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JAPANSKA

# Acquisition of giving verbs in Japanese by Swedish students

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## 要旨

この論文の目的はスウェーデン人日本語学習者による授受動詞の習得難易度を調べることであった。授受動詞「あげる」「くれる」「やる」およびその敬語である「さしあげる」「くださる」、および授受動詞の助動詞的用法の3点を組み入れた多枝選択式テストを作成した。これら3点はいずれもスウェーデン語にはなく、困難が予想されるが、その詳細は不明である。被験者は中級と上級で、それぞれ10人ずつ計20人のデータを集めた。結果の解釈には第二言語習得理論を参照し、また先行研究による日本語を母語とする児童の習得や第二言語習得の結果と比較した。その結果、スウェーデン人の最も困難とするのは「あげる」と「くれる」の使い分けであり、反面、その敬語形の判断はかなり正しく使用されていた。

## ABSTRACT

This is a study of Japanese giving verbs and how Swedish university students acquire them. Japanese giving verbs are known to be complicated by involving the notions of *uchi* and *soto*, and difficult for foreigners to learn. A pilot test was conducted in order to examine the acquisition process of Japanese giving verbs by Swedish students. A multiple-choice test featuring three aspects of giving verbs in Japanese were included in the design of the test. They are 1)the three types giving verbs 'ageru', 'kureru' and 'yaru', 2)their honorific forms 'sashiageru' and 'kudasaru', and 3)their auxiliary usage such as 'te ageru'. The data was collected from two groups of students, one at an intermediate level and the other at an advanced level, each consisting of 10 students. The results was interpreted according to the theories of second language acquisition and compared with the results obtained from previous studies. These include studies for child acquisition by native Japanese as well as for learners of Japanese as second language. The results show that Swedish students struggle with the differentiating between 'ageru' and 'kureru' and the usage of auxiliary verbs, while appearing to have very little difficulty with the honorific forms. Although none of the three features tested exist in Swedish and the contrastive theory of second language acquisition predicts they are all difficult to acquire by Swedish learners, there seems to be some differences in detail.

Keywords: Japanese, second language acquisition, SLA, giving verbs, contrastive analysis

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The process of acquiring a foreign language is a very interesting thing to study. There are many aspects to analyze; what kind of mistakes students make, what kind of teaching methods are more effective etc. Still, interesting as the subject is, second language acquisition is a fairly new area of research. According to Oozeki (2010) the first major theory regarding second language acquisition was presented in the mid-1900's. This can probably be explained by the limited need of information on the subject before this time.

However, in today's global society this field of study has become much more relevant. Knowledge of a second language is now not only desirable but in many cases essential. In some lines of work even a third or fourth language is required. It's therefore important, now more than ever, to continue the research of how a foreign language is acquired, in order to find more efficient ways to learn and teach one.

As this is a thesis in the field of second language acquisition, it will focus on the acquisition of Japanese as a foreign language, specifically by Swedish native students. Studies on second language (L2) acquisition are dominated by English as target languages and those are the main works that have contributed in developing L2 acquisition theories. But even studies on Japanese as L2 are increasing, particularly by Chinese and Korean as speakers' mother tongue (L1). However, studies on L2 Japanese by Swedish L1 are still very limited up to date. They include studies on pronunciation (Nagano-Madsen and Markham 1998), perception of Japanese accent by Swedish learners (Nagano-Madsen and Ayusawa 2000), acquisition of Japanese grammar (Nagano-Madsen, Gustafsson-Okamoto, and Shimizu, to appear).

In a discussion with fellow Swedish students it became apparent that one of the things we generally have difficulties with when learning Japanese is the different variations of the giving verbs. In Swedish, like in English, we have only one verb that can be used regardless of circumstances. However in Japanese it is a little more complicated. Harasawa (2012) describes two versions of the giving verb depending on something he calls *uchi* (inside) and *soto* (outside). These are very interesting concepts that apply to many aspects of Japanese.

Basically the former describes the speaker himself and those in his “inner circle”; i.e. family and close friends, while the latter can refer to anyone outside of it. . Applying these concepts, the giving verbs in Japanese can be:

- **Ageru** is used when the receiver is “outside”.
- **Kureru** is used when the receiver is “inside”.

In addition to the well-known concept of uchi and soto that are also reflected in the use of giving verbs, Japanese has a well-developed honorific system that can be combined with the giving verbs.

- **Sashiageru** is used in place of ageru when the giver is in a lower position than the receiver
- **Kudasaru** is used in place of kureru when the giver is in a higher position than the receiver.

Otani and Steedman (2010) also describe a fifth verb, **Yaru**, which is a less polite version of ageru.

Given the number of giving verbs used in Japanese, and the sometimes complex rules of which ones are applicable to each situation, it is no wonder it can sometimes be unclear to a student of Japanese which one is best to use. In this thesis I therefore want to look at how Swedish students acquire these different verbs and their usage. As for the process of second language acquisition past research has given us three major theories; Contrastive analysis, Error classification and Interlanguage.

## 1.2 Previous research

Östlund (2007) has studied how Japanese giving verbs are translated into Swedish. Categorizing the verbs according to syntax and function, he has examined how they are used in the book *kokoro* and how they were translated into Swedish. He has concluded that the translation of the verb is complicated, and in accordance to the categorization there are several factors involved. A Japanese giving verb is not always directly translated into a Swedish equivalent; Swedish may not have an exact equivalent, or the focus of the sentence may change in translation. For example it can switch from the giver to the receiver, translating the giving verb into a receiving one. In other cases it can lead to

paraphrasing, where for instance the focus can change from the act of giving a letter to the beneficial act of writing said letter, changing the giving verb to the verb “to write”. As for the lack of exact equivalents to certain variations of the giving verbs the most prominent example is the different levels of honorific, where Swedish only has one basic form. Östlund also brings up the problematic case for translation regarding the auxiliary usage of the verbs (助動詞 *kyodoushi*), where the auxiliary usage of the giving verbs is generally simply omitted in the translation. In conclusion there is quite a difference between how the giving verbs are used in Swedish and Japanese.

Previous studies (Yun 2004) on the use of Japanese giving verbs have shown the strong tendency that learners of Japanese acquire *ageru* before *kureru* regardless of the mother tongue.

