TAKING LEARNERS TO TASK:
Finnish students' opinions of learning communicative English through an experimental task design

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Suullisen kielitaidon oppimisen tärkeyttä on alettu korostaa myös Suomessa. Eräs paljon viimeisten kolmenkymmenen vuoden aikana tutkittu lähestymistapa suullisen kommunikaatiokompetenssin kehittämiseen on ns. tehtävälähtöinen oppiminen (task-based learning, TBL). Suomessa tehtävälähtöinen kielenoppiminen ei ole kuitenkaan herättänyt toistaiseksi merkittävää tutkimuskiinnostusta ja lisäksi muualla tehty tutkimus on usein koskenut aikuisia. Tehtävälähtöiseen oppimiseen liittyy oleellisesti myös autenttinen oppiminen. Tämän tutkielman tavoite on yhdistää tehtävälähtöinen oppiminen sekä autenttisuus ja tutkia, sopivatko nämä yhdessä englannin kielen suullisten taitojen oppimiseen lukio-opiskelijoiden mielestä. Tutkielman tavoitetta lähestytään kahdesta näkökulmasta ja vastauksia haetaan seuraaviin tutkimuskysymyksiin: 1) kuinka lukio-opiskelijat kokevat tehtävälähtöisen työskentelyn yleisesti sekä autenttisuuden kannalta ja 2) kuinka lukio-opiskelijat kokevat tehtävälähtöisen työskentelyn suullisten kielitaitojen harjoituttamisessa.

Tutkielman aineistona on kolmetoista puolistrukturoitua teemahaastattelua. Haastateltavat ovat 16–17-vuotiaita lukio-opiskelijoita, jotka ovat osallistuneet tehtävälähtöisen oppimisen periaatteiden mukaisesti järjestettyyn työnhakuteemaiseen harjoituskokonaisuuteen, jossa pääpaino on ollut englanninkielisen työhaastattelun simuloinnilla. Teemahaastattelut on nauhoitettu ja litteroitu, minkä jälkeen aineisto on analysoitu aineistolähtöisen sisällönanalyysin keinoin.

Tutkielman tulokset osoittavat, että opiskelijat ovat heterogeenisiä suhtautumisessaan tehtävälähtöiseen oppimiseen työskentelytapana ja mielipiteiden kirjo on laaja lähes jokaisen esille nousseen teeman suhteen. Suullisten kielitaitojen harjoittelu autenttisessa kontekstissa koettiin pääsääntöisesti hyödylliseksi, mutta herätti silti myös negatiivisia reaktioita, sillä suullista osuutta pidettiin toisaalta vaativana. Tulokset osoittavat, että kielen opiskeluun ja kielen puhumiseen liittyy paljon asenteita sekä tunteita tämän opiskelijaryhmän kohdalla. Lisäksi vaikuttaa siltä, että harjoituslähtöinen oppiminen ei kuitenkaan ole metodi, joka olisi periaatteessa sopimaton tälle opiskelijaryhmälle, mutta sen soveltaminen jatkossa isommassa mittakaavassa vaatisi tottumisaikaa opiskelijoilta ja lisäksi jatkuvaa opettajan tukea.

Tutkielman tuloksia voidaan käyttää lähtökohtana tehtävälähtöisen oppimisen suunnitteluun, kun halutaan selvittää opiskelijareaktioita sen eri osa-alueisiin. Lisäksi tutkielma näyttää yhden esimerkin siitä, kuinka opiskelijoille voidaan antaa konkreettisia valmiuksia koulun jälkeiseen elämään tehtävälähtöisen oppimisen keinoin.

Asiasanat – Keywords oral language skills, teaching methods, authenticity, language acquisition, English language, case study, learning experiences

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1 INTRODUCTION

Learning a language other than the mother tongue usually relies on materials specifically designed for the topic at hand. When most text and audio materials have been planned with their prospective users in mind, a disservice to them has been done, as the language in the materials, to which the learners are exposed, has been simplified but also saturated with repeated structures to an unnatural extent (Gilmore 2004: 363-364, 368). This means that the learners using such materials may form misconceptions about the essence of the language and how to use it in a similar fashion to native speakers. It has been claimed that the use of artificial (as opposed to authentic) material can lessen the comprehension skills language learners are able to gain, and even students with a good command of English can find natives speaking, particularly to one another, incomprehensible (Brown 1990: 6). It can, therefore, be questioned whether learners at present even have the chance of attaining practical communicative skills in school. Perhaps they are, in fact, learning to remain silent in multiple languages.

Moreover, in recent years, there has been increased emphasis placed on gaining well-rounded oral skills as a part of language instruction in school, as, for example, the Finnish Ministry of Education have suggested the inclusion of a course in English oral communication into the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Education (Lukiokoulutuksen suullisen kielitaidon arviointityöryhmä 2006: 48). In fact, it has been claimed that one of the most important skills one can possess in a non-native language is being able to communicate in such a way that it is possible to have a successful conversation (Nunan 1991: 39). One way to gaining communicative skills is task-based learning (TBL), which has lately increased in popularity (see e.g. Willis and Willis 2007, Nunan 2004, Ellis 2003, Willis 1996). TBL, in short, is about offering language learners the opportunity to participate in naturalistic communication and, therefore, to acquire a language in a holistic manner resembling that of native speakers. Indeed, TBL researchers find that it is possible to *acquire* a language in the classroom, in addition to learning in the traditional sense. This requires engaging in communicative activities, in which the importance of *what* is being said exceeds the importance of *how* it is being said. An argument has been made, however, that TBL is not conducive to language learning in conditions where

learner exposure to the target language is not extensive outside the classroom, which in principle renders TBL unsuitable for most foreign language learners around the world (Swan 2005: 399).

In Finland, the applicability of TBL to gaining communicative skills is yet to be a widely researched issue, and published studies on TBL in Finland from any perspective are scarce. However, as English is the modern day lingua franca, seen and heard everywhere in Finland, it would be reasonable to suggest that the limits to TBL, as previously set by Swan, may not apply in the case of learning English. Thus, if TBL is a functioning approach to gaining communicative skills in English in the classroom, its possible role in Finnish schools should be examined extensively. Moreover, while there have been shortcomings in the area of teaching oral skills, as written language competence has for long been preferred to oral communication on a global scale (e.g. Nishiko and Watanabe 2008), there has also been a relatively great disregard of learners' opinions of how they see learning communicative skills. The opposite perspective, however, is adopted in the present study, which is designed to cover the three aforementioned themes, namely TBL, authenticity in learning materials and contexts and oral communicative skills. The aim of the study is to examine the range of Finnish upper secondary school students' opinions of a TBL sequence in terms of learning communicative English. In order to research this topic, a group of students will first engage in a task, after which they are interviewed about their experiences. The foci of the study are 1) student opinions of the task in general as well as of the authentic elements it entails and 2) student opinions of gaining oral communicative skills in English with the task as a medium.

The reporting of the present study is divided into three sections and six chapters. First, the theoretical background is examined, as Chapter 2 focuses on TBL and Chapter 3 on select areas of second language acquisition (SLA) and language learning. Second, the present study is described in detail, as the research questions and the methodology are introduced in Chapter 4, while the analysis and the findings are presented in Chapter 5. Third, the results are discussed, as implications based on the findings are drawn in Chapter 6, whereas the strengths and weaknesses of the study as well as possible areas of further research are established in the concluding section, Chapter 7.

2 THE TASK-BASED APPROACH TO LANGUAGE LEARNING

In this chapter, the concept of task and the reasons why TBL has been claimed to be a functioning approach to learning a language and simultaneously obtaining communicative skills are canvassed. The many definitions of a task are discussed first, after which the nature and emergence of TBL are elaborated on. The process of task design is then examined as well as the claimed advantages and disadvantages of TBL. Finally, some previous research into TBL is presented.

However, before discussing tasks any further, it must be noted that they have been studied in connection to both second language (L2) and foreign language (FL) learning. Conventionally, the term English as a Second Language (ESL) has referred to non-native speakers who live in an English-speaking area, whereas speakers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are non-natives living in non-English-speaking surroundings. Accordingly, the Finnish participants of the present study would be classified as EFL speakers according to tradition. Nevertheless, research into SLA and L2 learning are greatly relied on in the present study, as the boundaries between ESL and EFL have become overlapping, and it is, therefore, difficult to use the terms consistently (Smith 1983a: 13, as cited in Seppälä 2010: 10). Furthermore, as stated by Crystal (2003: 6), “it is important to avoid interpreting the distinction between 'second' and 'foreign' language use as a difference in fluency or ability”, and, for example, the high levels of English fluency displayed by many Scandinavian and Dutch speakers act as an illustration of the discrepancy between the two terms (Crystal 2003: 6). It has, consequently, been a conscious choice to discuss language learning in this particular context of Finnish speakers of English without the prefixes L2 or FL where possible. However, the student participants of the present study are likened more to ESL than EFL learners based on Smith’s and Crystal’s remarks. Lastly, while TBL aims at facilitating language acquisition, the word *learning* is predominantly used in the present study, for purposes of clarity, in connection with tasks, as it is indeed entailed in the very name of the approach.

2.1 Definitions of a Task

In recent years, tasks have become a popular approach to language learning and

teaching, and despite the acclaim, there is some disagreement on what constitutes a task. Furthermore, it has been argued that currently tasks are being forced onto teachers and syllabus makers by researchers, as “clearly whatever the task-based approach means it is a good thing” (Littlewood 2004a: 319). In this section, definitions of tasks are introduced and the similarities and differences between them examined. Finally, the concept of task specifically in relation to the present study is discussed.

On this occasion, defining a task starts with a statement of what it is not: a task is not an exercise. Exercises traditionally focus on form, i.e. on grammar instruction, whereas the consensus on tasks is that they focus on meaning (Nunan 1989a: 10). Tasks are, then, supposed to generate language use and communication where the reception and production of language take precedence over correct forms. Some researchers have, however, found this categorisation between the two too narrow, because of which the term task-exercise (Morris et al. 1996, as cited in Littlewood 2007: 247) has been used to refer to activities that fall between the two extremes. Yet it is outside the research interests of the present study to delve further into either exercises or task-exercises. As such, tasks stress a very different attitude to language learning and teaching compared to traditional classroom instruction, e.g. the audio-lingual method or the grammar translation method. Tasks allow participants to choose rather freely what kind of language to employ, which means that learners decide for themselves which words, idioms or grammatical features to use. However, when attempts are made for the concept of task to be defined beyond the focus on meaning, the opinions become varied.

It must be pointed out that tasks can be defined in different ways depending on the context at hand and their purpose (Bygate, Skehan and Swain 2001). A categorisation into two primary task types, pedagogical task and research task can, however, be made, as the two main groups that have adopted the concept of task and modified it to suit their intentions are, in fact, communicative language teachers and SLA researchers (Bygate, Skehan and Swain 2001: 2-4). While teachers may choose to view tasks as work conducted as a part of instruction, researchers may wish to define tasks by variables that impact students’ performance and language acquisition (Ellis 2000: 194-195). In other words, whereas practitioners perceive a task as a

communicative activity and are occupied with the effectiveness of language learning and teaching, researchers are interested in using tasks as tools to investigate SLA. Furthermore, tasks and task definitions have different meanings in different contexts, as stated by Bygate, Skehan and Swain (2001: 9). They demonstrate how a definition of a task can be adapted to suit varying purposes by beginning with a basic definition, which can be considered to describe all tasks whatever the situation:

> A task is an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective (Bygate, Skehan and Swain 2001: 11).

Next, they alter the definition to match a teacher's interest in learners and learning, as opposed to an interest in e.g. teaching practises or assessment, which also require definitions of their own:

> A task is an activity, influenced by learner choice, and susceptible to learner reinterpretation, which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective (Bygate, Skehan and Swain 2001: 12).

Then, switching the point of view to research, the following definition for studying learners and learning through tasks is offered, which is, again, different to e.g. researching teaching practices or assessment:

> A task is a focused, well-defined activity, relatable to learner choice or to learning processes, which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective, and which elicits data which may be the basis for research (Bygate, Skehan and Swain 2001: 12).

These definitions clearly illustrate how the concept of task can be perceived differently depending on the context. There are, however, also many context-free definitions which emphasise other aspects than task purpose, and they are introduced next. For example, Ellis states (2003: 2) that factors by which a task can be defined include the scope, authenticity and outcome of the task as well as the linguistic skills required to complete the task in question. Moreover, he perceives tasks as "activities that call for primarily meaning-focused language use" (Ellis 2003: 2), while pointing out that some researchers have adopted rather broad definitions of a task, and cites both Long (1985), who considers even painting a fence a task, and Breen (1989), who sees any kind of language activity, including exercises, as tasks. In the more recent literature, tasks continue to be defined broadly, as e.g. van den Branden (2006: 4) sees a task as "an activity in which a person engages in order to attain an

objective, and which necessitates the use of language." A similar view is offered by Mishan (2004: 23), who defines a task as an activity that a learner undertakes and "in which the target language is comprehended and used for a communicative purpose in order to achieve a particular outcome (goal)." However, a narrower definition is put forward by Willis (1990: 127), to whom a task is "an activity which involves use of language but in which the focus is on outcome of the activity rather than on the language used to achieve that outcome." Based on the previous definitions, it can be stated that a task can also be something that includes the reaching of a goal through language use, and that there are significant differences between the scopes of tasks.

Nevertheless, not all task definitions cite the reaching of a goal as a priority, but instead value communication and learner activity more. Purposeful communication, authentic situations and active learner engagement are paramount to Dörnyei and Kormos (2000: 276). Moreover, pedagogical tasks can be seen through a different perspective compared to the previous description and regarded as "a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language, while their attention is focused on mobilising their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning" (Nunan 2004: 4). What this means is that even though pedagogical tasks may not have a direct link to the world outside the classroom, they still facilitate realistic language use. Real-world tasks emulate life and language use in the world outside the classroom, and both pedagogical tasks and real-world tasks, then, promote using language in the same manner as it is used in real life. Moreover, the value that is put on communicative competence can separate different task definitions onto three different levels (Littlewood 2004a: 320-321). On the first level, communicative competence, which is discussed in more detail in section 3.3, is not seen as essential criteria for a task. On the second level, tasks are not seen only as communicative but involving communication. In other words, communication has a role in a task but is not the sole purpose of it. On the last level, tasks are seen merely as communication activities. Thus, even if tasks in principle require communication, it can exist in different varieties and amounts, in order to accommodate for different learners.

Tasks can also be defined through their design, as in the case of one-way tasks and two-way tasks. In a one-way task only one person has information to convey,

whereas in a two-way task all participants have information to share, and therefore, the tasks differ in authenticity (Long and Porter 1985: 214). Moreover, it is pointed out that a two-way task between a native speaker and a non-native speaker will result in more conversational modifications, as also the non-native speaker has information that the native speaker requires. Hence, the native speaker will monitor the understanding of the non-native speaker and adjust their speech accordingly and use negotiation strategies. It could be argued that if a native speaker simplifies their speech to suit the abilities, say, of a Finnish upper secondary school student, the communication is not authentic, as the native speaker would not normally speak in the same manner. However, if one participant possesses information that the other does not have and attempts to convey it, communication is by default authentic, and also in real life speech is continuously adjusted according to the context, also when with other native speakers. Another distinction from the perspective of task design is whether a task is open or closed. An open task has no correct answer and the participants are free to find their own solutions, for example, in a task where an exchange of opinions is called for, and a closed task, then, strives for a precise answer, such as drawing the right route on a map (Ellis 2003: 89). It can, consequently, be stated that the nature of communication can be regulated to an extent through task design. Furthermore, defining tasks by their design is more of a practical approach, which also elicits narrower definitions, in contrast to those previously described.

Lastly, one final definition of a task, which takes the connection to real-life language use into consideration, is introduced. Skehan (1998, as cited in van den Branden 2006: 8) defines a task by five criteria. Firstly, meaning is primary in a task, and secondly, learners should not be given meanings to reproduce but facilitated to produce meanings of their own. Thirdly, a task should be somehow connected to the real world outside the classroom, and fourthly, the completion of a task should be seen as the priority. Finally, a task should be assessed as an outcome. From Skehan's lengthy list of criteria it can be noticed how many dimensions tasks can have and that it actually might be rather difficult to find a concise definition. Of course, as stated earlier, a single definition is neither necessary nor useful.

Regardless of the fact that there is no consensus on what constitutes a task, it is

possible to find something that unifies tasks, in addition to the focus on meaning. Nunan's (2004: 4) view that a task can and should be divided into parts, in his case into a beginning, middle and an end, represents the common perception of a task as a complete communicative activity that has different stages (Cameron 1997: 347). Moreover, similarly to Skehan, Prabhu (1987) and Crookes (1986), as cited in Bygate, Skehan and Swain (2001: 10), emphasise that a task must have an outcome that can also be assessed in some way. Written outcomes are probably the easiest to assess, while an oral task, the outcome of which is, for example, the sharing of opinions, is quite likely the hardest. However, arriving at an outcome does not guarantee reaching the aim of a task because it is possible for a learner to complete e.g. a spot-the-difference task without engaging in communicative language use (Ellis 2003: 8). In fact, it can in no way be warranted that learners reach the goal, as there are as many ways to interact with a task as there are learners (van den Branden 2009: 264).

Summary of task definition

To sum up, several definitions of a task, some of which may either compliment or overrule each other, have been introduced in the previous paragraphs. However, there is little merit in the broader definitions, such as Long's, in the context of teaching and learning a non-native language. Neither do any of the narrower definitions completely correspond to the aspects emphasised in the present study. The factor of real world-relatedness is an important part of any given task and, thus, e.g. van den Branden's views lack a fundamental aspect of TBL – the connection to real-life language use. However, the many definitions of a task reflect its many possibilities of usage. Moreover, the flexibility of the term can be considered a strength, as it gives its users the freedom to develop the definition to suit their purpose, therefore, elements from these different definitions have been combined in order to describe a task that is the most relevant to the present study. Thus, on these grounds and in the context of this study, a task is defined as a communicative, meaning-focused, goal-oriented activity, which reflects real-life language needs, and which can vary in its scope and manner of completion, and which can be used for pedagogical or research purposes or both simultaneously. Indeed, the aim of a task is not flawless language reception or production but natural interactive language use.

