2 He is going to work as a florist because no one would suspect that a simple florist would be a superhero.]

(female student, aged 18, academic program)





## Syntactic Aspects of Learner English

(4) I think we all know somehow thay [that] these supernatural forces exist, otherwise, we wouldn't be discussing these matters in the first place, because why would people discuss something that "doesn't exist" in many thousand years, and still be interested in it..

(male student, aged 18, academic program)



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(5) I have seen and heard about people that can talk to the dead and they say that they can have a dialog with people that have gone to the other side and i belive that these kind of tv-shows are fake.

(male student, aged 18, academic program)