Previous study on language acquisition by Japanese children (Uyeno , Harada and Hashibe 2010) has shown that at a young age differentiating between *ageru* and *kureru* is very difficult. However the aspect of the giving verbs lastly acquired is the honorific versions.

### 1.3 History of language acquisition

In studying the acquisition, it would be inevitable to have the basic knowledge of second language acquisition. During the last 50-60 years, the study of second language acquisition has received much attention. The first major theory, contrastive analysis, was according to Ozeki (2010) popular in the mid-1900's. This theory predicts all the difficulties in second language acquisition are predictable from the structure of mother tongue. According to this theory, difficulties in acquiring Japanese giving verbs and honorifics by Swedish students are predictable because Swedish does not have equivalent features.

The second theory, based on the research by Corder (1967), allows a wider variety of reasons for students' mistakes, each of which was sought to be classified and explained. One example of these classifications is overgeneralization of target language, where the student applies one general rule to parts of the target language that are exempt from the rule (i.e. irregular verbs)

The third theory was presented by Selinker (1972). He stated that the language spoken by language students was neither their native tongue nor the target language, but rather a third, independent language structure somewhere between the two. This structure then grows closer to the target language as the acquisition process continues and progress is made. More detail description of L2 acquisition theories will be presented in Chapter 2.

What I intend to do in this thesis is collect data on the usage of the giving verbs by conducting a test for student at intermediate and advanced level of Japanese, and analyze the results according to the three theories mentioned above. Note the students at beginner level will not be included in the present study because the giving verbs will not appear in their text by the time of my investigation. I hope to find answers to the following questions:

#### 1.4 Problem, Aim, and Research questions

Although Japanese giving verbs have been studied to certain extent in relation to translation to Swedish (Östlund 2007), how Swedish students acquire Japanese giving verbs is largely unknown. Therefore, the aim of the present thesis is to conduct a pilot study for the acquisition process of Japanese giving verb by Swedish university students. The following three research questions are postulated.

1. How can we characterize the acquisition process of the giving verbs in Japanese by Swedish students as Interlanguage at two levels (intermediate and advanced)?
2. How can we explain the process with reference to the theories of second language acquisition?
3. Does the acquisition process of giving verbs in Japanese by Swedish differ from other learner groups?

## **2. Theories of second language acquisition**

As mentioned in the introduction, there are three major theories regarding second language acquisition. While they each have separate focuses, they are somewhat overlapping at points, and share some general ideas. In this chapter, major aspects of the second language acquisition are summarized and translated mainly from Ozeki (2010)

### **2.1 contrastive analysis**

Ozeki (2010) describes contrastive analysis as a theory that focuses on the differences between the learners native tongue and the target language. According to this theory the things the learner struggles with in second language acquisition is the parts that differs between the two languages. Dulay and Burt (1972) explains this is due to the fact that when the learner can not find the correct way to phrase something in the target language he will apply the linguistic rules of his native tongue, which will lead to errors where the two languages differ.

One example of this language transfer is phonetics. Professor Nagano-Madsen of Gothenburg University explains that in her observation Swedish students of Japanese tends to apply Swedish phonetic rules to Japanese in the beginning of the learning process, before they've acquired more correct Japanese phonetics.

Asakawa, Minematsu and Hirose (2006) have made a similar observation about Japanese students acquiring English. They point out that English has so called



stressed vowels, which are absent in Japanese and can therefore be a difficult aspect of the English phonology for Japanese students to master.

In accordance with these ideas, it is said that the less the target language has in common with the native tongue the more difficult it will be for the learner to acquire and the more mistakes will be made in the process. This is called linguistic distance. Wakou (2010) argues this point in a case study about Korean learners of Japanese. Since Japanese and Korean have many similarities, Korean learners can apply knowledge of their native language to their studies of Japanese and therefore have an advantage.

On the contrary, languages with little in common, like Swedish and Japanese, with few similarities in grammar and different writing systems, would be a greater challenge to acquire, and more mistakes would be made in the process.

## 2.2 Error analysis

Error analysis bears some resemblance to contrastive analysis and can be argued to be an extension of the previous theory. While contrastive analysis sought to explain all of the learners mistakes by differences between their native tongue and the target language, Error analysis allows a wider range of explanations.

As Ozeki (2010) explains it, as linguistic differences do not account for all the students mistakes, error analysis attempts to classify and categorize them. This theory argues that some mistakes are unrelated to the learners native language, and can be made by anyone regardless of first language, including children learning it as a native tongue.

### 2.2.1 The hierarchy of errors

An important part of the error analysis is the differentiating between mistakes and errors, and further between local errors and global errors. A mistake, according to Ozeki (2010), is a temporary misuse of an aspect of the language the student normally knows, caused by for example performance anxiety, while an error is repeated and based on a gap in the students knowledge of the target language. Furthermore if the error obstructs the over-all comprehension of the sentence it is referred to as a global error, while if it does not it is called a local error.

1) "Let's driving"

2) "My cats is happy"

Example 1, while using the incorrect tempus of the verb, is perfectly clear in meaning, making it a local error. Example 2 however is a global error as it can not be gathered simply from this sentence whether the speaker is referring to cats in singular or plural.

### 2.2.2 The necessity of errors

Ozeki (2010) argues that a certain amount of error is inevitable in any language acquisition process. Therefore they should be regarded as an essential part of the learning process, rather than something that must be sought to avoid. However, not all mistakes are necessary. Teacherled mistakes are mistakes founded on lacking or biased explanations given by teachers or derived from textbooks. For example if the tempus-form "verb+ing" is only introduced in the present-tense form, the student may falsely believe that it can only be used that way and make the sentence present tense when it should actually be past tense.

3I am running to the bus (right now)

4) I was running to the bus (this morning)

5\*) I am running to the bus (this morning)

Kobayashi (2009) shows an example of this in a case study of Japanese learners of English, specifically the acquisition of the word 'because'. A number of students in the study had a tendency to use the word when writing as one would when speaking, even when grammatically incorrect. When examining four books aiming to teach English to Japanese students, it became clear one of the books only used the word 'because' in dialogue, which could explain the students mistakes.

### 2.2.3 Language transfer

The idea of contrastive analysis of using the native language as a base and apply its linguistic rules to the target language is in error analysis referred to as 'language transfer'. However this can be both positive and negative. For example since between Swedish and Japanese the pronunciation of vowels is fairly similar the Swedish student learning Japanese would be able to apply the rules for pronunciation of vowels from the native to the target language, resulting in positive language transfer.