2.2 TBL and its Origins

As it has now been established what a task is, the present study is continued with a discussion of TBL as a method. It is important to mention that TBL, on this occasion, it is examined in terms of language learning. The terms task-based teaching (TBT) and task-based language teaching (TBLT) have also been used in the literature. Nevertheless, the approach is often called merely TBL, which emphasises the learner's role as the one controlling their learning process, and their place at the centre of the approach. Irrespective of that the term TBL has been adopted in the present study, the impression that teaching has a less significant role in TBL is not wished to be given. On the contrary, it is also important for practitioners to know how to implement TBL theory into practice, and for example, Willis and Willis examine TBT in their book *Doing Task-Based Teaching* (2007).

As research has not been able to establish how language learning occurs best, TBL can be seen as experimental to a degree, although it is based firmly on research. It is noteworthy that TBL is indeed primarily concerned with language acquisition instead of language learning in the traditional sense and attempts to liken learning an L2 to that of acquiring a first language (L1). Moreover, although it is not exactly known how an L1 or an L2 is acquired, there is insight into how language acquisition may be impaired, and TBL aims at reducing the effect of these negative factors, which are elaborated on in Chapter 3. In the following, a description of the characteristics of TBL is provided first, after which the origins of the approach are explored.

Description of TBL

TBL is a form of authentic learning (of which more in section 3.2), in which learners engage in a task or a series of tasks emulating real-life communication in the target language. The aim is to create the impression of the language having a concrete use in learners' lives. Emphasis in TBL is placed on the learners, not the teacher, who merely presents the tasks to the learners, who are then expected to produce interaction (Seedhouse 1999: 150). Moreover, in order to successfully complete a task, communication between the learners is required. One of the aims of TBL is to give learners possibilities to rehearse real-world tasks in the safety of a classroom

environment; another is to support language learners in achieving communicative goals (Nunan 2004: 20). Furthermore, TBL aims at creating surroundings that help language learners develop a positive self-image, and the idea that a task usually renders the participants as language users, not learners, as introduced by Ellis (2003: 3), is descriptive of TBL. This view represents ideological emphasis on perceiving non-native speakers, indeed, as users and not learners of a language, which might function as a motivational starting point for non-native speakers, as what they *can do* is focused on instead of what they yet *cannot*.

The task-based syllabus "approaches communicative knowledge as a unified system wherein any use of the new language requires the learner to continually match choices from his or her linguistic repertoire to the social requirements and expectations governing communicative behaviour and to meanings and any ideas he wishes to share" (Breen 1987: 161, as cited in Seedhouse 1999: 149). In other words, the learner has to use all their linguistic resources and knowledge available and also take social conventions into account. Thus, they do not have the luxury of formulating isolated sentences gradually but, instead, have to communicate as one does in real life. This is why tasks form a link between the reality of the outside world and the pedagogy of a classroom (Littlewood 2004a: 324). Regarding task-based syllabi, however, there is sparse evidence that they function better than other, language-centred syllabi (Ellis 2003: 10). In addition, neither is there sound evidence on the usefulness of other approaches, and obviously usefulness is an elusive concept depending on who is attempting to define it. Nevertheless, if teachers are following a task-based curriculum to such an extent that they miss incidental opportunities to focus on form when learners would benefit from it, the learners' needs are not being met (McDonough and Chaikitmongkol 2007: 124).

Origins of tasks

As tasks and TBL have now been discussed, the evolution of the approach is studied next. Tasks are the result of changes in L2 pedagogy spanning the last forty years and an attempt to reflect what is understood by language learning today, which will become clear from the following. TBL has been researched for some thirty years, and, as previously stated, tasks are a part of interest in communicative approaches or

communicative language teaching (Loschky and Bley-Vroman 1993: 124, Nunan 1989a: 12). Moreover, the interest in tasks was preceded by research into conversational analysis of L2 speakers, and indeed, tasks are often associated with oral performance (Crookes and Gass 1993: 1).

In the following, the developments in L2 pedagogy leading to TBL are briefly presented as outlined by Kumaravadivelu (2006). The changes in language pedagogy can be inferred from the focal points of successive approaches: first, the roles of the teacher and the language were considered paramount, after which the interest shifted to learners and after that, to learning (Mishan 2004: 7). The tenets of teacher- and/or language-centred approaches are not explored, as they are somewhat outdated and have little to do with TBL. Furthermore, developments in SLA research are discussed later in section 3.1 and the following acts as a brief glimpse into the changes in beliefs about language learning and teaching.

Origins of tasks: learner-centred approaches

The origins of TBL lie within methodologies that emphasise the learner's role in the learning process. In this section, a short overview of learner-centred approaches and their history is provided as outlined by Kumaravadivelu (2006: 116-134). Firstly, language teaching methods started shifting from language-centred methods, such as the audio-lingual method and grammar translation method, to learner-centred methods. Secondly, while the focus on the learner and tasks is the result of emphasising communicative language teaching and learning since the late 1960s and 1970s, what was meant by communicative approaches was understood differently by different teachers and teacher educators. Thirdly, learner-centred pedagogues took advantage of e.g. sociolinguistics and discourse analysis in developing their approaches. Fourthly, learner-centred pedagogues considered meaningful learning a condition for internalising language systems and also regarded grammar instruction necessary. Finally, meaningful communication in the classroom was to be facilitated by employing information-gap activities where one learner knew something the other did not, allowing learners to decide what to say and how to say it by offering open-ended tasks and exercises, condoning errors and using authentic language as well as activities which required integrating listening, writing and speaking skills. While

learner-centred pedagogues must be given credit for highlighting the importance of such basic concepts as negotiation, interpretation, and expression, they failed to perceive language learning as anything but linear and additive, as language- and learner-centred methods both concentrated on the properties of language rather than on the processes of learning (Kumaravadivelu 2006: 129-130). Currently, the acquisition of competence is viewed not as additive but adaptive and learning as a process of on-going "revision and reconstruction" (Widdowson 2003: 140-141).

Origins of tasks: learning-centred approaches

As the interest shifted from learners to learning, tasks remained a relevant approach, as their characteristics responded to what learning-centred teachers wanted to achieve in the classroom, as illustrated by the following, in which five different aspects of learning-centred approaches are presented as outlined by Kumaravadivelu (2006: 135-156). Firstly, learning-centred approaches, such as the Natural Approach developed by Krashen and Terrell (1983) and the Communicational Approach by Prabhu (1987), are based on the belief that explicit grammar instruction is not needed and that language is best acquired when the focus is not on the language itself. Secondly, learning-centred practitioners consider language development incidental and meaning-focused, as well as comprehension-based and cyclical and parallel, even if there is a great deal of evidence suggesting that learners of an L2 need to notice the linguistic properties of the language by paying conscious attention to them as well. Thirdly, learning-centred practitioners believe that once an L2 learner has achieved comprehension, the ability to produce will emerge automatically, and thus the importance of learner output is minimal. However, this notion is arguable, and Swain's (1985) Output hypothesis, which advocates the importance of learner output, is introduced later. Fourthly, the merits of learning-centred approaches lie in that they prefer the process of learning over language-centred teaching. Finally, however, the first learning-centred pedagogues did not create more than limited possibilities for interaction in the classroom, did not consider the intake factors that play a role in L2 development nor did they answer several other questions regarding e.g. the developing and evaluating tasks or how to change teacher education accordingly.

Summary of TBL and its origins

In conclusion, TBL originated from learner- and learning-centred approaches to teaching as well as from an interest in communicative language teaching, and furthermore, the approach was created by practitioners and then adopted by researchers. However, TBL has meant different things to different people, but the main principles behind TBL are learner-autonomy and focus on meaning, which serve to emulate L1 acquisition. On engaging in TBL, a learner has to use all available linguistic resources and previous experiences, as they would in real-life communication, and not concentrate on drilling a particular feature of language. The teacher's role is that of a facilitator, and learners are required to participate actively in producing output with an authentic content. In short, TBL aims at generating speakers who can survive in the target language outside the school gates as well.

2.3 Task Design

A successful task is preceded by a process of careful consideration because learners cannot merely be given a topic of conversation and expected to then produce output. A task designer must be able to motivate learners and be aware of how any choices made affect the nature of the task and the achievability of the goals that have been set. There are a myriad of factors which can obstruct task performance, starting from how the teacher presents the task to the personal relationships and levels of motivation of the participants. There are also factors that impede with SLA in general, and they are discussed later in the study. In this section, task design is examined particularly in terms of elements that impact oral performance and task difficulty. Finally, the role of grammar in tasks is elaborated on.

Task design: factors to take into account

Planning has a central role as far as task outcome is concerned, and as with any instruction, also selection, gradation and assessment of tasks are relevant aspects to consider. Tasks can be seen as comprising of two primary elements: input data and instructional questions that make learners engage with the input in some manner (Wright 1978, as cited in Ellis 2003: 17). It is noteworthy that unlike many, Wright

does not list goal as one element, as he believes that tasks only have discourse potential. Moreover, he asserts that input must be split into two components, input and conditions, input referring to the data and conditions to the way the data is presented, e.g. providing split or shared information. In addition, Wright also advocates taking into account the procedures and predicted outcome when designing a task. Procedures refer to practical arrangements of tasks, such as giving planning time or dividing learners into groups or pairs. Moreover, the outcome can be seen as a product, e.g. a list of differences between two pictures, or as a process that generates desired linguistic and cognitive occurrences.

What the observations by Wright mean in practice is that a task designer must decide on four things: firstly, what they hope to achieve with the task, i.e. what the outcome of a successful task should be, secondly, what kind of input, i.e. material, is used as a starting point for the task, thirdly, how to present the input and what to ask the students to do with it, and fourthly, what the rules of working are, i.e. what time restrictions or other limitations to give. Furthermore, it should be considered if the task can be performed by learners of varying skill levels and how to accommodate for the differences between learners. Finally, if the task is used as the basis for evaluation, a teacher must settle on how to grade the performances. This multitude of factors relating to the design process demonstrates why careful planning is in order and highlights the fact that tasks are not something that lessen the role of language teachers, but who, indeed, become facilitators of learning.

Different types of tasks produce different types of output, i.e. learner speech. In section 2.1, open and closed tasks were introduced. Long (1989, as cited in Ellis 2003: 89-90) suggests that closed tasks are more beneficial since a learner has to strive for a specific answer and open tasks, such as discussions, may be experienced as de-motivating because they allow learners to abandon a difficult topic. Moreover, this perception is discussed further by Ellis (2003: 91-100), who observes the following. Firstly, it would seem that closed tasks lead to more negotiation, i.e. to clarification requests and confirmation checks, whereas open tasks produce longer discourse turns. This should be remembered by teachers when they decide what the pedagogical aim of a planned task is. Secondly, clarification requests and confirmation checks act as feedback to the learner, and feedback in the form of

clarification requests elicits altered output, unlike confirmation checks. Thirdly, topic and familiarity affect task performance, which is a claim also supported by Prabhu (1987), who found that the familiarity of task type improves performance but over-exposure results in fatigue. Furthermore, the clarity of task structure impacts performance since an explicit nature of a task frees the learner to focus on a more detailed on-line performance (Skehan 2001: 178). It has also been noted that production tasks by definition are unscripted, but certain task structures can elicit certain discourse conventions (Bygate 2000: 185). Moreover, the familiarity of the interlocutor affects task performance in the same way it affects all communication, as established in sociolinguistics (Ellis 2003: 98). In other words, it is possible to an extent, depending on task type, to predict the nature of output. However, the fact that misunderstandings between learners will inevitably occur, is not a negative development, but something that makes them use alternative strategies in order to be understood and to understand, which then helps them develop as language users.

Moving on to task difficulty, there are three separable factors that should be taken into consideration: code complexity, cognitive complexity and communicative stress (Skehan 1998, as cited in Elder, Iwashita and McNamara 2002: 349). Code complexity refers both to linguistic and vocabulary complexity, whereas cognitive complexity is dependant on information type and organisational structure. The latter includes the familiarity of the task as well as the genre and the topic of the task. On the other hand, communicative stress is connected with the practical side of performing a task, such as the number of participants involved and the time restrictions faced. Moreover, assessing the difficulty of a particular task from the perspective of the learner is challenging. For example, Prabhu (1987) reports on a five-year teaching project, the goal of which was to create such conditions for learning English that they would elicit communication in the classroom, and describes how the teachers of the project aimed at ensuring that the tasks were both cognitively complex and linguistically feasible but also difficult yet manageable. It is impossible to guarantee that every learner will experience every task as challenging but doable, but tasks allow a single student to function according to their own skills. One task can be challenging for learners of different proficiency levels because the learners are able to set their own standards and still complete the task. Obviously, this aspect to TBL involves the risk that a learner will not make a maximal effort, but

that is the case with exercises as well.

Task design: the role of grammar

Although the teacher's role is that of a facilitator and the focus of the class should be on meaning, the following guidelines about form are given to teachers in Willis and Willis (2007: 4-5) Firstly, it is natural for learners to sometimes focus on language, for example, when they are searching for an appropriate word, and the teacher may help them by supplying words or repeating learner utterances and thereby acting as a participant in the interaction. Secondly, teachers may draw attention to a form that is present in the task but they should not diminish the focus on meaning, and thirdly, any focus on form should be generated after the completion of a task. Indeed, even though tasks focus on meaning, they do not exclude the acquiring of form. The following three points observed by Prabhu (1987: 69-70) illustrate this. First, while conveying meaning takes precedence, TBL is designed to enable learners achieve *grammatical conformity*, which is a statement that is also echoed by Willis and Willis (2007: 8), who find that grammar in TBL has not been ignored, but it just is not the starting point. Second, acquiring grammar through communication is thought to be the result of a learner operating his or her internal system of abstract rules or principles on a subconscious level, while the conscious is concentrating on understanding and conveying meaning. This means that concentrating on communication does not disturb learners' awareness of forms even if they are not focusing on them, whereas exercises hardly ever inadvertently promote oral skills and communicative competence. Finally, the creation and development of this internal system is not a straightforward process, and it may take a long time for a learner to notice a grammatical rule, and the conclusions they draw from input may at first be faulty or incomplete but develop and become better defined through exposure and/or acquisition of other related structures.

Summary of task design

In sum, designing a task requires great effort and perception even if on the surface it may appear that the learners are doing all the work. Before the teacher can present them with a task, depending on the volume of it, a great number of hours may have

been spent on planning. Furthermore, grammar teaching can be a part of TBL, but the teacher should try to postpone any focus on form until the completion of a task in order not to make the learners concentrate on it when performing. Lastly, even if a task designer possesses a good grasp of all the elements affecting the outcome, the end result will always be out of their hands, as both the levels of motivation and the personal relationships of the learners will influence how they interact with a task and with each other.

2.4 Advantages and Disadvantages of TBL

TBL, as any other approach to language learning, has both its opponents and followers, and both sides have valuable points to take into account on critically considering the disadvantages and advantages of the approach. As TBL and the reasons why it is claimed to be a functioning approach to communicative language learning have already been discussed at length, at the end of this section a brief reiteration of the advantages is provided. First, some critiques made regarding TBL are discussed in order to establish what its limitations are.

Disadvantages of TBL

While TBL generates communication, the nature of it has been criticised. One negative claim made about TBL is that the communication it creates is of a narrow variety that emphasises the completion of the task (Seedhouse 1999: 155). Furthermore, the argument continues that little research has been conducted to support the claims of TBL providing learners with more beneficial interaction than other teaching methods do. While Seedhouse is correct about the lack of research, it must be noted that if a task-based language learning situation fails to function as wished, it is not necessarily due to some innate weakness of the task or the kind of language it produces, as there are three factors that influence the learning outcome: learner contributions, the task itself and the environment where the task is carried out (Murphy 2003: 353), as already discussed in the previous section.

In addition, it must be acknowledged that TBL may not suit all language learning contexts. As mentioned earlier in section 2.1, tasks are often described as

communicative activities that require real communication. To be able to produce the communication required, a learner must possess “basic” language skills in the target language. Moreover, according to Swan (2005), an exclusively task-based syllabus is not adequate in contexts where learners are not exposed to the target language outside the classroom, and there is no research into long-term TBL. Nevertheless, even Swan advocates combining form- and meaning-focused approaches. Furthermore, as previously pointed out, a focus on linguistic items can be assigned to pre- or post-tasks, which means that there is room for a focus on form in TBL.

Assessing has also been named as one of the disadvantages of TBL (Bachman 2002). This is supported by Elder, Iwashita and McNamara (2002), who find that teachers would benefit from a greater understanding of the numerous factors that have an impact on assessing task performance. In fact, predetermining the difficulty level of a task has become a research interest for academics who design tasks for assessment purposes (Bachman 2002: 462). Moreover, it is suggested that the complexity of the issue and the variety of content-bound real-life tasks render the test designer’s predictions of the test scores often unreliable. However, as assessing test scores is not an objective practice in any circumstances or with any approach, it seems unreasonable to cite unreliable evaluations as a disadvantage of TBL, when, instead, it is clear that TBL needs to find the suitable methods of evaluation.

Advantages of TBL

While there has been criticism towards TBL, its advantages have also been maintained. As indeed stated earlier in this chapter, there are at least five reasons that act in favour of tasks and TBL. Firstly, they offer L2 learners the chance to take part in communication which coincides with how languages are used in the world outside the classroom. What this means is that learners acquire a language as a whole, in “chunks”, instead of focusing on a particular phenomenon at a time. Secondly, TBL allows every learner to function on a level appropriate to their language skills, i.e. it suits learners with varying linguistic resources, who can engage in the same task with each other, while performing at cognitively different levels. Thirdly, TBL provides learners with an increased sense of autonomy and along with it, quite likely a higher motivation to language learning. Fourthly, tasks can be organised in a way that the

different stages of a task support and build on one another, and thus, provide a sense of continuum for the learner. Lastly, the authenticity entailed in tasks can be appealing to teachers and learners alike and bring variety into the classroom. Moreover, TBL is based on extensive research into SLA, of which more will follow in Chapter 3. Thus, TBL is an approach with many positive attributes, which coincide with what is known about language learning today.