English however, is fairly different from Swedish when it comes to phonology so if the same student attempted to apply the rules for pronunciation of vowels from Swedish to English this would lead to incorrect pronunciation and a negative language transfer.

### 2.3 Interlanguage

The Interlanguage theory was presented by Selinker (1972) The basis of this theory is that learners of a foreign language speak neither their native language

nor the target language but an independent structure somewhere between the two referred to as an interlanguage structure.

In the beginning of the language acquisition process the interlanguage structure tends to draw most of its qualities from the learners native language, but as the process continues the structure will grow closer to the target language. However, Selinker also says that among learners of a foreign language only about 5% will reach the fluency of a native speaker. The vast majority of learners will instead eventually hit something referred to as stabilization and will always speak their interlanguage structure. The interlanguage theory does not discard the ideas of error analysis, instead error analysis is often applied to interlanguage structures, as in the case study of Harashima mentioned in 2.3.1.

### 2.3.1 Native language transfer in Interlanguage

Takawa (2007) has made a case study of interlanguage structures created by beginner Japanese students of English in term of the verb 'to be'. She has found that the students often omitted the copula verb when it was followed by another verb. As the copula verb is not present in the Japanese translation of the sentences this can be said to be caused by native language transfer. She goes on to show further examples of these kinds of language transfer, which concludes that the impact of the native language when first attempting to learn a foreign language is strong.

Harashima (2006) has done a similar study of the interlanguage structure of an advanced Japanese learner of English. In this study the learners interlanguage structure bore more resemblance to standard English, however still maintained some aspects of Japanese including misuse of determined form and a habit of mixing Japanese vocabulary into the English structure. This could be an

argument for the theory of stabilization as the subjects interlanguage structure still contained Japanese elements despite having studied English for several years and having lived in an English speaking country.

### 2.3.2 Overgeneralization of target language

An interlanguage structure does not necessarily have to be based on native language transfer. Ozeki (2010) argues that it can also be created by overgeneralization of the target language. When one rule can be applied to several aspects of the target language, students may overgeneralize and apply the same rule to aspects of the language that are actually exempt from said rule. A common example of this is irregular verbs.

6) waited for you.

7) I wanted to speak to him.

8\*) I goed to school.

As this overgeneralization only handles the target language it can be made by any learner, unrelated to their native tongue, and even occurs among children learning the language as their native tongue.

### 3. Translation of the verbs of giving into Swedish

The three specific aspects of Japanese giving verbs that will be tested in the present thesis do not have an equivalent system in Swedish. First, Swedish has only one giving verb; "att ge" compared to three possibilities in Japanese – *ageru*, *kureru*, and *yaru*. The Swedish giving verb "att ge" can be used regardless of linguistic empathy, relationship and social status while Japanese giving verb cannot.. Second, there is no equivalence to the honorific form for giving verbs in Swedish. It is not impossible to express respect and politeness in Swedish but not in such a systematic way as it is in Japanese by having separate verb forms. Thirdly, the use of the same form 'ageru' and 'kureru' can be either as main verb for the action of giving or it can be used as auxiliary verb after a main verb to add nuance. Such a feature does not exist in Swedish.

#### 3.1 Translation of *ageru/kureru/yaru* into Swedish

As Swedish has only one verb of giving where Japanese has three, in translation from the latter to the former alternate verbs and paraphrasing can sometimes be used to capture the right nuance of the sentence. Two examples of this are from Östlund (2007):

9a) *Kodomo ni yatta hakudö* 'The coin I gave to the child'

9b) *Slanten som barnet hade fått.* 'The coin the child had gotten'

In this case the verb of giving is translated into one of receiving, putting the focus on the child receiving the coin rather than the person from whom it received it.

10a)... *Ani e yatta tegami* 'A letter I had given to my brother'

10b) *Ett brev som jag hade skrivit till min storebror...* 'A letter I had written for my brother.'

Here, the verb of giving has been changed to the verb 'to write', empathizing the act of writing the letter, rather than the act of giving it.

### 3.2 Translation of honorific language

Honorific language is an important part of Japanese. However, as the honorific versions of the verbs of giving have no counterparts in Swedish, and the nuance of difference in social status will most often be lost in translation.

An example of this is from the translation of *Kokoro*, taken from Östlund (2007). The honorific 'sashiageru' has been replaced by the verb 'to bring', which in itself has no indication of politeness.

### 3.3 Translation of auxiliary verbs

In Japanese, a verb of giving can be added to another verb to show that the action has a benefactor. Swedish, however, does not have this element, which can make it difficult to translate. The following two examples of translations are taken from Östlund (2007)

11a) *Hitori moratte yarō ka.* 'Should we get one [of the children]?'

11b) *Ska vi adoptera ett?* 'Should we adopt one [of the children]?'

In the original sentence a verb of giving is included, marking the potential child to be adopted as a benefactor of the adoption. However the verb of giving is lost in the translation, removing the nuance of benefice in the sentence.

12a) *Okusan wa watashi ni [...] to itte kureta* '[Senseis] wife told me...'

12b) *Senseis hustru var vänlig nog att säga...* 'Senseis wife was kind enough to say...'

In this case paraphrasing has been used in order to keep the sense of the speaker being the benefactor, showing that it is possible to maintain the nuance created by auxiliary verbs when translating into Swedish.

In terms of second language acquisition theories, this means there is gap between the two languages in this aspect, which can be presumed to cause ungrammatical interlanguage structures during the learning process.

## 4. Investigation

### 4.1 Test material and hypothesis

In order to map the acquisition process of Japanese giving verbs I have constructed a test material consisting of 10 questions. Each question aims at testing one of the three characteristics in the giving verbs in Japanese - linguistic empathy, honorific levels, and the use of giving verb as auxiliary verb rather than main verb. Although all the three features do not exist in Swedish and therefore can be problematic by Swedish learners, it is not clear if all the features are equally difficult for the Swedish students to acquire. My hypothesis is that Swedish students will primarily show more difficulties with the different honorific levels. Differentiation of ageru and kureru is known to be problematic in acquisition (Uyeno, Harada and Hashibe, 2010), but as this is covered pretty well in the textbooks used in my department, I think this feature may be less problematic. As for the auxiliary use of the giving verb, I have no prediction.

The 10 questions were all multiple choice with the following five possible answers and the entire test is shown below.

a)ageru b) kureru c) sashiageru d)kudasaru e) yaru

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Undersökning av användning av japanska verb av svenska studenter.

Komplettera nedanstående meningar med något av följande alternativ:

a)あげた    b)くれた    c)さしあげた    d)くださった    e)やった

1)彼は私に本を\_\_\_\_\_

Han gav mig en bok

2)私は彼女に本を\_\_\_\_\_

Jag gav henne en bok

3)彼女は私の妹に本を\_\_\_\_\_

Hon gav min lillasyster en bok



4)彼女たちは花子に本を\_\_\_\_\_

Dom gav Hanako en bok

5)私は社長に本を\_\_

Jag gav chefen en bok

6)私は愛犬に餌を\_\_

Jag gav hunden mat

7)私はクラスメイトに本を\_\_

Jag gav min klasskamrat en bok

8)私は彼女に説明をして\_\_\_\_\_

jag förklarade för henne

9)彼女は私に見せて\_\_\_\_\_

Hon visade mig

10)彼は娘に読んで\_\_\_\_\_

Han läste för sin dotter

\*\*\*\*\*

## 4.2 Participants, material, and procedure

I have conducted the test in two groups, both studying Japanese full-time at university level and each consists of 10 students. Group A is an intermediate group who has studied Japanese for three semesters. Group B is an advanced group who has studied Japanese for 5 semesters. All the students in Group B have studied either one of two semesters in a partner university in Japan. The participants were the students from each group present during the lecture the test was distributed, and no advance notice had been given. The test was answered anonymously.

## 4.3 Limitations of the study

### 4.3.1 Participants

As the test was conducted anonymously I do not have any information regarding the language background of the participants, wherefore it is possible that some of the students have a mother tongue other than Swedish, which might have affected the outcome.

I also found out after the test was conducted that the students of group A had prior to this had taken a similar test as part of their Japanese course, and thereby had recently revised the giving verb, which has likely affected the outcome to some extent.

#### 4.3.2 Exclusion of the verb *morau*

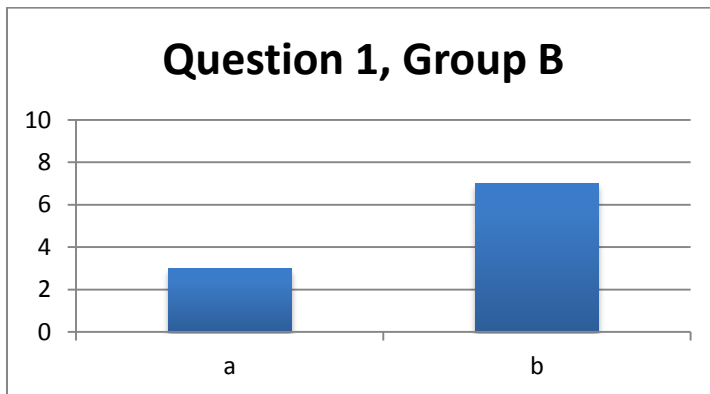
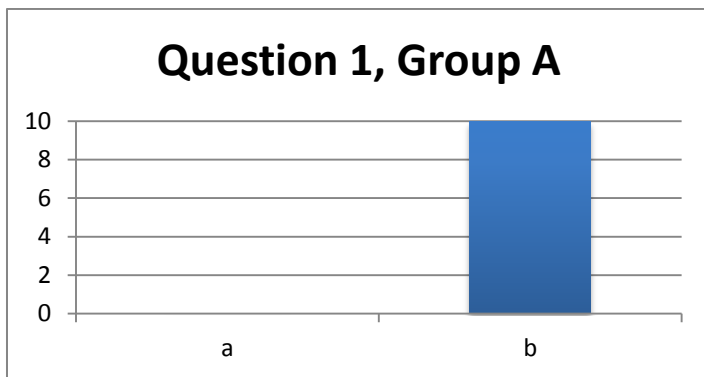
When talking about the Japanese giving verbs, one would usually include the verb *morau*, 'to receive'. However I have chosen to exclude this verb in order to narrow down the extent of the study.

## 5. Results and analysis

The results will be presented in bar charts in order to clearly display the difference in answers between the two groups. For each question, students were asked to choose one of the five possibilities: a) ageru b) kureru c) sashiageru d) kudasaru e) yaru

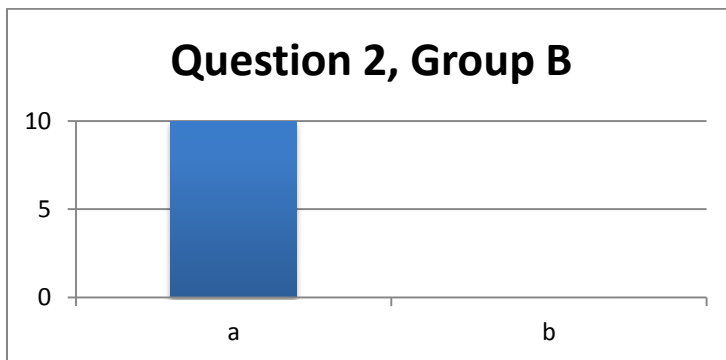
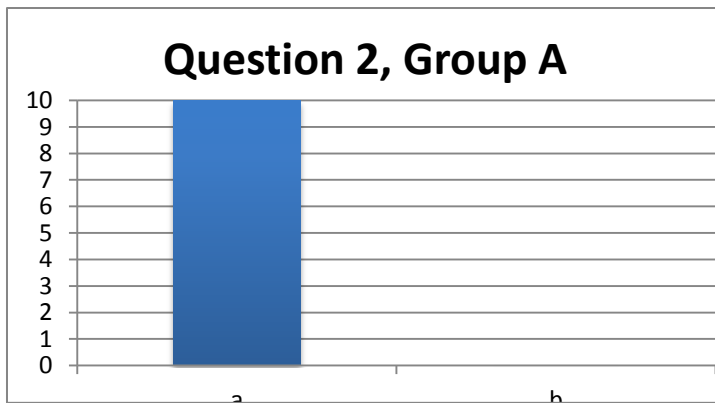
### 5.1 Ageru/Kureru differentiation

Question 1; *Kare wa watashi ni hon wo \_\_\_\_* 'He gave me a book'



The results of this question are quite surprising. As the speaker in the sentence is the receiver, *kureru (b)* is the only grammatically correct alternative, something 100% of the students in group A (intermediate level) got correctly. Among the students in group B (advanced) on the other hand, 3 out of 10 students answered *ageru (a)*. In other words, the intermediate students answered this question more correctly, however this can probably be said to be due to the recent revising of giving verbs made by this group of students.