Summary of the advantages and disadvantages of TBL

The criticism regarding TBL seems mostly based on three issues: by the perceived negligence of grammar, difficulty of assessment and the unsuitability to beginner-level learners. Some of the criticisms seem fair, but for example, a focus on form is not shunned by TBL, instead, grammar is approached from a different perspective. However, assessing oral task performance appears to be an area that needs more research. On the other hand, the advantages of TBL have mostly to do, firstly, with it being a practical approach to language acquisition, in which real-life needs for the target language are stressed, and secondly, with the prospect of increased learner autonomy and motivation. Furthermore, the possibilities that TBL offers teachers to take the varying proficiency levels within a group of learners into account is often seen as an advantage.

2.5 Previous Studies on TBL

As mentioned before, the interest that has been placed on TBL has increased in recent decades. As a result, the number of studies conducted in the field has also risen. However, little research has been conducted into employing tasks to cover any themes of a larger scale, or what Nunan (2004) calls maxi-tasks or projects. Most tasks that have been examined and presented to practitioners seem to be isolated units, and relatively quick to perform, and thus may lack a proper sense of connection to the real world. Moreover, the number of studies related to the research interests of the present study is, in fact, rather low, as adolescent task-based learners seem to have been a neglected group in the literature. In the following, some studies conducted relatively recently and with significance to the present study are discussed. These studies include themes such as oral skills, input and learner

motivation and perceptions.

The manipulation of different aspects of a task was studied by Murphy (2003), who aimed to find out if the manipulation had an effect on learners' concentration on a particular feature, namely accuracy, fluency or complexity of the communication they produced. In addition, Murphy was interested in finding out how learners interacted with the tasks and if the nature of the interaction interfered with achieving the pedagogical goal. The results seemed to suggest that it was difficult to manipulate the task in such a way that the intended pedagogic outcome was achieved. In addition, it was found that the learners' personal characteristics, such as fear of mistakes and appreciation of a particular area of language, were of a great influence. However, all the students agreed that the post-task error analysis was beneficial, therefore, Murphy suggests that one way to focus on a desired area would be to discuss it after the task.

On evaluating performance in an oral task, Skehan (2001: 175-177) used the three variables of accuracy, fluency and complexity, which could be identified from task transcripts. Furthermore, accuracy was determined by counting the grammatical errors per clause, fluency by counting the number of pauses lasting more than one second per five minutes of performance, and complexity by a subordination index. The results implied, rather surprisingly, that the familiarity of the task subject, for example, talking about personal matters, does not necessarily mean greater accuracy. In addition, the effect of familiarity on fluency was slightly better but other factors could have impacted this result. Finally, it was concluded that dialogic tasks are, in general, associated with fewer errors and greater complexity, whereas lower fluency, on the other hand, was related to interaction.

The former results are supported by Carless (2008), who studied learners' use of their mother tongue during tasks. He found that extensive use of the L1 during language instruction may affect the promotion of the target language. Moreover, it was found that there are several factors that may increase the use of the mother tongue instead of the target language, for example, unfamiliar topic (Carless 2008: 336). Thus, it seems to be possible to prevent extensive use of the mother tongue with appropriate task preparation. Furthermore, the importance of target language use is expressed by Duff and Polio (1990) who state that while the quality of the

input is important, the quantity of the exposure is essential, as it is needed in order to make it possible for SLA to happen.

In East Asia, TBL, as well as communicative language teaching in general, has been interspersed with practical and conceptual obstacles, as reported by Littlewood (2007) based on both his own work and other published reports. Concerns expressed by teachers in several sources included the difficulty of classroom management in a communicative classroom, the excessive amount of mother tongue used by learners as well as insufficient language skills for performing communicative activities, and teachers' lack of self-confidence or actual lack of communicative skills. Moreover, learners often do not try to exceed the minimum output required to perform an activity. In addition, examinations and university entrance exams concentrated heavily on written communication, grammar and vocabulary; therefore, communicative language teaching did not prepare the students for them. Furthermore, it was questioned whether TBL even suits the fundamentally different East Asian philosophy of learning and education, in which transfer of knowledge from teacher to pupil and lengthy accumulation of knowledge are emphasised. In some cases, in South Korea for example, this means that teachers pretend to follow the communicative educational demands set by the Government but in practice continue to teach as before, or in others, as in Japan, the practices or not "adopted but adapted" to suit the given environment, which may be a positive development in the end. One reason for the state of affairs is that many teachers have misunderstood the concept of communicative language teaching and believe that means only talking and no grammar instruction. Even though the study in question concentrated on implementing TBL in Asia, similar difficulties may arise in other cultural contexts as well.

The cultural contexts of teaching were also studied by Burrows (2008), whose research interest centered on how much cultural support Japanese learners needed when participating in TBL. His study provided the following observations: Firstly, it may be unreasonable to expect input and active participation from a Japanese learner as the learning culture they are accustomed to expects, in fact, less participation from the student. Secondly, the more traditional approach to classroom interaction with a teacher might actually be preferred by them (Burrows 2005, as cited in Burrows

2008). Thus, learners unaccustomed to learner autonomy should be gradually introduced to the new style of learning and not merely provided the input. The practical problems in terms of students, such as reluctance to exceed minimal input in the L2, that were recounted by Littlewood (2007), are also supported by Burrows' study, which suggests that activities should be aimed at facilitating a sense of success and making learners think about language learning and how to make it more effective. In addition, the Western ideals of learner independence and individuality should be addressed to make learners aware of these differences and to know what is expected of them.

TBL has also been studied from other points of view, which expand the insight into it. As an example of the range in the literature, three studies with different interests are now presented. Firstly, the effects of pre-task teacher-provided materials and input on learner performance were studied by Boston (2008). He was interested in finding out whether task preparation diminished the authenticity of task-based communication if learners relied on the materials provided for them rather than producing real communication themselves. The study concluded that the positives of using pre-task materials overcame the negatives. Secondly, learning grammar through a task-based approach was studied by Fotos and Ellis (1991). Their research interest lay within how EFL students in Japan learnt grammar through tasks. The results showed that the communicative approach promoted the discussion of a particular grammar issue in question, and thus, deepened the students' knowledge of it. Thirdly, the individual and social variables' roles in oral task performance were studied by Dörnyei and Kormos (2000). The study showed that motivational variables have an impact not only on how learners perform in a task but also on how engaged they are when participating in one. Thus, there has been significant research into varying areas of TBL, which provide useful information for task planners and executors.

Lastly, in direct relation to the research interests of the present study, both student and teacher impressions of a task-based EFL course at a Thai university were studied by McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007). The course covered a period of over 12 months, during which data was collected for a qualitative analysis. The data consisted of written and oral task evaluations, learning notebooks, observations,

course evaluations and interviews. The results showed that the teachers and students felt that the course corresponded to the students' real academic needs and increased their independence as thinkers and learners. In regard to real-world relevance, the students seemed unsure about how they could apply their newly-learnt skills outside the academic context, even though many of them stated having learnt something that would benefit them in the future as well. Moreover, the students reported that they needed time to adjust to a task-based course. Finally, the students and teachers agreed on an increased need for teacher feedback and support, as the students stated being hesitant about understanding the task instructions correctly and performing in the desired manner. In addition, it was established that teachers needed to make sure that learners comprehend the purpose of an activity in its relation to broader task objectives.

Summary of previous studies on TBL

Even though the interest in TBL has been growing, the number of studies relevant to the present study is not large. Yet there are many qualitative case studies among recent research, the methodologies of which correspond with that of the present study. Significant areas of inquiry have included both oral skills and grammar learning through tasks, as well as student motivation and perceptions. However, research into adolescent or younger learners has been scarce, and in particular any Finnish studies matching the interests of the present study have proved to be non-existent.

3 ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND LEARNING

The approach to language learning (and acquisition) that is applied in the present study has now been introduced at length, and next it is necessary to examine language learning and SLA from a few select perspectives. SLA, however, is a fragmented field because of two reasons (Long 2007: 4). Firstly, researchers come from a multitude of backgrounds, linguistics and psychology, for example, and secondly, it consists of dozens of different theories, models or hypotheses which are applied in different domains. Moreover, as with any other discipline, there is no reason to expect that even the majority of them will stand the test of time, and in

addition, SLA research is not very interested in L2 pedagogy (Long 2007: 16-18). Even though SLA and L2 teaching are two different fields, an attempt is made to discuss such research into SLA that could be exploited in favour of the present study on designing and conducting the task. In this chapter, what is known about SLA in general is looked at first, which then is followed by an introduction to authenticity in language learning, and, finally, by an examination into gaining communicative competence.

3.1 Common Perceptions of SLA

As the main aim of TBL is to facilitate the holistic acquisition of a language other than the L1, it is relevant to examine what is known about SLA and how it may be aided, or thwarted, for that matter. In the following, some common perceptions of SLA are briefly canvassed, after which the origins of research into SLA as well as current and possible future interests are briefly presented. In addition, four central themes are discussed: the cognitive abilities of the human brain, the roles of input and output, the age of acquisition (which connects to cognitive abilities) and the relationship between SLA and L2 pedagogy.

Description of SLA

Despite the fact that teaching languages has a centuries-long history behind it, it is not clear how exactly languages are acquired, and thus, how they should be taught. Language acquisition (of first, second and possible successive languages) consists of internal phenomena, which are impossible to measure (Carroll 2001). The nature of these phenomena can only be examined by observing their external manifestations, i.e. the development of language competence, based on which teaching then can be planned. Furthermore, acquiring and learning languages are indeed commonly viewed by SLA research as different processes, as acquiring a language refers to the unconscious picking up of language, whereas learning a language is more of a deliberate attempt to *know about* a language (Krashen 1982: 10). To put it differently, while language learning is typically seen as something more mechanical and something requiring effort, successful language acquisition is thought to entail the somewhat automated competence to understand and produce communication.

The fact that SLA researchers have not been able to achieve a consensus on how an L2 is acquired makes designing tasks for language teaching complicated and challenging, and somewhat experimental in nature. One thing that researchers do agree on is that SLA requires exposure to the target language, i.e. input, but the quality or quantity of exposure has been left rather undefined. In fact, regarding input, three things have been pointed out by Carroll (2001: 2-3, 215). Firstly, there is no theory of input in SLA. Secondly, it is not known how learners process the speech that they hear, even though that process of handling input is the beginning of the formation any knowledge of grammar. Thirdly, it is, however, significant that infants' and small children's perceptual and cognitive systems are not so-called blank slates. In other words, there is something pre-wired in the brains of newborns that make them susceptible to acquiring a mother tongue. In fact, TBL attempts to emulate L1 acquisition by providing meaningful input.

Human mind and SLA

One perception of the so-called pre-wired condition of the human brain is the Universal Grammar Hypothesis (usually associated with Noam Chomsky), according to which "there is a set of principles which govern all languages and are already wired into the human brain when we are born" (Littlewood 2004b: 516). Before and during the 1950s, the approach to language acquisition was behaviourist (see e.g. Skinner 1957), meaning that language was regarded basically as a set of habits, while "general learning mechanisms of some kind" were seen as a satisfactory explanation for humans being able to learn and do things (Chomsky 2006: vii). At the same time, a new field combining biology, psychology and linguistics was emerging, and its approach to language acquisition was to examine the cognitive systems of the human brain, which were believed to be based on biological properties of the brain (Chomsky 2006: viii-ix). Research into syntax conducted by Chomsky (e.g. 1957, 1968), which suggested that all natural languages shared features in their so-called deep structures, was an important part of the cognitive revolution of the 1950s, as he showed that "there is really only one human language: that the immense complexity of the innumerable languages we hear around us must be variations on a single theme" (Smith 1999: 1). In other words, all humans have the same cognitive capacities inside them and all languages share the propension to arrange and classify

themselves, for example, to distinguish between nouns and verbs or different colours, because they are cognitively able to do so. Indeed, the Chomskyan view of language is that it is psychological or cognitive by nature and a part of human capital (Carnie 2006: 3).

Krashen's classic hypotheses

SLA research became a science of its own right in the 1980s. Thus, it is a relatively new field of study, and one of the early classics of the field is Krashen (1981, 1982, 1985) who studied SLA with the language classroom in mind. Three of the hypotheses formulated by him are still particularly relevant to the present study: the Input Hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis and the Affective Filter Hypothesis, which are discussed next in the aforementioned order.

Firstly, according to the Input Hypothesis, for acquisition to happen, input should be slightly beyond a person's current language skills (Krashen 1982: 21). However, as pointed out by Krashen, a deliberate attempt to provide i+1 (where *i* stands for current competence) may be harmful, as in school the pupils are not at the same starting point compared to one another and it is arguable if the right order for SLA is even known. Yet, when students engage in successful communication and when there is enough of it, i+1 will be provided for everyone automatically.

Secondly, moving on to the Monitor Hypothesis, Krashen (1982: 15-16) posited that the function of learning is to act as a monitor that controls the output produced by acquisition, but three conditions must be met in order for a person to afford monitoring: time, focusing on form and knowing the rule. This means that in order to produce a grammatically correct utterance, a person has to know the right way of using a rule, put conscious effort into it and have the time to think about it in advance. Often in a two-way discussion this is not possible if language acquisition has not developed sufficiently, and as claimed by Krashen (1982: 19), some people may in fact start to over-use their monitor, which leads to a hesitant style of speaking, while some may not monitor themselves at all and may end up producing output that is difficult to understand. Thus, Krashen found that there is such a thing as the optimal Monitor User, which is also the pedagogic goal.

Thirdly, regarding the Affective Filter Hypothesis, there are personal characteristics, mainly motivation, self-confidence and anxiety, which affect SLA (Krashen 1982: 31-32). This hypothesis is explained as "those whose attitudes are not optimal for second language acquisition will not only tend to seek less input, but they will also have a high or strong Affective Filter - even if they understand the message, the input will not reach that part of the brain responsible for language acquisition, or the language acquisition device" (Krashen 1982: 31). On the contrary, a low Affective Filter is supposed to help language acquisition.

Age of acquisition

The cognitive abilities of the brain, which allow for language acquisition, are an essential part of SLA research. As cognitive abilities change with the development of the brain, age has been thought to be a factor relating to SLA in that the sooner one starts to acquire a language, the better the results (see e.g. Spolsky 1989). However, as the research tradition has continued, recent work has tried to establish if any other explanations than neurological maturity for any age-related effects on SLA exist (Singleton 2001: 80). It has been thought for a long time that every learner has their so-called Critical Period, during which language acquisition is the easiest due to neurological reasons, and after which "language acquisition of any kind is difficult" (Singleton 2001: 82). He continues to discuss four counter-arguments to the classic Critical Period. These are, firstly, that no clear end point for the Critical Period has been established. Secondly, there have been reports of some late beginners who have achieved native-like language skills. Thirdly, other explanations than age are available; and finally, that the causal relationship between the Critical Period and SLA has not been verified. Moreover, Krashen (1982: 10, 34-35) finds that adults, too, are able to acquire language and believes that teaching only benefits those who do not have a rich source of input outside the classroom. Originally this was considered to mean those learners who do not live in a country where the target language is spoken, but globalisation has changed the world since then and many people are exposed to more than one language in their everyday lives.

Young age has been regarded as an advantage in SLA, in addition to the Critical Period, also because children are thought, firstly, to be more motivated to learn an L2

to a native-like extent, secondly, to possess a more positive attitude towards the L2 in question and its speakers, and finally, to receive simpler input and less of it compared to adults (Bialystok and Hakuta 1999). Indeed, input and affective factors are often seen as essential (e.g. Krashen 1982) but some researchers are less inclined to support the view that children are superior to adults when it comes to motivation and attitudes. Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson (2003: 563) draw on research carried out by Long (1990) which found that there are flaws in studies citing the aforementioned factors as explanations for child-adult differences, for example, the claim that children naturally have higher motivation to learn language. Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson continue that, firstly, as it has been established that the maturation of the brain has a great deal to do with L1 acquisition, it would be implausible that it had no role in SLA, and secondly, that it would be equally implausible to claim that social and psychological factors did not influence SLA at all, and thus, they come to the conclusion that both maturational and non-maturational factors must have an effect on SLA. This view has received support in the literature by Singleton (2001: 85). Furthermore, positive motivational and attitudinal factors in addition to extensive input may help to make up for a late start or neurobiological disadvantages (Bongaerts, Planken and Schils 1995: 45). Thus, while there may be such a thing as a Critical Period, the end of it and/or being an adult does not have to signify the end of being able to acquire a language.

Input and output

As input is a central concept both in SLA in general and in relation to the present study, it is important to give a more detailed description of it, and, furthermore, a distinction between input and intake must be made. Input can be considered to be all the language that is encountered, whereas intake is what actually is ‘taken in’ and acquired (Krashen 1982, Swain 1985). Some find that the term input is often used erroneously and too readily, while its definition is easily forgotten (Carroll 2001: 8). Moreover, it is generally merely understood as speech heard by learners or something that stimulates the visual and auditory senses, and as Carroll finds that what matters is not the external but the internal, she suggests that the term stimuli be used, because language acquisition has more to do with the internal goings-on of a person’s mind instead of the environment. Carroll’s stance can be, however, merely

perceived as another way of distinguishing between input and intake, while it is, of course, important to recognise that learners do not process all the input they receive.

Relating to input, Swain (1985: 248-249), however, thought that the role of output, speech produced by the learner, had been overlooked and, therefore, formulated the Output Hypothesis, according to which "producing the target language may be the trigger that forces the learner to pay attention to the means of expression needed in order to successfully convey his or her own intended meaning" (Swain 1985: 249). She speculated that the Output Hypothesis might explain the phenomenon where one can understand a language but produce it very limitedly, as even Krashen (1982: 66) had previously stated that understanding a language does not require syntactical knowledge, but lexical information and extra-linguistic clues suffice. In connection with producing output, the possibility to negotiate for meaning may aid SLA, and learners who have the opportunity to take part in unscripted interaction have more chances to learn (Mackey 1999: 560), which is, of course, one of the main principles in TBL.

Using the target language for communication may, indeed, advance the acquisition of it. For example, Long (1996: 414 as cited in Mackey 1999: 561) finds that "environmental contributions to acquisition are mediated by selective attention and the learner's developing L2 processing capacity -- negative feedback obtained in negotiation work or elsewhere may be facilitative of SL development". In other words, when a learner struggles to be understood, this may aid e.g. the noticing of different forms, as the learner is forced to come to the realisation that something in their output is lacking or different from that of others. Thus, researchers have claimed that if interaction is to affect learners' language competence, learners may need to notice the gap between their input and the L2 alternative (Carroll 2001: 561), while the "alternative" way to use the L2 is provided by the interlocutor. Furthermore, Mackey (1999: 584) suggests the use of tasks to effectively achieve interaction and advocates for more research into how exactly the positive influences on L2 learning occur through interaction.

Relationship between SLA and L2 pedagogy

Current research suggests that cognitive abilities are indeed the most significant reason behind varying scores in language aptitude tests and that there are psycholinguistic processes involved in both explicit and implicit learning, which is why future research is likely to focus on examining "which abilities are related to which processes" and whether learners who have different strengths and capabilities can learn in different ways and still achieve success (Ellis 2004: 534). However, SLA researchers have been very vague regarding how their research could be applied to practice, and there is surprisingly little literature on the matter of how to use the theoretical information gained through SLA research as a source of practical language pedagogy (Ellis 1997). In fact, it has not been fully recommended by researchers that the results of their studies be applied due to the young nature of the field, and moreover, a number of practitioners have perceived the work of researchers with disregard, as they have deemed the gap between theory and practice too great and considered the relevance of SLA theories questionable (Ellis 1997: 70-71).

There are at least three factors which impede the relevance of SLA research from a pedagogical point of view (Ellis 1997: 75, partly drawn from Nunan 1991). Firstly, much of the research carried out has taken place outside the classroom, and moreover, research that has been conducted inside one, has interfered with classroom conditions in order to accommodate for experimental teaching of some kind. In other words, researchers have not merely observed learners in their usual context but changed the content and methods in one way or another. Secondly, SLA tends to focus on issues that teachers are not directly concerned with, and thirdly, any practical applications of research findings have been scarce. However, the role of SLA in L2 pedagogy could be that of stimulating reflection (Ellis 1997: 82). In other words, SLA research and data can help when teaching is hoped to raise awareness instead of giving out direct answers. In addition, insight into SLA may help teachers to conduct research of their own (Ellis 1997: 69). As it is currently accepted that there is no one correct methodology which suits all teachers and learners and that teachers should "develop a pedagogy to suited to their own specific situations" (Littlewood 2007: 248), a working knowledge of SLA can help teachers to achieve

this.

Summary of common perceptions of SLA

To sum up, research into SLA is a relatively new field, and rather little is known about the internal mechanisms or cognitive structures that affect SLA. It has been, however, speculated that the brain is more capable of acquiring a language at a certain stage, during the Critical Period, and that the emotions and attitudes as well as environmental factors affect SLA of both adults and children, and moreover, research no longer agrees that SLA is impossible for adults. What is agreed upon, however, is that SLA requires being exposed to the target language, as well as most likely producing it oneself. Lastly, the gap between "theory and practise", i.e. research into SLA and L2 pedagogy, has been significant and these fields have not been able to form a uniform theory of how languages are acquired, and thus, how they should be taught, which is a possible area of future interest. To conclude this section, the previous reporting on SLA concentrates on themes relevant to the present study, and the nature of these connections between SLA theory and the present study are presented in more detail in Chapter 4.

3.2 Authenticity

The concepts of authenticity and task are closely related to each other, as authenticity, too, strives for incorporating real-world-relatedness into language learning. Moreover, as researchers have not agreed on the usefulness of authenticity, it is important to consider both its advantages and disadvantages. In this section, the concept of authenticity is presented first, which is the followed by a discussion of both the arguments against and arguments favouring it.

Description of authenticity

Before authenticity can be discussed further, it must be considered how authenticity can be defined. A relatively straightforward definition of authenticity has been put forward by Morrow (1977: 13, as cited in Mishan 2004: 11), who defines an authentic text as "real language, produced by a real speaker or writer for a real

audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort". Authentic materials are explained in rather a similar manner by Little, Dewitt and Singleton (1989: 25, as cited in Peacock 1997: 146), who define them as materials that are not designed particularly for language teaching purposes and which convey some social function in the given language community. Moreover, learning materials are paramount, as Mishan (2004: ix) states that authenticity is often conveyed through the materials used. As TBL aims to have a connection to the real world by creating possibilities for learners to practice real-life language, using authentic materials seems to become relevant in the context of the present study.

Another way of incorporating authenticity into language learning is learner participation, and in fact authenticity is beginning to be more associated with interaction than texts, which is a change brought about by prevailing pedagogical principles such as learner-centeredness, communicativeness and learner autonomy (Mishan 2004: 1, 11, 16). Moreover, the illusiveness of the concept of authenticity is discussed by Clarke (1989: 73, as cited in Mishan 2004: 17), who points out that "the notion of authenticity itself has become increasingly relative, being increasingly related to specific learner needs and less and less concerned with the 'authentic' nature of the input materials themselves". What this means is that learner interpretation of and interaction with authentic texts are also seen as authenticity, and as important as the text itself, if not more so.

Arguments against authenticity

Having now defined authenticity, its disadvantages in the language classroom are studied next. Both the negative aspects of authentic texts and authentic contexts are elaborated on.

There are several factors that argue against authenticity in language learning, as pointed out by Widdowson (1998: 711). Firstly, it is impossible to employ authentic language in a learning situation simply because of the classroom environment. Secondly, classrooms do not provide the contextual necessities that language needs in order to be authentic. Thirdly, the authenticity of language is context-bound as well as only authentic for insiders of a certain discourse community. Finally,

language learners are always outsiders to the target language community, and thus, the language used by native speakers can never be authentic for learners. These arguments have been echoed in other literature as well as, for example, Morrow (1977: 14, as cited in Mishan 2004: 13) claims that a text can only be authentic in its original context and that if it is used to teach language, it ceases to be an authentic text. Furthermore, the challenge of authenticity is that authenticity is indeed context- and people-bound, and what is authentic for a teacher, may seem artificial for a learner (Splitter 2009: 137). This may, however, also stem from a lack of skills on the teacher's behalf to present the material to the learners, which may make any material seem artificial in the eyes of the learner.

Authenticity in the strictest sense may be impossible to achieve in language learning. In fact, some also find it unnecessary. Thus, the following arguments for the use of artificial materials are, in fact, arguments against authenticity. For example, the use of artificial listening comprehension material can be reasoned with making listening activities easier for learners as well as providing them with material which gives them opportunities to notice target language forms, which they then can pick up and later use in communication (Gilmore 2004: 366-367). Moreover, it has been argued that language tasks are for learning purposes and they do not have to entail authentic language use (Widdowson 1998: 714). Furthermore, the argument continues that authentic language tasks are, in fact, likely to be less beneficial than purposely designed language tasks or exercises. In addition, it has been claimed that when authentic materials are compared with artificial ones, beginner-level students, in fact, consider the authentic material less interesting (Peacock 1997: 152). This may derive from the fact that artificial materials often are simplified, and therefore, beginner-level students can comprehend them better than more complex authentic materials.

Arguments in favour of authenticity

Now that the arguments posited against the use of authenticity as a part of language learning have been established, some counter-arguments are introduced next, which see authenticity as a beneficial part of language learning for several reasons.

Two positive aspects of authenticity have been put forward by Gilmore (2004: 363-

364, 368). Firstly, artificial language tasks are typically simple with straightforward language use and thus, do not include aspects that would be present in natural communication, such as repetitions and hesitations. Moreover, the typical course book material reflects “a ‘can do’ society, in which interaction is generally smooth and problem-free, the speakers cooperate with each other politely, the conversation is neat, tidy and predictable” (Carter 1998: 47). Thus, authentic materials provide students with a more realistic view into language use in the target language communities. Secondly, the use of authentic material as a part of language classroom is desirable because if language learners are exposed merely to perfect language in listening comprehension activities, this may affect their motivation negatively, as they may feel that they will never be able to reach that level of perfection in communication. However, what learners fail to realise is that this communicative perfection to which they are exposed does not exist in real life.

On considering learner interest, authentic materials are often more interesting than conventional textbook materials and, consequently, serve a motivational function (Little and Singleton 1992: 124). Furthermore, authentic materials provide learners with richer target language input than artificial materials do, and authentic materials are also motivating. Despite his previously cited claim that authentic texts are less interesting to beginner-level learners, Peacock (1997: 157) found that the learners in his study did, nevertheless, perceive the authentic material as more motivating. Moreover, the study showed that motivation reflects learning outcomes and, therefore, is a criterion that should be taken into account when selecting teaching materials. Finally, as suggested by Nunan (1991: 37), tasks could be made easier for less proficient learners, in other words, a teacher might use authentic materials with simpler instructions and requirements. For example, rather than requiring the students to understand the whole content of a text, a teacher could ask for an explanation for the most important message conveyed in the text.

In addition, it is currently possible for non-native language users to be a part of an authentic cultural context on the Internet, as they can participate in activities and even produce content of their own. Participation in communication in the target language is without a doubt authentic even according to the narrowest of definitions. Internet and other technology can be used inside the classroom as well at home as a

part of learners' homework, in order to attain authenticity. It would certainly seem that the advances in information technology have outdated many perceptions of authenticity conceived before the 21st century.

Summary of authenticity

To sum up, it seems there are three main aspects to why authenticity should be promoted: motivation, learner-autonomy and real-life materials, which entail cultural information and realistic language. Those opposed may claim that artificial materials correspond better to learners' maturity to process linguistic items; however, this is not supported by extensive research. In addition, those critical of authenticity find it a flawed concept, as according to their definition, authenticity only exists in the original context. It seems that many of the arguments against authenticity are rather based on philosophy than pedagogy, as much attention is given to debating a matter such as when authentic texts cease to be authentic.

3.3 Communicative Competence

In theory, a language is learnt in school so that it can be used in real life. However, there have been serious shortcomings in, firstly, the teaching of speaking, and secondly, in focusing learners' attention on how to use the language in varying contexts. Greater emphasis has lately been placed in the Finnish National Core Curricula for Basic Education (Peruskoulun opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2004, hereafter POPS 2004) and Upper Secondary Education (Lukion opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2003, hereafter LOPS 2003) onto the learners to achieve communicative competence in the target language. In other words, the importance put on teaching in terms of what to do with language has increased. In the following, the term communicative competence and what it means in terms of language learning are examined.

Description of communicative competence

Communication, in a way or another, is a part of the everyday lives of human beings. Most people communicate both through written and spoken discourse, while oral

communication is the primary form of language. Typically any type of communication requires two or more participants – it can, for example, be compared to sending and receiving, "picking up", messages as described by Rost (1990: 2). Merely listening does not suffice, but one also needs to understand the message being conveyed. In fact, successful communication consists also of other elements than merely words put together to convey a meaning. It is also about sending out one's message in such a way that the intended meaning will not be misunderstood or considered inappropriate. Gestures, intonation, expressions, choice of words and cultural knowledge of language use are inseparable parts of communication. That is why it is important to pay attention on how to communicate in the target language.

Communicative competence "consists of grammatical competence as well as sociolinguistic competence" (Kumaravadivelu 2006: 9). In other words, communicative competence refers to a speaker's ability to communicate in a given language in a manner appropriate to the context. The term communicative competence can be divided into smaller units, as done by Celce-Murcia (2007: 46-50), whose list of the six areas in communicative competence includes socio-cultural competence, discourse competence, formulaic competence, interactional competence, linguistic competence and strategic competence. First, socio-cultural competence refers to a learners' pragmatic knowledge of the target language. The importance of socio-cultural competence can be achieved through extensive exposure to the target language culture, and thus, the target culture should be present in language teaching. Second, discourse competence refers to everything that speakers must do in terms of choosing and arranging words and utterances to produce a speech act. Third, linguistic competence includes phonological, lexical, morphological and syntactical knowledge of a language that one must be able to use while producing output. Fourth, formulaic competence concerns with larger chunks of everyday language that people commonly use, for example, idioms and collocations. Fifth, interactional competence refers to how people interact in the given language, which may differ greatly from one language to another. The concept may be divided further into three subareas: actional competence, conversational competence and non-verbal competence. Finally, strategic competence refers to different learning and communication strategies that language learners use when learning a language. Thus, communicative competence is, in fact, a result of several

factors, all of which should be taken into consideration when planning communicative activities for the language class.

Communicative competence in the classroom

As the concept of communicative competence is greatly multifaceted, there are challenges in gaining comprehensive communicative skills in the language classroom. In a school context, language learning typically is seen as a skill-learning comparable to, for example, learning to play an instrument and, furthermore, instruction is designed to teach so-called target skills, which the teacher isolates and explains to the learners who in turn practise them, and finally, learner performance is then evaluated with preset criteria in mind that are typically concerned with either accuracy or appropriateness (Littlewood 1992: 37). In other words, a language is learnt through separating small units from the context, while solely concentrating on one unit at a time in a situation without any particular meaning for the learners. Moreover, when considering teacher-dominance in language teaching, it easily creates a problem, as the learners are left with fewer chances to produce language themselves (Willis and Willis 2007: 135). In fact, studies have shown that language teachers may spend nearly 90 percent of the class time talking (Nunan 1989b: 26), which gives little time for the students to take part in actual communication.

Furthermore, it can be questioned whether languages should be taught in the same way as other school subjects, as language acquisition is not an object of knowledge in the way most other school subjects are, but it is, in fact, “a natural competence” (Council of Europe 2007: 24). This view is also supported by Littlewood (1992: 62), who argues that language learning is fundamentally different from any other skill learning that takes place in schools and, accordingly, natural learning should be given more emphasis. In addition, when language skills are assessed, errors, for example, typically downgrade the evaluation of one’s competence. However, hesitations and errors are parts of normal everyday language use, even with one’s mother tongue, as pointed out by Johnson (2008: 56). In fact, error correction can sometimes be pointed out as one of the main tasks of a teacher (Nunan 1989b: 31). On the contrary, real-life language use contains elements that language classrooms tend to try to eliminate. When these aspects of natural language use are marked as

unwanted, it may lessen a learner's willingness to use the language, and along with that a teacher's perception of the learner's communicative skill level.

Usually during language instruction, a learner has a limited amount of freedom to choose, for example, the content or length of the output they produce (Willis and Willis 2007: 135). This does not correlate with the language use that learners will face outside the confines of the classroom. Moreover, from the traditional teacher-centred, or language-centred, instruction learners will infer that the way they say something is more important than the actual content (Long and Porter 1985: 209). Consequently, some learners indeed may find it intimidating to produce speech freely if they have not been given the opportunity to do so when they have been learning the language. Tasks that resemble real-life language use situations may reduce these fears, as learners have been given the chance to practise conversing in similar situations as a part of their studies. In fact, tasks are aimed to provide learners with experience of a wide range of discourse types, in order for them to be able to produce real discourse of their own (Willis and Willis 2007: 135). Even though teacher-dominance does eliminate learner chances to produce the target language orally, it is still occasionally argued that being exposed to the large quantities of input that is easy to comprehend, i.e. teacher talk, will benefit the learning process (Nunan 1989b: 26). However, listening tasks in school should offer a challenge for the learners and thus, encourage them to deal with aspects that may be intimidating but common in normal communication, such as not being able to understand all the words or expressions encountered, and moreover, listening skills cannot be expected to develop in a void (Rost 1990: 153).

The idea that any type of classroom communication can be considered genuine communication is challenged by Willis (1990: 58-59), who, firstly, points out that authentic communication, which is the key to achieving communicative competence, is obtained only by giving the participants the freedom to choose what they are going to say. Thus, the communicative usefulness of typical pair exercises can be challenged, as often they do not give the speakers the option to choose what to say, instead they may, for example, instruct them to translate a given sentence into the target language. Secondly, classroom communicative activities cannot be considered authentic if communication comprises of questions posed by the teacher, to which

the answers are known by the teacher, or if language forms that should be used in the communication are given to the students beforehand. Real-life communication rarely possesses either of these features.

Summary of communicative competence

Languages provide human beings with the possibility to communicate with each another. While communication can be both written and oral or non-verbal even, the importance of oral skills has lately gained in prestige and they are, or at least should be, emphasised in school. Communication consists of different sub-areas, some of which are culturally-bound. This offers a challenge for language teachers, as learners should not only be able to produce language, but they should know what kind of language is appropriate in every single context. Learning to communicate can only be achieved by being allowed to practise it in school.

4 PRESENT STUDY

In the previous chapters, concepts that are paramount to the present study, which aims to examine the range of student opinions regarding the task designed, have been introduced. The student opinions of the task itself, of the authenticity in the task and of gaining oral communicative skills by performing the task are of particular interest to the present study. In this chapter, the research questions are introduced and, as the present study is a case study, the nature of case studies is briefly established, which are followed by task design and execution. These are followed by a report on the collection of data and, finally, a discussion of the methods of analysis.

4.1 Aims of the Study and Research Questions

TBL takes a communicative approach to language learning, therefore, it can be argued to give learners better means to attain improved communication skills in the target language. Furthermore, the importance of gaining communicative competence as a part of language learning has risen, as the goals of being able to communicate in a manner typical of the target language as well as having the ability to self-assess one’s own level of language skills have been laid out for Finnish upper secondary

school students (LOPS 2003: 100). Thus, learners should not only be exposed to natural communication in the target language but also be able to produce it themselves. Hence, TBL, the use of authentic materials and gaining communicative skills can be seen to have a connection with one another.