Question 2; *Watashi wa kare ni hon wo \_\_\_\_* 'I gave him a book'

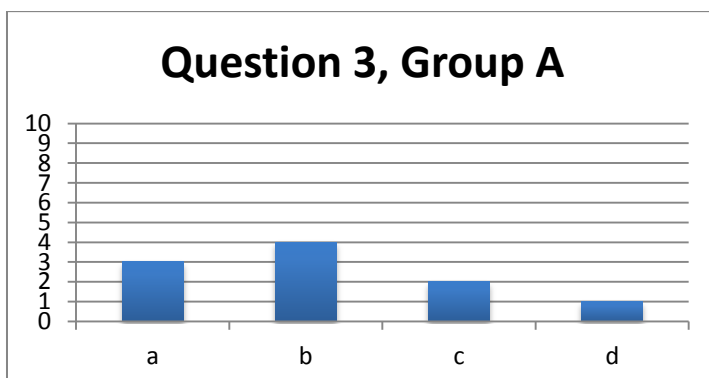


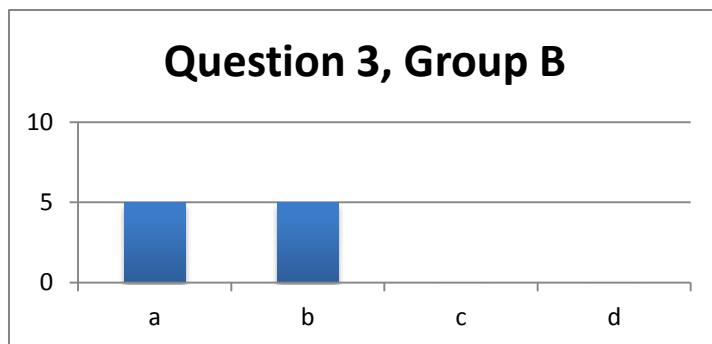
In this example the speaker is the giver, making the right answer *ageru (a)*, something all students of both groups got correctly.

## 5.2 Third party involvement and linguistic empathy

Questions three and four were originally intended to examine linguistic empathy, however they also came to bring up the issue of honorific language.

Question 3; *Kanojo wa watashi no imōto ni hon wo \_\_\_* 'she gave my little sister a book'





This question, involving a family member of the speaker as the receiver, brings up two key issues regarding differentiating between the five giving verbs. Firstly whether the speaker should take the standpoint of their sister (the receiver), or the third person (the giver). Seeing as family members can be considered an extension of the self, and therefore in Harasawa's terminology *uchi*, the standpoint taken in this case should be the one of the sister

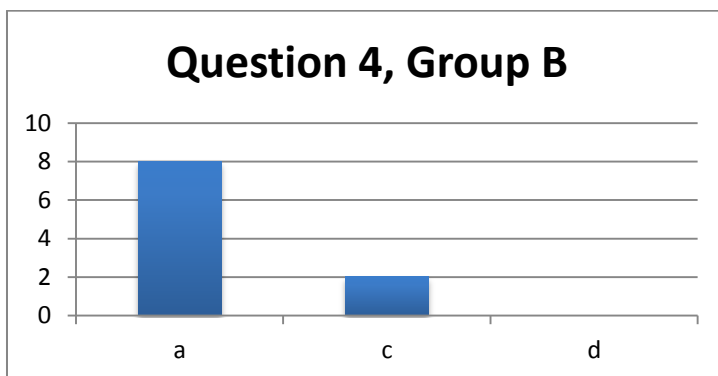
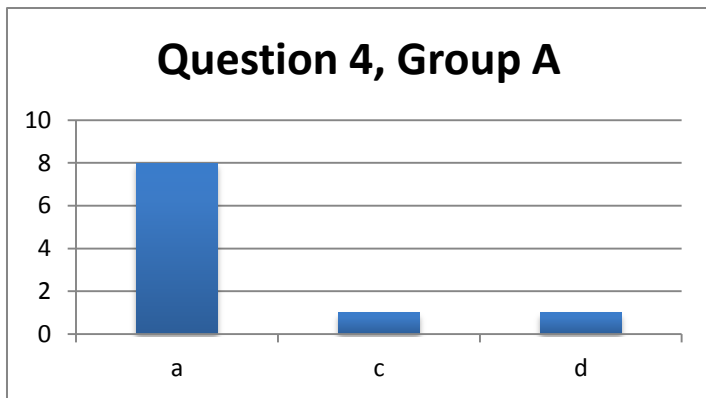
However in both groups only 5 out of 10 students chose the standpoint of the sister, and the other 5 that of the third person. While questions 1 and 2, which were straight to the point and involving only the speaker and one other person, seemed to prove fairly easy to the students, it appears that determining linguistic standpoint becomes more difficult when a third party is included.

One possibility is that the students have created some form of interlanguage structure, where in the cases the speaker is not directly involved in the sentence, the linguistic standpoint of either party can be taken. As in this case a mistake in determining linguistic standpoint does not interfere with the overall comprehension of the sentence, it is only a local error.

Secondly this example brings up the question of whether honorific language should be used when speaking about ones own family. In accordance to family members being an extension of oneself, honorific language should not be used when speaking about them with third parties.

Still, 3 out of 10 students in group A chose honorific verbs, while all students in group B chose basic verb forms. This suggests that students at beginner/intermediate level have difficulty determining when to use honorific verbs, but at advanced level have a better grasp of the rules of honorific language.