As stated earlier, TBL is often claimed to offer help in attaining better oral communication skills in the target language. Critical views of the suitability of TBL to language learning have been expressed, for example, it has been stated that young adult learners in particular may find TBL methodology most useful in learning a language, while other age groups might not see it as appealing an option (Carless 2008: 331). Furthermore, Swan (2005: 397), as previously established, claims that TBL is not well suited for learning that does not take place in the target language community, as the exposure to the target language in other surroundings is limited. It seems that a number of studies on the suitability of TBL have been conducted, with mixed results. There has been scarce research into how learners themselves experience TBL, except for McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007), where the scope of the study covered an entire task-based course in English for university students. The present study is interested in examining learner opinions, as learners have valuable information to share about what goes on in their minds when they are trying to learn a language. When researching tasks or SLA, it seems that learners' opinions are rarely asked, and instead, their performance measured, which is the exact opposite of the present study. Thus, the aim of the study is to establish the range of opinions of how Finnish upper secondary school students perceive one type of task in terms of the task itself, authenticity and gaining oral communicative skills in English.

There are two central research questions, which are to be answered:

1. What are the students' opinions of the task in general as well as of the authenticity in the task?
2. What are the students' opinions of the task as a way of gaining oral communicative skills?

The aforementioned research questions evolved, while the theoretical background for the study was being researched. The intention of the present study is to find answers

to these questions by conducting a case study and designing a TBL sequence for Finnish upper secondary school students, which involves them in engaging in a real-world task that requires communicating with people who do not speak Finnish. In addition to the research interests, the present study also has a pedagogical motivation, as it aspires to give the students the chance to practise their oral skills in a context which is new to most of them but which corresponds with the current aims of language teaching. A focused, also known as semi-structured, interview was chosen as the primary method of data collection, the purpose of which is to elicit student opinions of the task and which also means that it is possible for the research questions to change and become more defined depending on the data collected. In addition, the present study includes questionnaires to be filled in by the students at the beginning of the course in order to gather information on them as language users, as well as another questionnaire after the task to help the formulation of themes for the interviews. The questionnaires also include self-assessment forms, in which the students are asked to assess their own English communication skills.

Nature of case studies

As the present study is a case study, examining the characteristics of case studies become relevant at this point. Moreover, as a case study represents qualitative research, it is explained in the following section and briefly compared to quantitative methodology.

Case studies allow a variety of approaches to research (Nunan 1992: 74). What constitutes as a case study is not always straightforward, as pointed out in the following observations (Nunan 1992: 74-81). Firstly, the limits of what can be considered a case study are loose and can be interpreted in different ways. A case study can be a study of a single individual, but it can also cover, for example, a classroom or even a whole school. Secondly, case studies share aspects with ethnography studies, for example, in relation to the research philosophy employed, as ethnography aims to describe cultures and groups and, thus, the methodologies used may be similar to case studies. However, these similarities or differences between these two approaches are context-bound. Thirdly, case studies are aimed at investigating a particular research interest in a given context and it is not aimed to

produce information that could be generalised and applied for other contexts. It may, nevertheless, be possible to draw implications for similar contexts but the main interest is not to produce results that would provide universally valid findings. In other words, a case study is targeted at creating a deeper understanding of a particular case.

The following observations on qualitative research and case studies are introduced as outlined by Duff (2008: 30-45). Firstly, in qualitative research, the object of study should be situated in its original context. Even if the number of qualitative studies in the field of applied linguistics has steadily increased, qualitative research is often mistakenly considered inferior to quantitative research for two reasons: first, the existence of many poorly conducted qualitative studies and second, traditionally, quantitative methodology has been considered the only valid approach to genuine scientific study. This is mainly due to quantitative research offering data that can be presented e.g. in the form of numbers or charts, unlike qualitative data, the analysis of which is based more on in-depth interpretation, exploration and description. Secondly, a case study, indeed, represents interpretive qualitative research, the case being the subject of study. However, there is some confusion over the term case study, as it seems to mean different things to different researchers, but generally in applied linguistics cases have either been language learners or language users in either an instructional or non-instructional situation. The advantages of a well-executed case study include “a high degree of completeness, depth of analysis and readability” (Duff 2008: 43). Finally, due to their exploratory nature, case studies may open up new perspectives and even result in new theories, as well as provide evidence contrary to existing theories. This is also the reason why a case study suits the present study, which is experimental in nature.

4.2 Data and Data Collection

In this section, the collection of data is elaborated on in detail. There were different stages for collecting data. Firstly, the task, which was planned as being compatible with an upper secondary level English course, was designed. Secondly, questionnaires were used to collect data both at the beginning of the course, which was the third obligatory English course on the upper secondary level, as well as at

the end, after the task had been completed. Finally, the students were interviewed in a focused interview partly based on the post-task questionnaires. Although the study consists of three sets of data, i.e. the pre-task questionnaire, the post-task questionnaire and the student theme interviews, the emphasis is placed on the interviews, while the questionnaires support the collection of the main data, mostly in terms of their use for the interviews and planning the task. These different phases in collecting the data are now introduced in the order they took place in the present study.

4.2.1 Task Design and Execution

The process of task design as well as the execution of the task is now described. First, a general description of the task is given, second, the task execution is illustrated, and last, after the nature of the present task has been established, a description of how the task design and execution take SLA theory into account is provided.

Task design

The first step in the data collection was designing the task to be used in the present study, and the theme of the task had to be chosen before anything else could be proceeded with. Moreover, the intention was to design a task that integrated into the general theme of the students' English course, which was studying and working, because of which the textbook and other course materials also concerned with these issues. Thus, the task designed was to cover the process of applying for a job, starting with finding an interesting job advertisement and ending in a job interview. There were three stages in the task, in fact, the task can be seen as consisting of three smaller, separate tasks, i.e. first, the search for a job, second, the writing of a cover letter and a curriculum vitae (CV), and third, the oral task, which was the job interview with a speaker of English. However, for purposes of clarity, the three tasks are from now on referred to as the three stages of one big task or task sequence. The main function of the first two written stages was to prepare the students for the job interview, which is from now on also referred to as stage three. The goal of the present task was, therefore, the completion of stage three. Furthermore, the students

were given written homework which supported stage three, and they also took part in a short activity before the interviews in order to raise awareness of appropriate job interview etiquette.

Task execution

To begin the task, the course teacher asked the students to search for a job advertisement on the Internet that interested them and they were given written instructions, which included a list of addresses to websites where job advertisements could be found. These instructions are enclosed in Appendix 3. Furthermore, the students were instructed by the teacher to write a full application for the job chosen, including a cover letter and CV. These documents were written as if the students were actually applying for the job, in other words, they had to be typed out on a computer using a word processing programme, printed out, signed and handed in to the teacher. The job interview was conducted as a part of class work a week after the written documents had been submitted. The interviews were conducted so that native or near-native speakers of English interviewed the students in a context that, through simulation, was designed to resemble an authentic job interview situation as much as possible. The interviewers were given the students' cover letters and CVs in advance, so that they were able to prepare for each interview. Moreover, it was possible to match job seeker interests with the interviewers', as for example, a student who had applied for a job in Dublin, Ireland, was interviewed by an Irish interviewer living in Dublin. Stage three of the task can be defined as reciprocal by nature, therefore, a two-way flow required both listening and speaking from the participants (Ellis 2001: 49). Thus, the students were expected to use both their English comprehension and production skills simultaneously

As the interest of the present study lies not only in TBL, but also in the use of authentic materials in the classroom, using the material available in the course textbook was opted against, therefore, the students were indeed asked to seek real job advertisements on the Internet as a part of the job application process and were given a variety of possible Internet sites on which to find a suitable job (see Appendix 3). They were, however, allowed and encouraged to find any job that interested them, as long as the job advertisement was written in English. Furthermore, while the students

were given the option of using the sample materials in their textbooks on writing their CVs and cover letters, they were also provided with instructions of where on the Internet to seek information on the process of applying for a job. The task design relied greatly on the use of the Internet, but the students had the choice to use school computers if they wished, however, it emerged that most of them had the resources to complete the job application and CV at home. Importantly, it was emphasised from the beginning that the oral task performance would not affect their course evaluation and final marks given by their teacher.

Role of SLA theory in task design and execution

As stated in section 3.1 concerning with SLA research, a brief return to task design and execution is now made, in order to illustrate the connections between SLA theory and the present study. Firstly, the difference between language learning and language acquisition was examined since TBL is an approach to language acquisition despite the term itself including the word *learning*. Secondly, in order to plan a task, it was important to know how different personal elements, such as motivation and anxiety, affected language acquisition either positively or negatively, which was then dealt with in Krashen's Affective Filter hypothesis (1982). While it was not possible to directly affect the learners' personal characteristics, the intention was that the experience would be a positive one, which might, for example, help the students to relinquish possible anxieties of using English for oral communication. Thirdly, input and output were considered in detail, because, in fact, in the present study, the student participants were forced to pay attention to their output more than when conversing with a peer, as they could not rely on their common mother tongue. The basic assumption behind why this was perceived as useful was that the more a person produces output, the more fluent their output becomes. Moreover, the aim was that the participants would notice the differences between their output and the input received from the interviewers, which would make them notice the aforementioned gap in their speech and that of the L2 alternative. Regarding Krashen's Input hypothesis (1982), it was important to examine the nature of useful input, and it was concurred that in the present study, i+1 would be achieved during the task performance, as the interaction was likely to automatically find a balance where the interviewee could understand the interviewer and vice versa. Swain's Output

hypothesis (1985) was essential, as knowing the things that can interfere with producing spoken language should be considered in advance and taken into account in planning the task sequence. The Monitor hypothesis as formulated by Krashen (1982) pointed out the factors that were needed in order for a student to produce accurate utterances, namely, knowing the rule, a focus on form, and time, which helped to understand the quality of their performances. Thus, abiding by Krashen's hypotheses, the participants in the present study could be seen as able to acquire language and even benefiting from it more than from teaching an L2, despite the Critical Period hypothesis, which posited the very contrary. Indeed, the Critical Period hypothesis was examined because age has traditionally been thought to be an important factor in SLA. Finally, the relationship between SLA theory and L2 pedagogy was discussed in order to illustrate the fact that SLA research does not have a direct influence on how L2 teaching has and is being conducted, for several reasons. This lack of "combining practice with theory" is also the reason why the nature of the present study is experimental.

4.2.2 Participants

In order to complete the task, two different groups of participants were needed. The first group consisted of students who took part in the task as a part of their upper secondary school studies, whereas the second group was required to act as interviewers at stage three of the task. These groups are described further in the following.

Group of students

The students taking part in the study were first-year students at a large upper secondary school in Central Finland, and they were given handouts to take home where their parents' consent was asked for the students to take part in the study (see Appendix 1). Not all students returned a filled in parental consent form, and thus, the group of student participants consisted of thirteen students, three of who were male and ten female, while the whole class participated in the task, as agreed with the course teacher. Due to task design-related factors, such as having a number of people involved in the task outside the student group, the student sampling can be called

convenience or opportunity sampling (Dörnyei 2007: 98-99). The purpose of the study required that the voluntary interviewers, who are discussed in more detail in the next section, had easy access to the school in question, and thus, convenience or opportunity sampling was a logical and feasible choice.

In addition to the logistic factors, there were three further criteria that the students in the present study had to fulfil. First, TBL is particularly well-suited for adolescent L2 learners (Carless 2008: 331). Thus, a group of students that consisted of boys and girls aged either sixteen or seventeen can be seen as an age group well suited for TBL. Second, TBL is the most applicable with learners who already possess basic knowledge of the target language (Swan 2005: 376), and the students in the present study had been learning English in school for at least seven years prior to starting in upper secondary school and, therefore, could be expected to have sufficient knowledge and skills in the English language. Moreover, the Finnish Primary and Secondary School curricula goals state that the learners should as a result of formal instruction be capable of comprehending structured informal texts and audio materials, but also able to manage communicating in more formal situations (POPS 2004: 141, LOPS 2003: 100-101). Thus, first-year upper secondary school students could be, in principle, considered to have learnt English skills that enabled them to communicate with people other than their peers in a semi-formal setting. Third, after choosing the general topic to cover in the task, it was needed to find a teacher and a group of students who were doing this particular course in English at a time convenient for the present study. Thus, considering these three points, it is clear that the chosen group of students was ideal for taking part in a TBL experiment, as conducted in the present study.

Group of native and near-native speakers

The second group of participants that were involved in the task consisted of native and non-native speakers of English who acted as the job interviewers at stage three. The decision to use these participants based on the following factors. Firstly, one of the claimed shortcomings of communicative tasks has been that learners will create communication despite their lack of language accuracy, and therefore, there is a danger of them developing a way of speech that only the other learners in the

classroom can understand (Willis and Willis 2007: 174). In other words, there exists a risk of a classroom idiolect being created, which is comprehensible merely to other members of that classroom and people who share a first language. Thus, it was decided to bring in outsiders that were competent speakers of English to conduct stage three with the students. Moreover, it was hoped that the student participants in the present study would notice the differences between their output and that of the interviewers. Secondly, there is a communicative need for interaction with competent target language speakers so that learners are given the opportunity to use the target language in a genuine way in a realistic communicative situation (Canale and Swain 1980: 27-31, as cited in Aguilar 2007). The intention was to employ language users who could give the students an example of a way of efficiently communicating in English. In addition, presenting the students with a situation where they would have to communicate in English without the possibility to rely on Finnish was strived for, and as one of the aims of the study was to maximise the use of English at stage three of the task, the students were, therefore, led to believe that these speakers had no Finnish skills, which was only partially true, as the native and non-native volunteers had all lived in Finland for more than a year, and as a consequence, had learnt some Finnish. Finally, the decision to use both native and non-native speakers was based on the real-life language use that the students will face outside the classroom. To put it differently, it was found that having solely native speakers would not be sufficient, as English often is used as lingua franca with other than native English speakers.

Keeping all the aforementioned criteria in mind, volunteers were sought to take part in the study. Four volunteers were found among the students of University of Jyväskylä. Two of the volunteers were male native speakers and two were female non-native speakers. All of these participants were second year Master's degree programme students at the time the stage three of the task was conducted, and as non-native English speakers who are enrolled in a Master's programme conducted in English must display a high level of language proficiency, the non-native interviewers were considered suitable to take part in the present study.

4.2.3 Questionnaires

The students taking part in the study were asked to fill in two questionnaires as part

of the data collection. The students filled in a questionnaire collecting background information about them as language users at the beginning of their English course. After carrying out the task sequence approximately six weeks later, the students were immediately presented with another questionnaire to help identify themes of discussion for the interviews following later. In addition, the questionnaires included a self-evaluation of the students' oral communication skills in English. The pre-task questionnaire is discussed first, which is followed by a description of the post-task questionnaire.

In the beginning of the course, the students were asked to fill in a four-page questionnaire (see Appendix 2) during the first lesson of their course in mid-February 2010. The purpose of the pre-task questionnaire was to collect data on how the students perceived studying English, as well as to gain information about the amount of English they used in their everyday lives. This data was needed mainly to pre-evaluate the students' participation in the task designed for the course, in other words, the main function of the questionnaire was to gain background information about the student participants as users and learners of English.

The questionnaire was divided into three separate sections. The first part of the questionnaire was based on The Language Contact Profile (LCP) questionnaire that Day (1985) used to investigate how much influence contact with English outside the classroom had in learning the language. In order for this questionnaire to serve the present study in the best possible way, we extended it by designing a second part with questions that were aimed at gaining some background information regarding the group of students so that it was possible design the task without knowing the students, as well as to pose questions on the areas we are investigating. As mentioned above, LCP has been used by studies interested in determining if exposure outside the classroom has an impact on the learning results (Collantine and Freed 2004: 162). Despite its age, LCP is still used in research (e.g. Freed, Segalowitz and Dewey 2004), and thus, cannot be considered outdated. On the contrary, it has proven to be a useful tool providing valuable information about language use outside the classroom environment. Finally, in the last part of the questionnaire, the students were asked to evaluate their conversational English skill level. For this purpose, the Common European Framework (2002) descriptions of different proficiency levels were used.

The version provided by the Language Centre of Tampere University (2010) was used, however, some adaptations were made in order for the texts to be more appropriate for adolescents with varying English skills. Ideally in TBL, the task designer is familiar with the particular students who are taking part in the task. As the group of students was unfamiliar to us prior to the present study, it was necessary to gather some information on them beforehand as emphasised by Murphy (2003). Thus, the main function of the pre-task questionnaire was to provide general information of the students as users of English and help with the task designing process.

Later in the course, after the completion of stage three, the students were asked to fill in another questionnaire (see Appendix 5). The post-task questionnaire consisted partly of the same questions that were asked of the students in the beginning of the course as well as of questions that were aimed at determining the students' immediate feelings about the stage three of the task as well as the entire task in general. This was done in order to establish if the students held the same views then than after having had time to process the task. In addition, it was hoped that the post-task questionnaires would support the formulating of themes for the interviews. Furthermore, the students were also asked to evaluate their spoken English skills with the help of the proficiency level tables, identical to those used in the first questionnaire. The purpose of this was to establish if there had been a change in the students' general self-evaluations, which would have indicated a significant aspect to be discussed in the following interview.

4.2.4 Interviews

As the research interest lay within the students' opinions of the task as a whole, one-to-one interviews (see Appendix 6) with the students were chosen to be conducted. In the following, firstly, the reason for the manner of collecting data, and, secondly, how the interviews were conducted, are discussed.

The methodological approach to the student interview began to build on two main issues. First, the aim of the interviews was to deepen the understanding on pre-set themes that had already been introduced to (and by) the students in the

questionnaires, which also served the purpose of providing a general overview of their opinions before the interviews. Furthermore, some questions asked during the interviews were based on the individual student answers in order to seek clarification or further information for these previously expressed opinions. Thus, the aim was to form deeper insights into the students' opinions of employing this particular type of task in learning oral communication skills in English. Second, an informal approach to the interviews rather than a formal one was used, as the goal was to make the students feel comfortable sharing their opinions. Moreover, while a list of questions related to the themes were used by both interviewers (see Appendix 6), the possibility of posing questions that suited each particular interviewee was given, as advised by Patton (2002: 409). For example, a heavily structured interview was ruled out due to the lack of freedom given to the participants to express their own views. Given that the main emphasis of the interviews would be set on given themes that were found important in relation to the present study, a semi-structured theme interview, or a focused interview, was chosen as the methodological basis of the interviews.

A semi-structured interview gives the interviewees more freedom in terms of expressing their own opinions than a structured interview would. A semi-structured interview is build around themes that the interviewer wishes to discuss with the participants (Eskola and Vastamäki 2001: 33). The interviewer's role is that of a guide that leads the discussion into the areas of interest, while keeping an open mind about the developments the topic may have incurred during the interview, and moreover, in semi-structured interviews, the interview questions are typically the same with each participant but not necessarily asked in the same order (Dörnyei 2007: 136). There are, however, several different types of semi-structured interviews. A focused interview, which was used in the present study, is a semi-structured interview which relies more on the themes rather than on specific questions. In other words, the themes of the interviews, or the topics that the interview will cover are the same for each participant but the order of the questions as well as the exact questions may be different from one interview to another (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2001: 48). The focused interview would, thus, provide us with both the freedom to concentrate on the themes as well as the possibility to use an informal approach that we concluded to suit the given purpose best. Furthermore, a focused interview was deemed easier

for the students because of their young age: they might have been discouraged if they felt they were expected to produce lengthy answers to precise questions about their self-image as language users, or analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the task. The last important criterion was that a focused interview gave the students the possibility to raise issues we had not considered in advance.

With the permission of the course teacher, the interviews were conducted during the English lesson that followed the job interviews, two days later. This arrangement allowed the interviewers easy access to the students as well as increased their willingness to participate, as they were not required to do so in their spare time. All thirteen students were individually interviewed. One interviewer interviewed six students, while the other interviewed seven, and the interviews lasted between 10 to 15 minutes and were conducted in the school premises. Furthermore, the interviews were all recorded to allow for the use the gathered material as accurately as possible, as advised by Patton (2002: 380). As mentioned earlier, the aim was to let the students freely express their opinions, and thus, the interviews were conducted in a casual manner. In fact, the students were encouraged to express their opinions as openly as possible. Moreover, both interviewers emphasised that the opinions expressed in the interviews would not, in any way, affect the mark given on the English course in question.

4.3 Data Analysis

The data collection was followed by the analysis which was conducted in three steps. First, the student interviews were transcribed. Second, the data was analysed according to the principles of content analysis. Finally, the report of the findings was written. In this section, the transcription process and content analysis as a method for analysis are elaborated on, in this order.

Transcription of data

After the interviews, the data consisted of recordings which then needed to be transcribed. The transcriptions were needed as a written tool for the analysing process (Gillham 2005: 121). As there were two transcribers, some preparations

needed to be undertaken before the actual transcribing process began. This pre-transcription process included both transcribers transcribing the same first five minutes of a particular interview recording in order to determine how similarly different aspects of the discourse were being marked into the transcriptions. Furthermore, this process assured that both transcribers would be using similar markings in the transcriptions.

The following observations of the transcription process are discussed by Gillham (2005: 123-125). Firstly, the reliability of transcriptions, and the correctness of them, is higher when the person who has conducted the interview performs it. Hence, it was decided that both interviewers would transcribe their own material. This meant that one had six interviews to transcribe, while the other had seven. Secondly, it is advisable to transcribe the interviewers soon after recordings are made, which supports the transcription as the interviewer is likely to have fresh memories of the actual interview in case the recordings prove not to be of high quality. Due to practical reasons, such as having to perform the pre-transcribing preparations, the transcribing of the present interviews took place a couple of weeks after the recordings were made. Both interviewers had, however, made sure that the recordings were of high enough quality to secure the possibility of conducting the transcribing at a later stage after the necessary preparations had been done. Finally, the transcriptions should be checked against the audio material to make sure that the interview has been recorded in writing as truthfully as possible. Hence, all the interviews were later listened to again and the transcriptions simultaneously compared with the audio material.

There are several alternatives regarding how accurately to transcribe the discourse and which conventions to use. The present study adopted these markings from Johnson (1995: xv), but the markings' meanings were partly adapted to suit the present study better, as, for example, the actions of the participants were not needed to be distinguished as a discourse feature in this case. Table 1 describes the chosen conventions of transcription (parentheses not included in actual transcriptions except for the marking for incomprehensible data):

Table 1. Illustration of transcription markings

discourse feature	**marking**
shorter pause	(..)
longer pause	(…)
ellipsis	(---)
explanatory word	([brackets])
hesitation/ repetition	(-)
incomprehensible	[(epäselvää)]
word stress	(_____)

In addition, as part of the transcription process, the interviewees were randomly numbered ranging from one to thirteen to make it easier to follow up, while using the transcriptions at a later stage of the analysis and report writing. Moreover, the extracts from the transcriptions that appear in the report are in Finnish, which was the language used in the interviews, but English translations have been made available in Appendix 9. Although the interviews were transcribed in detail for the analysis, it was considered unnecessary and even irrational to include all possible conversational markers, such as pauses, self-corrections, hesitations, or the interviewers' utterances expressing interest or understanding or asking for clarification, as the accurate interpretation of the data did not require linguistic accuracy and would, in fact, have rendered the extracts more difficult to comprehend. However, these features have been marked where they have been regarded significant to the content. Furthermore, the letter and numbers in the parentheses after the quotations indicate the participant number and the page number of the interview transcription. An example of the transcription is given below.

> (6) paljon voimakkaammin täytyy ite miettiä sitä mikä on niinku paljon hyödyllisempää koska jos on parin kanssa ja jos ei tuu nopeesti sanaa mieleen niin sitä helposti [kysyy suomeksi] mikä se sana olikaan (S10, 125–127)

Content analysis

After the interview data had been transcribed, it had to be analysed. There are several possible ways of conducting the analysis depending on the purpose of the research. In the present study, the data was analysed for its content, and the chosen method is now described in detail.

Content analysis is a method of analysis which concentrates on the messages conveyed in the data, which is why it corresponded with the aims of the present study. In the following, some characteristics of content analysis are presented as outlined by Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2002: 110-114). First, there are three starting points from which content analysis can be approached: the theoretical background, the data itself, or both. In the present study, the data approach was applied. Secondly, when only the data gathered is used in the analysis, it is called inductive content analysis, because the findings, indeed, arise from the data. Moreover, this method is suitable for situations where the data and the theoretical background are being processed at the same time, as was, in fact, the case with the present study, where the theoretical background had not been fully established by the time of the analysis. Thirdly, inductive content analysis discovers the findings and implications as "new", based only on the data, whereas both theory-driven and theory- and data-driven analysis attempt to find them based on existing theory. As the present study entailed no hypotheses, and instead, was of an exploratory nature, inductive content analysis was deemed appropriate.

The analysis can be started by reading the transcripts over several times, while looking for recurring topics, the goal of which is to end up with a compiled list of themes or categories arising from data (McKay 2006: 57). This phase of the analysis can also be called pre-coding (Dörnyei 2007: 250-257), during which data must be reduced to smaller representations in order to increase the reliability of the analysis, especially when there is a great deal of data (Krippendorff 2004: 85, 100). Reducing the data can be as simple as underlining parts of the transcriptions that appear to concern with the research questions (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2002: 111). After this, the data is reviewed and coded according to the smaller categories found (McKay 2006: 57). Coding is a way to diminish the gap between the units of data and someone's

interpretation of them (Krippendorff 2004: 84), i.e. to increase objectivity. As stated by Krippendorff (2004: 105), "categorial distinctions define units by their membership in a class or category – by their having something in common", in other words, units that have something in common must be thoroughly studied and grouped together. Furthermore, while searching for patterns, the meanings should also be looked for (Stake 1995: 78). Finally, the main categories are then identified and theoretical implications are drawn on the findings (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2002: 115). Moreover, even though Dörnyei (2007: 250-257) agrees with the aforementioned stages, he adds a phase into the structure of analysis, namely growing ideas and making observations, while the analysing process is ongoing. This phase supports the final phase of drawing theoretical implications and results. These aforementioned guidelines were followed on conducting the data analysis in the present study.

5 FINDINGS

The findings of the present study are reported in this chapter. The interviews provided data to answer both research questions as well as enabled the re-definition of the research questions. The analysis began with reading the transcriptions in detail and looking for meanings or pre-categories, each related set of issues then forming a sub-category, which later developed into themes, which were employed to answer the research questions. Simplified examples of the analysis can be found in Appendices 7 and 8. As the present chapter gives a thorough view into the data, the extracts illustrating the findings are partly the same ones that are found in the appendices. This chapter reports on the findings in the following order: first the range of student opinions of the task and of authenticity are presented, which is then followed by a report of the range of student opinions of TBL as a way of gaining oral skills. When explaining the extracts, the personal pronoun 'she' is used to refer to all participants regardless of gender, due to practical reasons, as well as to protect the anonymity of the participants, since only three of the student participants were male.

5.1 Student Opinions of the Task and Authenticity

As desired, the interviews produced sufficient data to report on how the group of

students responded to the elements of authenticity at the different stages of the task as well as to the task itself. As a reminder, the first research question was:

1. What are the students' opinions of the task in general as well as of the authenticity in the task?

The data conveyed opinions of the task in general and how the students reacted to the idea of tasks being a part of language learning, however, these opinions are discussed under the same heading, as they are closely connected. In addition, authenticity was a recurrent theme at all stages of the task, and the following two sub-categories of authenticity were established on analysing the data: authenticity in the task and authenticity in relation to the students' future. The range of opinions regarding authenticity and the task has been divided into three sections: negative, neutral/ambivalent and positive student opinions, which are reported on in this order.

5.1.1 The Task

Student opinions of the task and of the idea of incorporating more tasks into language teaching were expressed in the data. As these themes are so interrelated (if a student liked the task, it is plausible that she would prefer to do more of them) they are discussed under the same heading. Furthermore, a part of the research interest in the present study was to determine whether the task design worked in the given situation, therefore, the following section also attempts to find out opinions regarding task structure as well as its execution.

5.1.1.1 Negative Opinions

Three different factors that impacted the usefulness of the task negatively were established and are discussed in the following.

Firstly, the pre-task materials were deemed insufficient for preparing for the interview. Moreover, it was stated that even more pre-task preparation material could have been offered, as one student felt that she was not able to prepare for the interview by simply completing the activities and the other stages, as reported in

extract (1):

> (1) ois ehkä voinu antaa ne kysymykset valmiiks silleen ja vähän sillein valmistautua tai niinku meille jaettiin ne jotkut paperit mutta ei multakaan kysytty niistä oikeestaan ku yks kysymys niin sit siinä oli kauheen vaikee keksiä niitä vastauksia silleen tai koittaa muodostaa niitä siinä englanniks (S8, 17–20)

The student expressed a wish that the interview questions could have been provided beforehand and hence, it would have been easier to come up with answers to the questions being asked. However, the purpose of the written homework was not to give the students questions guaranteed to be asked in the interview, as that would have been inauthentic, but to help them know what sort of things they might be asked.

Secondly, the students' plans for the future and expectations of whether they would need English in similar situations were discussed in terms of having an impact on the perceived usefulness of the task, as illustrated in extract (2):

> (2) varsinkin sellanen joka tietää et ei tuu ikinä hakee englanniks mihinkään työhaastatteluun tai sellaseen menemään.. niin tavallaan se on sellaselle ihan turha.. tehtävä (S9, 36–38)

The student stated that she knew that she would not be applying for jobs in English and, therefore, felt that the interview was of no use to her. Interestingly, she did not appreciate that the skills learnt in an English-speaking interview could be applied in a Finnish one. In other words, she believed that any skills that she might have learnt could not be transferred onto other similar situations.

Finally, it was also clearly stated that similar tasks would not be preferred as a part of school work in the future, as explained in extract (3):

> (3) että ei tehtäis koska se on kuitenki.. pitäs nähä vaivaa (S5, 56–57)

The task design was seen as too demanding on the student's part, and for some students the workload involved outweighed the possible benefits of the task.

5.1.1.2 Neutral or Ambivalent Opinions

Ambivalent opinions had to do with the ‘small amount’ of English learnt as well as the ‘large amount’ of work involved, while it was admitted that the task was useful in other ways, as illustrated by the following two extracts.

Firstly, the data of the present study suggested that the only benefit of the task was that it had an effect on building up self-confidence as a speaker of English, as expressed in extract (4):

> (4) henkisesti hyödyllistä mutta ei se varmaan mitenkään kauheesti opettanut englantii (S5, 61–62)

The student stated that completing the task was *mentally beneficial* but that she did not learn much English in the process. This response suggests that to her learning English was something else other than communicating in a language.

Secondly, the willingness to do more tasks in the future depended on the effort required, as discussed in extract (5):

> (5) no se riippuu tosiaan miten ne on toteutettu mutta tää oli aika hyvä siinä mielessä että se oli helppo tehdä että jos se kovin sellaista suurta suunnittelua ja pitkäaikaista työntekoa vaatii niin ei se sit oo…[hyvä] (S13, 172–174)

The student stated that she would not advocate tasks in the future if they demanded long-term planning and work (from the student) but that the task in the present study was *good because it was easy to do*. Evidently, the student regarded committing to a task for a longer period of time as something undesired and did not identify the possible benefits of being able to carry out a long-term activity, project, etc.

5.1.1.3 Positive Opinions

Several positive opinions relating mainly to the task structure and execution were reported, of which seven examples depicting different characteristics of the task are discussed next.

Firstly, the data of the present study showed that the pre-task materials were considered beneficial, as illustrated in extract (6):

> (6) niistä oli muuten tosi paljon apua sillei tuli kiinnitettyä huomiota (S7, 20–21)

The student stated that activities completed immediately before the interview, i.e. first discussing appropriate conduct in a job interview and then watching a humorous video on the matter, helped her to remember how she should behave in an interview. Thus, even the students who had no previous experience of attending a job interview were given an example of the situation, and therefore, could be more aware of their own behaviour in it.

Secondly, the pre-task materials may also have helped the students on taking part in the job interview whether they were aware of it or not, as discussed in extract (7):

> (7) en mä sitä videoo kyllä miettinyt mutta kyllä kun jälkikäteen ajattelee niin paljon niitä varmasti käytin hyväkseni niitä videon vinkkejä (S10, 43–44)

The student stated that the pre-task activities helped her prepare but she did not consciously employ them for her benefit. The student speculated on using these tips on an unconscious level, while participating in the task.

Thirdly, the data of the present study suggested that also the homework was considered to have been useful. For example, the opportunity to think ahead of possible questions seems to have been beneficial, as illustrated by extract (8):

> (8) mä en silleen kirjottanu siihen mitään mää kävin mielessä ne jutut läpi --- oli se silleen hyvä et silleen koska.. jos ei ois ollu mitään niinkö.. mitenkään miten valmistautua ni sit ois ollu vähän silleen paniikki et mitähän tässä nyt sit oikeen kertoo itestäänsä (S11, 74–77)

The student stated that she would have probably *panicked*, had she not been able to prepare by thinking about the questions in advance. It is interesting that she did not consider the other activities to be as essential in preparing for stage three, not to mention the pair interviews the students had conducted during the course with their teacher.

Fourthly, the execution of the task was considered to have been well conducted, as illustrated in extract (9):

(9) tää oli aika hyvin järjestetty kyllä kaikin puolin (S1, 122)

The student regarded the task as generally well-organised. This may have influenced how the student perceived the task in terms of usefulness for her in general.

Fifthly, the aim of the present study was to make the task of applying for a job, including the job interview, resemble reality as well as it was possible under the circumstances. The data of the present study suggested that this was, at least partly, achieved, as illustrated in extract (10):

(10) se oli itse asiassa aika hyvin lavastettu et se tuntu aidolta (S13, 77)

The student considered the interview situation to have been well staged to resemble a real-life situation. Hence, the interview felt genuine to her, which corresponded to the aim of the present study.

Sixthly, the task compared positively to textbook materials, as described in extract (11):

(11) siis kirjaha.. siel on aina just ne samat et on teksti ja on tyyliin lauseita mitkä pitää ettiä sieltä tekstistä että totta kai tää oli tosi hyvää vaihtelua (S2, 13–14)

Textbooks were said to repeat the same pattern with their similar exercises, and thus, the task was said to offer a change from the norm.

Finally, despite some students not preferring to perform similar tasks in the future, also an opposing opinion was recorded, as expressed in extract (12):

(12) kantsii tehä uudestaansa totta kai koska tästä on hyötyä varmasti ihan kaikille (S11, 103–106)

The student stated it would be beneficial to include this type of task in language teaching as all students would benefit from it. It would seem that the student thought

it a useful experience for all, which was in stark contrast to other opinions discussed earlier in this section.

5.1.1.4 Summary of Student Opinions of the Task

To sum up, the factors affecting student opinions of the task and its design were the different stages of the task, including the pre-tasks/activities, the setting, and the purpose of the task. Not one student deemed the task poorly designed or conducted and it was stated that the situation felt very real. Regarding the general usefulness of the task, both very negative and very positive views were expressed, i.e. that range of opinions was, again, wide. On an ambivalent note, the workload involved was reported to affect whether doing more tasks was seen as positive or negative.

5.1.2 Authenticity in the Task

The task was authentic in two ways: both in terms of the written material as well as spoken communication. Authentic texts, this occasion, were job advertisements, whereas stage three of the task provided the student the opportunity to take part in an authentic communicative situation. In the following, the range of opinions of authenticity and the reasons behind them are illustrated with extracts from the interviews.

5.1.2.1 Negative Opinions

The data of the present study conveyed negative opinions that the students described in relation to the use of authentic texts or to the authentic communication. Three different reasons were found to be behind of the formation of the negative view.

Firstly, the nature of the job advertisements made the authentic material less appealing. An example of this is illustrated with extract (13):

> (13) ne kaikki työt oli semmosia mihin ei oikeesti ees voinu hakee niinku tän ikäsenä tai tällä koulutuksella (S12, 7–8)

In fact, the student found it difficult to choose a job advertisement because she

lacked the required qualifications for jobs that were mainly targeted at qualified adults rather than upper secondary school students.

Secondly, the language difficulties that the students faced had an impact on how they viewed the use of authentic texts, as can be inferred from extract (14):

> (14) no alussa --- ei ois oikein jaksanut ettii sitä työpaikkaa ku se oli kuitenkin aika vaivalloista sillee koska piti löytää joku sellanen ilmotus josta tajus jotain (S5, 4–7)

The student found it troublesome to find a job advertisement that she could understand, and therefore, her general involvement in the task was lower.