Question 4; *Kanojotachi wa Hanako ni hon wo* \_\_\_\_ 'they gave Hanako a book'



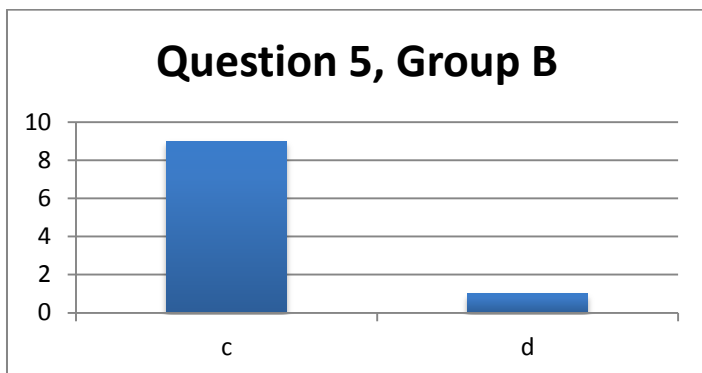
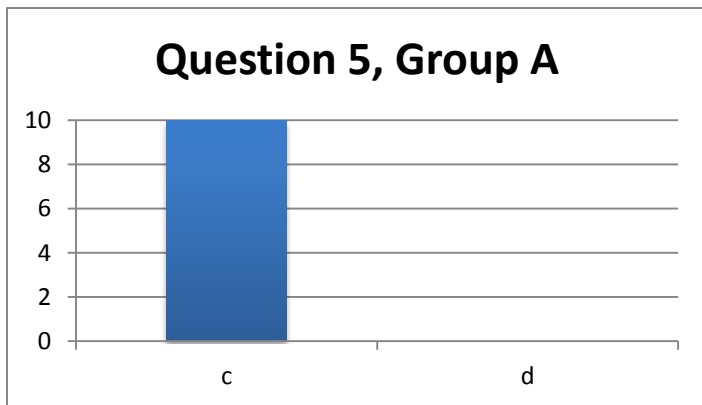
This example again brings up the question of linguistic empathy. In this case only one student empathizes with Hanako rather than taking the neutral standpoint expected since the speaker is not involved in the sentence either directly or by extension.

The amount of students using a honorific verb in this example is noteworthy. 2 out of 10 students in both groups answered in honorific language. This tendency to overuse honorific language may be due to an interlanguage structure; possibly that when the receiver is a third party an honorific verb is used.

### 5.3 Speech levels

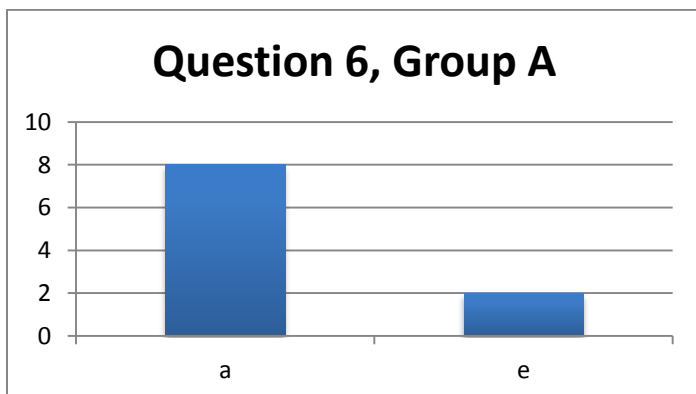
Questions 5-7 were created to test the ability to differentiate between the different honorific levels of the giving verb; *yaru*, *ageru* and *sashiageru*.

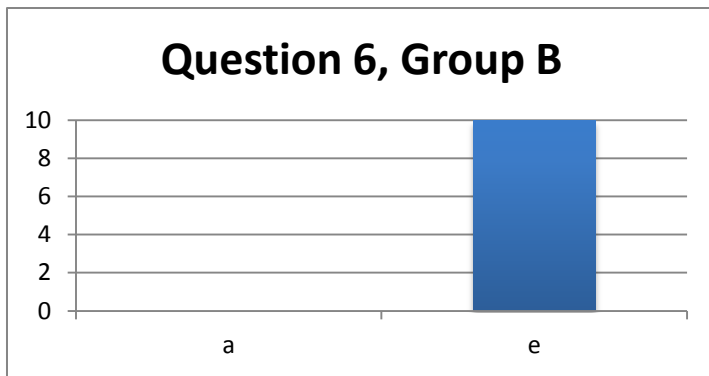
Question 5; *Watashi wa shachō ni hon wo* \_\_\_ 'I gave my boss a book'



The results of question 5 shows that all students of both groups know to use honorific language when the other party is socially superior. This would suggest that Swedish students are quite good at determining when to use honorific language.

Question 6; *Watashi wa aiken ni esa wo* \_\_ 'I gave the dog food'

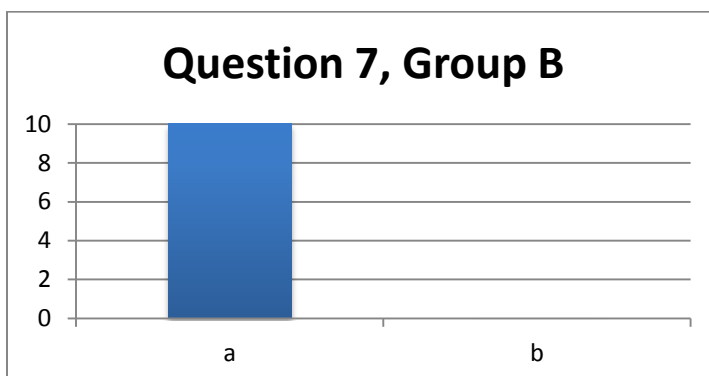
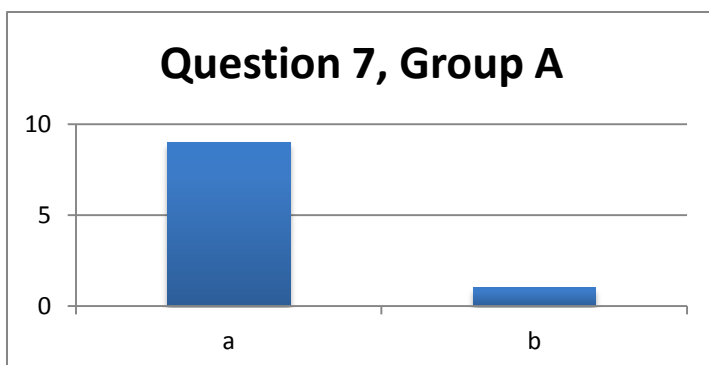




Question 6 shows some interesting differences between the two groups. Since the receiver in this sentence is an animal, anti-honorific language should be used, as it is by all students in the more advanced group. In group A on the other hand, only 2 out of 10 students used the anti-honorific *yaru*, while the vast majority used the basic form *ageru*.