Thirdly, comparing one's oral skills to the interviewer's was described as distressing, as discussed in extract (15):

> (15) kauhee sellanen tunne että ei osaa yhtään puhua englantia ja kun se toinen puhuu siinä sujuvasti ja nopeesti (S8, 35–36)

The student was discouraged from speaking after she comprehended that the interviewer's oral English skills were better than hers and that the interviewer spoke fluently and too quickly, at least from the student's point of view.

5.1.2.2 Neutral or Ambivalent Opinions

The data conveyed some apprehensive opinions of the authenticity in the task. Two reasons were found to be behind the formation of the ambivalent view.

Firstly, authenticity in terms of the job advertisements seemed to add to the student's workload but this authentic aspect was still perceived as something positive, as illustrated in extract (16):

> (16) joo oli siinä valinnan vaikeus.. että sit löytää sellasen työn.. muuten se oli kyllä kiva (S1, 39)

The student stated how the large number of job possibilities advertised on the Internet made it difficult to choose a job for which to apply. However, the student found the search for an actual job on the Internet to be *nice*, and hence, she expressed

a mixed opinion of the issue.

Secondly, when a student was asked if knowing about the foreign interviewers in advance would have changed the amount of effort she put in preparing for the interview, she produced a somewhat apprehensive answer, as illustrated by extract (17):

> (17) mä olisin ehkä valmistanu vähän paremmin sen cv:n kanssa et kirjottanut vähä ehkä vähä enemmän itsestäni --- (S10, 62–63)

The student stated that knowing about the authentic nature of stage three would have perhaps motivated the student to do a slightly more thorough job at the written stages, but the authenticity of stage three did not seem to be particularly motivating to her from this perspective.

5.1.2.3 Positive Opinions

The data of the present study conveyed positive opinions that the students described in relation to authenticity, particularly in the terms of oral communication. Five such opinions are discussed next.

Firstly, the freedom that the students were given to look for the job was considered positive, as expressed in extract (18):

> (18) oli ite --- löytänyt ja valinnut sillei ja sitte sen tuntee sen työpaikan mitä haluu hakee (S3, 45–46)

The student stated that because of having found the job herself, she knew it better, and therefore, was more engaged in the task due to this personal dimension.

Secondly, being able to take part in oral communication with a foreigner was seen as an opportunity, as illustrated in extract (19):

> (19) pääs puhumaan niinkö kieltä niinkö ihan ulkomaalaiselle ihmiselle ku --- ihan normaalissa elämässä niinku harva suomalainen puhuu ulkomaalaiselle just niinku tän ikäsenä (S11, 37–39)

The student regarded communicating with a foreigner as rare for their age group, and therefore, emphasised her personal satisfaction in being able to talk to one as a part of the task.

Thirdly, not being able to rely on Finnish was regarded as beneficial for oral proficiency, as expressed in extract (20):

> (20) paljon voimakkaammin täytyy ite miettiä sitä mikä on niinku paljon hyödyllisempää koska jos on parin kanssa ja jos ei tuu nopeesti sanaa mieleen niin sitä helposti [kysyy suomeksi] mikä se sana olikaan (S11, 125–127)

Not having the option to rely on Finnish while producing English was useful, as it was stated that it was easy to switch to using Finnish when talking to a peer in cases where the student did not remember an appropriate word to use.

Fourthly, the authentic features of the interaction itself were regarded as positive, as expressed in extract (21):

> (21) ja sit [haastattelija] huomas et mä jotenkin epäröin niin oli sit sillain että [haastattelija] täydens sitä kysymystä tai kysy eri tavalla se oli niinku helpotti ihan hirveesti (S10, 103–105)

The student stated that when the interviewer noticed that she was hesitating, they asked the question in a different way, i.e. the student and the interviewer were negotiating to find meaning, which was something positive for the student.

Finally, the use of authentic materials made the task more personal for a student, which helped when working on the task (22):

> (22) sai kuitenkin vähän miettiä päässä että mitähän siellä tulee tulee vastaan ja mitä pitää jotain sanoo ja oli niinku prosessoinu päässä ne tilanteet itte (S3, 63–65)

The authentic materials made the student treat the situation as a real one, preparing for the interview by thinking about possible questions in advance as well as envisioning possible answers. This kind of preparation made the task authentic personally for her and seems to correspond to the preparation that she would do in the same situation in real life.

5.1.2.4 Summary of Student Opinions of Authenticity in the Task

To sum up, the authentic materials were reported to have made engaging in the task more difficult, however, they were also stated to help identify with the task because of the freedom they offered. Furthermore, as the communicative situation was authentic, it was perceived both as useful and distressing. The range of neutral/ambivalent opinions was narrow, but it was stated that knowing about the authentic nature of stage three might have increased the amount of work done at the written stages. Thus, the opinions seemed quite divided.

5.1.3 Authenticity in Terms of the Students' Future

In the following, how the students perceived the simulation of a real-life situation that was part of the task in terms of its usefulness in the future is described. The range of student opinions was not wide on the topic as there was one negative reaction, which is presented first before moving onto the positive ones. Neutral and/or ambivalent opinions were not established on this theme.

5.1.3.1 Negative Opinions

The negative opinions of the topic were expressed, but they were rare. Indeed, only one type of negative opinion was recorded, which are discussed next through two interview extracts from the same student.

To start with, neither the aspect of authenticity nor the task was considered beneficial, as illustrated in extract (23):

(23) ei tää mun mielestä silleen opeta kauheesti mitään (S5, 49)

The student stated that the task, and its authenticity, had not really taught her anything.

Furthermore, when the student was asked to elaborate on this statement in terms of what should be taught, she stated that the Finnish National Core Curriculum should

be adhered to, as discussed in extract (24):

(24) no just jotain mitä opetussuunnitelmassa on periaatteessa (S5, 51)

The student stated that the task did not teach what, in her opinion, was in the National Core Curriculum. However, the task did follow the Finnish National Curriculum for Upper Secondary Education and the goals of it were merely executed in a new manner to the student in question.

5.1.3.2 Positive Opinions

The positive opinions elicited by the authentic nature of the task had mainly to do with experiences gained, which were seen as useful in the future. The three following extracts describe these views.

Firstly, the experience may indeed help when faced with a job interview in real life, as discussed in extracts (25) and (26):

(25) mä en oo ennen ollu oikeessa niinku tämmösessä työhaastattelussa nyt kun menee niin ehkä on varmempi olo (S7, 41–42)

(26) tulee testattua miten edes osaa vastata mihinkään kysymyksiin ei oikein ole ikinä ollut edes työhaastattelussa niin sekin hyöty että tietää millasia ne oikeestaan on (S3, 12–13)

In other words, the first participant in extract (25) thought that engaging in the task provided her with more confidence to handle a similar situation in real life. In addition, the other participant in extract (26) found it useful to be able to acquaint herself with what happens in a job interview as well as test her skills in advance, i.e. before actually applying for a job in the future. Thus, the simulation of real-life seemed to help these students to practise skills they will need in their futures.

Secondly, the advantage gained from the authenticity of stage three was not seen merely in relation to the English language, but the situation itself, as expressed in extract (27):

(27) on kokonaan hyötyä kun menee työhaastatteluun vaikka menis suomekskin niin silti koska samalla tavallahan ne kuitenkin menee (S10, 76–77)

The student saw the simulation of job interview beneficial in terms of prospective job interviews also in Finnish, as she considered them to be similar to the one practiced at stage three.

5.1.3.3 Summary of Authenticity in Terms of the Students' Future

To sum up, student opinions were divided into negative and positive ones, as no neutral opinions were established. The authenticity of the task was seen to help in future job interviews, and in contrast, it was also stated that nothing could be learnt from the authentic aspects of the task, which means that the range of opinions spanned from one extreme to another.

5.2 Student Opinions of the Task as a Way of Gaining Oral Communicative Skills

This section reports on the findings regarding the students' opinions of the task in terms of attaining oral communicative skills. The second research question was as follows:

2. What are the students' opinions of the task as a way of gaining oral communicative skills?

Two recurring themes in the student interviews could be separated: firstly, emotions and attitudes, and secondly, self-assessment of task performance and oral skills. However, these categories overlap to some extent, and, therefore, some extracts could in principle be placed in two different categories but are here presented in the most relevant context. The themes established about gaining oral skills through the task are reported on in the aforementioned order. The reporting of each theme is divided into three sections: negative, neutral and positive student opinions.

5.2.1 Emotional and Attitudinal Opinions

As learning has much to do with attitudes and emotions, it is important to examine those involved in speaking English at stage three of the task. According to the data,

things that evoked reactions and caused the students to state their beliefs included the nature of the situation as well as previous personal experiences and expectations. It was considered that emotions were more fleeting and short-termed, whereas attitudes were somewhat permanent and probably existed before that task and were perhaps reinforced by stage three, and therefore, they have been divided into two separate categories. In this section, the emotions raised are dealt with first, and second, the attitudes examined. Describing the range of both themes starts from the negative expressions, moving on to the neutral ones and ending in the positive ones.

5.2.1.1 Negative Emotional Opinions

The data of the present study conveyed negative emotions-related opinions that the students described in relation to stage three, and three different causes of negative opinions were established.

Firstly, the situation where communication relied solely on speaking English caused anxiety, as expressed in extract (28):

> (28) mua aina jännittää hirveesti tollaset tilanteet ylipäätään varsinkin kun pitää puhua kieliä ja sit jotenkin koulun puolesta tuplasti ärsyttävää ja pelottavaa (S3, 6–8)

The student found situations such as the interview unnerving in general, and the fact that she had to speak in English in a school context made stage three even more *irritating and scary*. It is interesting that the student chose to describe speaking languages as *having to speak languages*, which implies that she was not comfortable in her language skills and regarded it as a chore.

Secondly, it was reported that producing English freely was seen as frustrating, as illustrated in extract (29):

> (29) kauheen turhauttavaa kun sillein mulla oli kauheesti päässä mitä ois niinku pystynyt vastaamaan ja sillein mutta tuli kauhee blackout siinä että ei muista joku ihan yksinkertainen sana en muistanu sitä (S8, 135–137)

The student stated that the simplest of words escaped her in the interview, and she used the term *blackout* to describe her experience, which caused her to become

anxious.

Thirdly, nervousness or anxiety, however, may have been caused not merely because of using English but having to communicate with a stranger as, illustrated by extract (30):

> (30) niin olihan se että joutuu vieraalle ihmiselle puhumaan englantia (S13, 11–12)

The student saw speaking English to a strange person not something that she *got* to do, but *had* to do. Thus, the student did not see the communication task as an opportunity but as something mandatory that had to be done.

5.2.1.2 Neutral or Ambivalent Emotional Opinions

Some students did not seem to experience significant emotions related to the task or stage three, while others reported mixed feelings. Two examples of these are presented next.

Firstly, the prospect of using English freely was perceived as more frightening in advance than what it actually proved to be during the task, as described in extract (31):

> (31) se nyt vaan oli silleen mä panikoin sitä niin paljon ei se sitten ollutkaan niin kauhee siinä mielessä positiivinen .. se oli ihan mukava kokemus sillein (S3, 184-185)

The student stated that her feelings were different prior to stage three from after completing it. She was positively surprised by the experience, as she had *panicked* about the interview beforehand but discovered that it was not as *terrible* as she had expected. Hence, the idea of communicating with a foreigner was, in fact, perceived more negatively before actually having engaged in it.

Secondly, the data of the present study also suggested that stage three was regarded as something that helped in getting a realistic understanding of one's English skills, which then had an effect on how this part of the task was perceived, as discussed in extract (32):

(32) kyllä siinä huomas sillein että pitäisi tai että aina on uutta opittavaa ehkä vähän sillein masentaa toisaalta se nosti vähän mielialaa että osaakin jotain (S3, 165–166)

A student considered it *depressing* to discover that she still had things to learn, but on the other hand, she was pleased about possessing at least some English skills. This response indicates a sense of perfectionism, as the student felt discouraged by the things she could not yet do or say instead of merely being satisfied with the things that she already could.

5.2.1.3 Positive Emotional Opinions

The range of positive emotions-related opinions was not wide, and only one extract is given below. In terms of positive emotions, interestingly, the very nature of stage three that some students had considered negative, others regarded as positive.

The data of the present study indeed showed positive attitudes to speaking English freely, as it was, for example, considered something pleasant, as expressed in extract (33):

(33) oli hauska päästä puhumaan (S7, 11)

The student stated that it was *fun* to get the chance to speak English. Thus, the student's own reaction to using spoken English skills had an effect on how she perceived it.

5.2.1.4 Negative Attitudinal Opinions

Negative attitudes were expressed in the data, and they appeared to have mostly to do with the amount of effort involved in speaking in English, therefore, only one example is given.

Indeed, the data of the present study described how students reacted negatively to the (cognitive) workload associated with the task, as illustrated by extract (34):

(34) ohan se [englannin puhuminen] silleen periaatteessa tosi työlästä (S2, 64)

The student stated that speaking English was burdensome to her *in principle*. In other words, performing the task and speaking English in general required great effort from her.

5.2.1.5 Neutral or Ambivalent Attitudinal Opinions

As with neutral or mixed emotions, some did not appear to express any particular attitudes or factors that would have made them take either a positive or negative stance to stage three, while others found both positive and negative aspects in the same matter. Three such opinions are reported on next.

Firstly, even though it was wished that the students would benefit from the non-Finnish interviewers, a neutral attitude to the interviewers' nationality and mother tongue at stage three was expressed in extract (35):

> (35) se on ihan sama kuka siellä on (S12, 82)

The student considered that it did not make a difference who was there to conduct the interview. Thus, to this student the foreign speakers had no effect on stage three.

Secondly, it was also reported that whether the interviewer was a native or non-native speaker made a difference with both having their advantages and disadvantages, which is why this extract has been classified an 'ambivalent attitude', as discussed in extract (36):

> (36) [englannin puhuminen non-natiivin kanssa] on paljon mukavempaa kuitenkin pitää keskittyä enemmän mutta jos on äidinkielenä englanti --- [hänellä] joka puhuu niin sitten on jotenkin hirveet --- suoriutumispaineet (S3, 96–99)

The student stated that she preferred a conversation with non-natives to one with native speakers because she experienced more performance pressure in the company of a native speaker. She also stated that she had to concentrate more in order to understand non-natives but she still preferred talking to them.

Thirdly, the data also implied that speaking to an interlocutor who was a foreigner might help a student to build up self-confidence as a speaker of English, as discussed

in extract (37):

> (37) just tämmöset että pääsee puhumaan ihan niinku niin ni ihan oikeitten ulkomaalaisten kanssa ni se varmaan tuo sitä [itsevarmuutta]... ja jos onnistuu hyvin (S1, 114–115)

The student considered it important to perform well when speaking to a foreigner in order for her self-confidence to strengthen. This implied that if she did not succeed well initially, her self-confidence and motivation to improve her skills might suffer. Thus, this extract has also been classified as ambivalent, as the element of success was required by the student.

5.2.1.6 Positive Attitudinal Opinions

Several positive attitudes, which seemed to exist already prior to the task, and therefore impact how the students experienced the task, were recorded. Five such attitudinal opinions are presented in the following.

Firstly, real-life experiences were reported to have had an effect on how using spoken English was perceived. In extract (38), a student discusses a change of attitude towards speaking English:

> (38) just sen vaihto-oppilaan kanssa ja tän työhakemusjutun perusteella ja sit muutenkin nyt on käyttänyt enemmän englantia ni sitte on tajunnu enemmän ja sit se on ollut paljon luontevampaa käyttää englantia kun sitä on käyttäny enemmän (S2, 82–85)

The student found that speaking English came more naturally to her than it had before and that her skills had developed recently, but not solely because of the task but also due to having regular contact with an exchange student. It is apparent that her skills and confidence had increased due to simply using the language.

Furthermore, the previous sentiment of gaining more skills by using English is echoed in extract (39):

> (39) mun omasta mielestä mun pitäis kehittää puhumista ni niinku autto siinä että sai sitä rohkeutta puhua ja pääs puhumaan niinku henkilön kanssa joka on niinku ulkomaalainen eikä oo kukaan tuttu.. silleen hyvä (S2, 42–45)

A student found stage three to provide her with more courage and an opportunity to talk, as she had recognised that she needed to better her oral skills. This implies that in her case, the task corresponded to a need to develop communication skills.

Secondly, it was widely discussed that the students' awareness of the world and their plans for the future caused them to have a positive attitude to speaking in English. A student stated that she had a professional need for English in the future, as explained in extract (40):

> (40) mää haluun töihin siis jos on vaan mahollisuus ulkomaille niin tiän et se on hyödyllistä ja sitte ku.. mulla on niinku neljä muuta vierasta kieltä niin tota --- mä tykkään ihan hullusti puhua (S11, 97-99)

The student, who hoped to work abroad, was learning four other foreign languages in addition to English, which made her an exception among the students. It is likely that she possessed the same positive attitude to all the languages she was studying, as apart from Swedish, none are obligatory.

Thirdly, a student reported wanting to study English at university in the future and was therefore trying to learn as much English as possible, as discussed in extract (41):

> (41) mä olen harkinnut että menisin yliopistoon opiskelemaan englantia et sen takia mä yritän tosi paljon sillein --- just yrittää vaan opiskella kaikkea niin paljon kuin pystyn mutta siis ei mulla oo muuta sillein kun että mä vaan haluun pärjätä niin et mä voin just tällein puhua englantia (S6, 118–121)

The student expressed a desire to be able to communicate orally in English, and not, for example, to learn as much grammar or vocabulary as possible. This suggests that the student had an understanding of which skills would be important to her in the future.

Fourthly, a general need for English skills in the future was described, as illustrated by extract (42):

> (42) tietää et englantia tulee tarvitsemaan aina ja se on melkeinpä se suosittu ja puhutuin kieli mitä on (S1, 88–89)

It was stated that one would always need English and that English was the most popular and the most widely spoken language, by which the student probably meant the role of English as a lingua franca. Thus, the student considered learning English meaningful and important when considering her future.