This difference isn't very surprising since *yaru* isn't covered in *Genki's* introduction to the giving verbs. Therefore this can be said to be a teacherled error.

Question 7; *Watashi wa kurasumeito ni hon wo* \_\_\_ 'I gave my classmate a book'





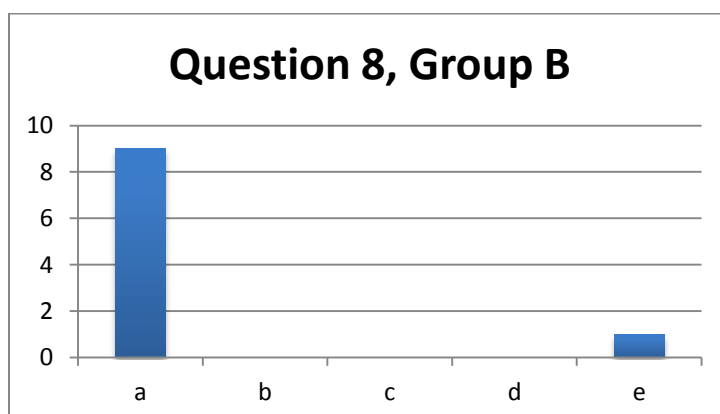
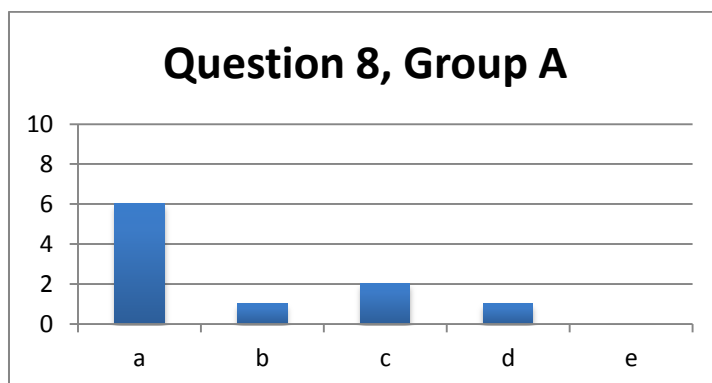
In question 7 the receiver in the sentence is a classmate to, and therefore equal in social status with the speaker, whereas the basic form of the giving verb should be used. Like in question 5, all students of both groups used the correct level of speech.

Apart from the teacherled error in question 6, Swedish students seem to have a good comprehension of the different speech levels and honorific language. The answers for questions 5-7 were more unanimous than questions 1-4 regarding linguistic empathy, suggesting that the former is easier for a Swedish student to acquire than the latter. Especially the students in Group B showed a good comprehension of the different speech levels.

#### 5.4 Auxiliary verbs

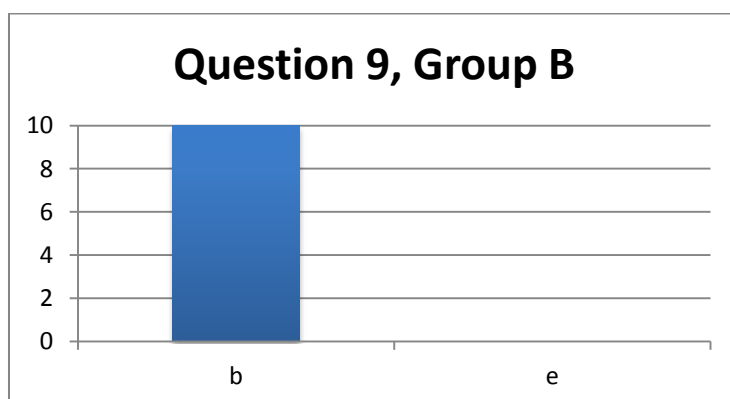
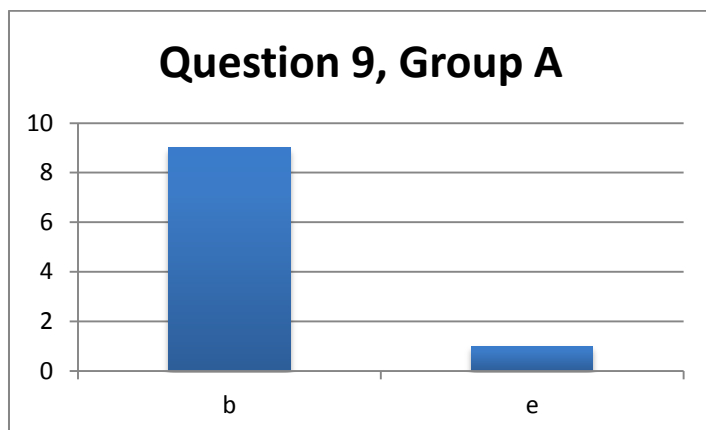
In accordance with the contrastive analysis theory, like honorific language auxiliary verbs should also be challenging for Swedish students to acquire as these aspects are not present in the Swedish language.

Question 8; *Watashi wa kanojo ni setsumei wo shite* \_\_\_\_ 'I explained to her'



This example supports the contrastive analysis theory, as between the two groups, all 5 alternatives has been used as an answer. The answers are diverse not only by linguistic standpoint but by speech level as well. This would suggest that auxiliary verbs may difficult for Swedish students to acquire, even more so than honorific language which according to Oozeki is what Japanese children learning Japanese as a first language struggle with. Even though all students in question 2 showed understanding that when the speaker is the giver, *kureru/kudasaru* can not be used, in question 8, 2 out of 10 students answered with one of these two options. It's possible that some sort of interlanguage structure has been created where different rules apply to the auxiliary verbs than the independent giving verbs. It should be pointed out that students' understanding about the use of giving verb as auxiliary verb improves considerably at the advanced level (group B), indicating that this feature is well acquired at the latter stage by Swedish students.

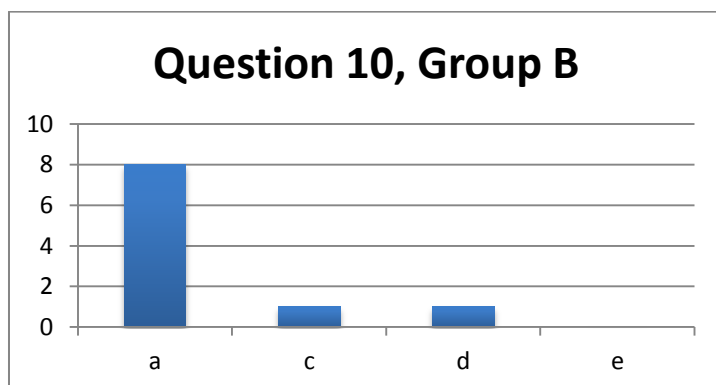
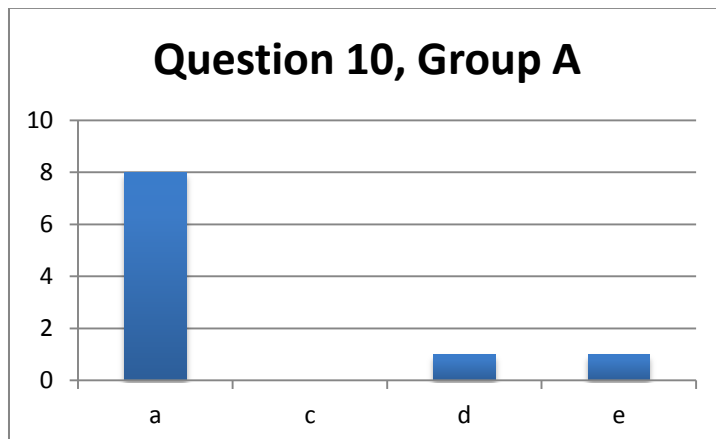
Question 9; *Kanojo wa watashi ni misete* \_\_\_\_ (She showed me)



In this example the answers are almost entirely unanimous. 9 out of 10 students from group A and all students from group B answered *kureru* (b). It

appears that it is easier for students to determine the auxiliary verb when the speaker is the receiver than when they are the giver, possibly because examples of the former is more common in the Japanese language. It is likely that the students remember the whole phrase V+kureta as it frequently occurs in textbooks.

Question 10; *Kare wa musume ni yonde* \_\_\_\_ ‘He read to his daughter’



Question 10 shows that there is rather little difference between the two groups. In both groups 8 out of 10 students answered *ageru* (a). 10% of both groups took the standpoint of the daughter, choosing the honorific *kudasaru* (d). This suggests that there isn't always that much difference in the usage of giving verbs between intermediate and advanced students. It should also be pointed out that the use of *ageru* and *kureru* as auxiliary verb is not totally parallel.

In these 10 sentences both subject and object were included to clarify giver and receiver. However in Japanese speech subject and/or object are often omitted, which means in conversational Japanese mistakes in *ageru/kureru*

differentiation as seen in questions 1-4 might become global errors. Mistakes in speech level on the other hand, would be local errors.

## **6. Conclusion**

10 questions on the topic of giving verb was given to a group of Swedish students at intermediate and advanced levels, each consisting of 10 students. The question was formulated in such a way to test the students' competence on 1) differentiating Japanese giving verbs as main verb, 2) additional honorific feature, and 3) giving verbs as auxiliary verb. Since all the three features are missing in Swedish, they are expected to be difficult for Swedish students to acquire according to the contrastive theory of second language acquisition, but details are unknown. Since the results of this diagnostic test is based on only 10 questions answered by 20 students, the obtained data may not cover the whole picture of Swedish students acquisition of the giving verbs. However from the data collected there were both expected results and some unexpected ones.

Firstly the knowledge gap between the intermediate and advanced students, i.e. one year learning period in between, wasn't as great as one might expect. Some questions were answered equally or in fact more correctly by the intermediate students. Of course the most obvious conclusion is that the recent test taken by the intermediate level students has at least to some extent affected these results. However this may not be the whole reason. It is also possible that interlanguage stabilization occurs between the two levels for some students, where the ability to determine linguistic standpoint etc., ceases to improve.

Secondly the results show that Swedish students do not struggle with the same things as the Japanese children learning Japanese as a first language do. While Japanese children are said to acquire honorific forms late in their learning process (Ozeki 2010), the Swedish students, especially at the advanced level showed a good grasp of honorific language. Some overuse of honorific language occurred on the questions involving a third party, especially on the question involving a family member. This could be due to a negative transfer based on cultural differences, as it is generally more acceptable in Swedish culture to speak highly of one's own family than it is Japanese culture, and this may be why some students have created an interlanguage structure where honorific language is used when speaking of one's family.

However, overall, especially in the direct questions involving only the speaker and one other party, Swedish students showed a very good comprehension of honorific language. This is a bit surprising as honorific language is not present in Swedish, and according to contrastive analysis should therefore be difficult for Swedes to acquire.

What Swedish students struggled with was instead the determining of linguistic empathy, i.e. the choice of giving verb, foremost when there was a third party involved. These findings indicate that contrastive theory of second language acquisition is not always uniform in its predicting power since the honorific aspect was well acquired by Swedish learners.

It could be that the varying answers regarding linguistic standpoint is a sign of overgeneralization of the target language, where differentiating between *ageru* and *kureru* is only important when the speaker himself is involved, and when speaking about third parties is less relevant.

Swedish students also seemed to find the use of giving verbs as auxiliary verbs difficult. More diverting answers were obtained for the question involving auxiliary verbs. This can of course be explained with contrastive analysis, as auxiliary usage of giving verbs is not present in the Swedish language.

Lastly, the anti-honorific form *yaru* was used only by 2 out of 10 intermediate students, indicating a very limited knowledge of this type of giving verb at intermediate level. This, again, can be interpreted to reflect the content of teaching and textbook, as the verb is not covered in the introduction to the giving verbs given in *Genki*, and it is therefore a so called 'teacherled error'.

The present study, though limited in context, has indicated that the differentiation of giving verbs are difficult to acquire by Swedish students but it has also indicated that the influence of the classroom teaching and textbook is considerably big at intermediate level. More comprehensive studies including the fill in task should be designed to test some of the hypotheses obtained in the present study.

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