Finally, a student who did not see herself using English in the future in contexts similar to the task still reported to have motivation to study English, as illustrated by extract (43):

> (43) en aio mennä ulkomaille enkä opiskella englantia mutta perustaidot yritän saada (S13, 70–71)

She said that she had no plans to go abroad or study English (at university), but nevertheless wanted to master *basic skills*. This might suggest a perception that these days *basic English skills* are a part of general knowledge.

5.2.1.7 Summary of Emotional and Attitudinal Opinions

In conclusion, the data of the present study suggested that for some students stage three and the opportunity to use the target language with a native or a non-native speaker was a positive experience, while some regarded it as a distraction, which could have been avoided if they had been communicating with peers. Moreover, some students also regarded the task in a neutral/ambivalent way, as, for example, the quality of personal performance affected their views. It was shown that a student's personal plans for her future and the prospect of using English may have an influence on how practising English is perceived.

5.2.2 Self-Assessments of Task Performance and Communicative Skills

One motivation for the present study was to help the students receive a realistic but not a discouraging picture of themselves as speakers of English. This section reports the students' views of their performance in the task, and at stage three in particular, and attempts to establish if the task had an effect on these views. However, determining if the self-assessments were correct as such was not strived for, and the interviews were not evaluated by any set of criteria, but instead, the students'

perceptiveness in terms of monitoring and evaluating a communicative situation while it was taking place was to be examined, and indeed, stage three was a fairly realistic opportunity for the students to test their skills as speakers of English. The data showed that establishing the realistic level of one's oral skills did not have a shared meaning for all the students. Furthermore, it was perceived either as a negative, neutral or a positive experience, as discussed in the extracts below that have been categorised accordingly.

5.2.2.1 Negative Opinions

An authentic communicative situation, where the students were able to test their skills, proved to be a negative experience for some. It seemed that the reason why talking was considered difficult, was the 'multi-tasking' involved. Two such extracts are discussed next.

Firstly, it was stated that missing words interfered with speaking, as discussed in extract (44):

> (44) en mä sitten ihan niin hyvin puhu sitä englantii ku tarvis ja kaikkii niitä sanoja ei sitte löydy (S4, 96–97)

A student had realised that she did not speak English as well as needed, and she mentioned, indeed, problems with her vocabulary. ´

Secondly, a student stated that taking part in a conversation in a natural, *normal*, way was beyond her skill level, as illustrated by extract (45):

> (45) no kun ei pysty keskustelemaan englanniks sillei niinku.. tavallaan ihan tavallisesti (S9, 90)

Indeed, the interviews did entail also so-called ordinary questions, as the interviewers wished to know, for example, about the students' interests and hobbies, as well as opinions of their home towns, which were expected to be easy topics for the students to discuss. However, the student felt that even ordinary topics required great effort.

5.2.2.2 Neutral or Ambivalent Opinions

Most students felt that they either did well or badly at stage three, therefore, neutral or unsure opinions were scarce. Thus, only one ambivalent extract is given, in which a student discusses the relationship between her course mark and spoken skills.

Indeed, the data of the present study suggested that some students might be capable of assessing the validity of their course marks in terms of different areas of language, as illustrated in extract (46):

> (46) mun mielestä se ei numero tavallaan mun keskustelujuttuihin se ei pidä paikkaansa… et se on enemmänkin se et mä pystyn kirjottamaan ja ehkä muistan jotain sanoja ja tällästä (S9, 94–96)

The student stated that her good course marks did not, in her opinion, tell the truth about her oral language skills. Hence, this response perhaps indicates an emphasis put on written communication in English teaching or the lack of continuous assessment of oral skills.

5.2.2.3 Positive Opinions

Corresponding with the motivation for this study, positive self-assessments concerning oral skills were reported, and in the following two examples of these are introduced.

Firstly, while some students did indeed find that their skills were below the level they had assumed, several students reported an opposing experience, as they remarked that they were positively surprised by their performance, as illustrated in extract (47):

> (47) tää haastattelu ja sitte ne hakemusten teot niin siinä tuli semmonen että osaanhan tätä paremminkin vaikka (S1, 99–100)

The student reported that both the written stages of the task and the oral stage affected her opinion of herself as a user of English, as she was able to achieve more with her skills than she had expected, which should have a motivational effect on her.

Secondly, the width of one's vocabulary was a recurring issue in the data, of which also a positive experience was reported, as illustrated by extract (48):

> (48) siinä alussa mä ajattelin et mulla on aika huono sanavarasto niin sitte mä ajattelin että se vaikuttaa siihen puhumiseen sillai että se selittäminen ja näin tekis siitä huonompaa siitä… mut jotenkin nytte ensinnäkin toi vaihtojuttu ja sitte no tääkin niinku osaltaan ja muutenki koko kurssi… niin sillain että ei se haittaa vaikka menee semmoseks selittelyks ei se haittaa vaikka ei tiedä niitä sanoja --- (S10, 55-60)

Initially, the student had feared that her lack of a reasonably wide vocabulary prevented her from communicating effectively and that attempts at explaining what she meant worsened the quality of her speech. However, having almost completed the English course in question and participated in the task and especially having had regular contact with an exchange student, the student realised that needing to employ varying tactics to be understood, such as explaining words, was not a sign of failed communication. The student in question had re-evaluated her understanding of successful communication.

5.2.2.4 Summary of Self-Assessments of Task Performance and Communicative Skills

In conclusion, the interview data suggested that the majority of the students had been given a realistic understanding of their level of English. This was, however, perceived in different ways as for some students it was a positive experience, while for others it was a negative one. It seemed that no-one was left ambivalent about their skills, as a discussion with a foreigner either advances or not. Moreover, a realisation regarding the permissibility of not speaking English "perfectly" was also reported.

6 DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was to investigate Finnish upper secondary school students' opinions of a particular task designed to cover one topic on the third obligatory English course, i.e. applying for a job. To achieve this two research questions were determined for the study. The first research question dealt with student opinions of the task in general as well as of the authenticity it entailed, while

the second research question was concerned with student opinions of gaining English oral communicative skills through the task. The qualitative data was gathered by interviewing thirteen students who had participated in the task. This was followed by a transcription of the interviews which were then analysed according to their content. In the following, findings and their implications with reference to previous research are discussed.

6.1 Student Opinions of the Task and Authenticity

In the main, the findings of neutral or ambivalent opinions regarding the first research question were the rarest, which suggests that the task was an experience which elicited strong opinions. Furthermore, as the students were free to describe their experiences, it is likely that they did not concentrate on issues on which they held a neutral stance. In addition, it must be remembered that they were actually only assessing the task in the present study, hence, it was impossible to establish any student opinions of TBL in general. Moreover, it was not explained to the students that they were, in fact, performing a particular task, therefore, they probably did not classify the task sequence as a certain type of approach to learning English, at least until the theme interviews. Furthermore, based on the lack of research into TBL in Finland, it would be reasonable to assume that it was unlikely that the students' previous teachers had used the task-based approach to a great extent, if at all. Finally, it was not possible in the scope of this study to compile profiles of the students and then compare those with the data, and instead, describing the range of opinions was chosen as the focus of the study rather than discussing how previous experiences, language skills and future goals corresponded with every student's opinion of the task and authenticity. Naturally, this would be an interesting area to explore in the future.

On the topic of the authenticity of the materials as well as the authentic nature of the task itself, the findings of the present study showed a wide range of opinions, which was expected due to the heterogeneity of the students. In order to make this assumption, it was not necessary to know the students personally, as the interests and skills of students in any classroom will inevitably vary. Moreover, it has been pointed out that individual reactions to tasks may be difficult to predict (van den

Branden 2009: 264). In the present study, the use of authentic texts meant using real-life texts that had been created for other purposes than teaching or learning a language. Furthermore, the material was not provided for the students but they had to search for it themselves, therefore, the task may have appeared to entail more work for the students than using readily provided textbook material. This aspect of authenticity seemed off-putting to some, as it was reported to have been, in fact, too bothersome. However, we argue that the students did not have to work any more, since without the task they would have been expected to advance with their textbook exercises, but instead, the work was merely of a different nature.

The findings also suggested that some students found it difficult to find a suitable job. However, the challenge of finding a suitable job is faced by all jobseekers, as job databases do contain numerous job advertisements, of which only some are relevant due to the educational background of the individual. One must keep in mind that the students, most of whom did not have previous experience in looking for a job, may not be aware of these aspects of real life, hence, may find them negative in relation to the task. This negative aspect could have been corrected by limiting the students' chances of where to look for a job, however, that would have been inauthentic and might have decreased the students' chances of finding their 'dream jobs'.

It was noted before that using material outside the textbooks seemed bothersome for some of the students. It may also be the case that this material was seen as extra, and thus, not taken as seriously. This observation is supported by Dörnyei and Kormos (2000: 288) who found that the participants in their study, which included a task outside the official English syllabus, did not take the given task as seriously as tasks, or exercises, which were a part of it. Thus, if the job advertisements were regarded as something extra, that might have been another reason why the amount of work needed to choose one was regarded as a negative feature of the task. The present study may have entailed using material outside the course book, but the task was, in fact, part of the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Education. However, it seemed that not all students fully appreciated this, as a claim was made that the task did not follow the National Core Curriculum, based on which it seems that some students may be aware of there being goals and guidelines for teaching and learning, but not actually know what they are. In fact, the belief that merely course

books cover the issues mentioned in the National Core Curriculum can be considered as worrying as it indicates a limited view of language learning. This may also have impacted the student's opinions of the present study.

Considering the text materials used in the present study, it can be questioned whether the job advertisements proved to be authentic for all the students. A student who struggled to find a suitable job due to lacking qualifications and work experience may have found the material, in fact, inauthentic in terms of real-world relevance. This would, without a doubt, have decreased both her interest and motivation in the task as well as in the use of authentic materials. Interestingly, some students did find jobs that suited adolescents, such as baby-sitting or dog-walking, therefore, initial motivation may have had an effect on the level of enthusiasm to look for an appropriate job. Moreover, the authenticity of the jobs did not seem to depend on whether it was a realistic option at the time. In fact, one student applied for a job in anaesthesiology and stated that the interview still felt authentic and beneficial. Thus, it seems that the authenticity in the task was connected with individual experiences and characteristics, despite the fact that the task could be defined as authentic from a theoretical perspective. This observation is supported by Splitter's (2009) claim that authenticity is, in fact, people-bound, and therefore, does not have the same function for everyone.

Indeed, the group of students participating in the present study proved to be heterogeneous. The course with its theme of working and studying was expected to expand the students' vocabulary beforehand, making it possible to understand the job advertisements, especially as the course was already drawing to a close at the time of the task. Regardless, in addition to finding a suitable job in terms of experience and qualifications, difficulties in simply understanding the job advertisements were experienced. This finding is consistent with those of Tavakoli (2009: 18), according to which language difficulties were a key factor contributing to task difficulty from the point of view of learners, although the participants in her study were adults. Language difficulties in the present study were reported both at the written and oral stages, and, in general, they can be seen as arising from the cognitive demands of a task (Robinson and Gilabert 2007, as cited in Tavakoli 2009: 18), such as requirements set on memory, attention, reasoning, or processing information, the

simultaneous demands then resulting in a breakdown of the communication. This is not, however, a negative occurrence but something that makes interlocutors notice their deficiencies and develop other strategies to be understood, such as asking for clarification or employing confirmation checks (Robinson 2003, as cited in Gilabert, Barón and Llanes 2009: 369). It is likely that stage three was cognitively demanding, but the comment about the difficulty of understanding job adverts is interesting, as it is questionable if reading job advertisements entailing familiar words to a person who has studied English for over seven years is, after all, cognitively challenging. Thus, it would seem that the language difficulties encountered when trying to find a job were due to personal language skills and not any cognitively overly-complicated demands. In general, the authentic text materials seemed to correspond with the language skills of the 16- and 17-year old students, since the difficulty of the job advertisements was not a common complaint.

In addition to the trouble regarding the authentic materials and the task, either language-wise or in terms of the amount of work required, another reason for underperforming may have been a low general level of motivation for language learning, since Dörnyei and Kormos (2000) found that motivational issues are closely related to task performance. Furthermore, this also relates to Carter's (1998) claims of the textbook materials creating a problem-free idea of language, and language learning which, therefore, seems to be more appealing to the less motivated students who do not put in maximal effort. Moreover, motivation seems to have had an effect on whether the students were prepared to make more of an effort when taking part in the task or whether they preferred working with the materials they were accustomed to.

In fact, the less proficient or motivated students in the present study might have profited from further simple oral instructions as well as explanations of what the purpose of the task was and what was expected from them before stage three was about to commence. These would have made the task and its requirements clearer for the students, and thus, they may have been able to prepare themselves better for stage three. This might have led to a better performance as well as to an insight into the many skills involved and learnt. Naturally, these issues were covered in the oral instructions before the whole task as well as stage three. Nevertheless, more time

could have been spent on them to make sure that the usefulness of the task would have been optimal for all student participants, as it quite likely was a new way of working to them. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, Nunan (1991: 37) has suggested that less proficient students could be accommodated for by changing their goal of the task. In other words, a teacher might use authentic materials for a task with simpler instructions and requirements for the students who would benefit from them.

However, had different sets of instructions been offered, it is difficult to know how many students would have admitted to needing a simplified version as we did not personally know the students and, therefore, were not able to take their differences account in advance. Essentially this problem represents the difficulty in all teaching: the heterogeneous nature of students. Furthermore, the instructions were aimed to be kept as simple as possible when writing them, in order to be clear what was expected from the students, as we could not be present to hand them out ourselves and answer possible questions. In addition, with regard to the present study, having to rely on co-operation with the course teacher and conflicting schedules made it more difficult to ascertain that the students received all the necessary information.

Regarding the claim that TBL only suits a learner living in a country where the target language is spoken, and therefore, acts as input (Swan 2005: 399), the results of the present study suggest that this was not the case with this particular group of students. They were all able to perform the whole task, and moreover, they reported in the pre-task questionnaires (see Appendix 2) that they had contact with the English language for several hours a week outside the language classes. From the point of view of target language exposure, English is, in fact, a part of our everyday lives in Finland, thus, Swan's argument of not having proper exposure cannot fully be applied to the group of students in the present study. Moreover, sufficient target language exposure cannot be guaranteed even when living in a "suitable" country, as, for example, immigrants may experience trouble integrating into society and have limited contact with the target language outside the language classes and, therefore, also produce a limited amount of output themselves. In this respect, Finns may not be any less suitable for TBL.

The reason why the suitability of TBL to Finland can, however, be questioned is culture. Quietude and restraint have been traditionally valued in Finland, which has been stated to make teaching intercultural communication in English to Finnish learners challenging (Berry, Carbaugh and Nurmikari-Berry 2004). Thus, as TBL requires intensive participation, a cultural conflict may occur, if the expectations do not match the abilities or characteristics of the learners. In a similar cultural context to Finland, Burrows (2008) found that Japanese learners of English needed excessive support in daring to take an active participatory role, as it was not something they were culturally accustomed to. Burrows claimed that the differences between Western and Japanese learning styles and philosophies were so great that it was not, ultimately, possible to "import" TBL as such into Japan, at least without culturally-bound adaptations by practitioners. However, Finnish education can be considered to have a very Western mentality and currently upper secondary schools are obliged by the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Education (LOPS 2003: 101) to encourage active student participation and independent thinking and therefore, at least in theory, that is something that students should be used to. Even if the anxieties about speaking that were reported in the present study could be seen as a result of the cultural differences, on the other hand, they could have merely derived from a lack of practice.

It has been claimed that Finns see themselves as "practically incapable of communicating with each other or outsiders" (Creig 1991: 342, as cited in Sajavaara and Lehtonen 1997: 264), which may be a self-fulfilling prophecy to an extent, in which case, practising communication is the only possible solution. However, the stereotype of the Finnish mentality is merely a stereotype, originated decades ago, and not something that can be used as an argument against TBL in Finland considering the lack of extensive research into the matter. Furthermore, it is feasible that there is a variation in the language attitudes of Finns who have grown up in different cultures and in different times. Instead, it would rather seem plausible that TBL may actually befit Finnish learners, as also the students in the present study found many positive aspects in the task and those who did not, might have just needed more time to come to terms with TBL. Moreover, tasks could be incorporated into an otherwise non-task-based syllabus to be used in practicing communicative skills, therefore, tasks could be used to a varying extent among "normal"

schoolwork.

Continuing with the theme of culture, the present study introduced the students to a scenario that all of them will face at some stage of their lives, i.e. searching for employment. In fact, as the purpose of learning a language is to gain competence to use the language outside the classroom environment, any language acquisition tasks should be designed with real-life language needs in mind (Nunan 1991: 61). All communicative situations are, however, culture-bound, therefore, it can be considered slightly alarming that one student so readily stated that job interviews were the same in different countries. Admittedly, job interviews in Western Countries tend to focus on similar questions and employers value similar qualities in an employee, however, this statement by the student might indeed suggest a need to pay attention to cultural differences in language teaching, as the same language can be used very differently, not to mention the non-verbal communication that goes with the language. Moreover, there are at least three different cultures at play in TBL: the learning culture conveyed in the method, the L1 culture and the target language culture, and it is no wonder that learning cultural competence in addition to language competence can be perceived as demanding by teachers and learners alike.

Keeping the aforementioned issues in mind, it would have been useful to discuss what was learnt from the task, but on the other hand, it would have affected the student opinions and reflected onto the data. However, in general, it would seem a good idea to dissect a task of this nature and scope after the students have performed it, and discuss student opinions together. This finding is supported by Murphy (2003) who found that students' attention could be directed to a particular issue also after the task, in a post-task discussion. It is noteworthy to mention that in the present study only one student stated that stage three was not beneficial. Furthermore, we argue that the perceived uselessness of the task is not true, as the experience provided by the task can be exploited in every job interview in the future, conducted either in Finnish or English. In addition, the task required the students to employ their language skills for problem-solving of sorts, as they had to think of alternative ways to communicate and use English to achieve a goal. It is, indeed, important that a teacher makes teaching as transparent as possible and states the aims at hand. Thus, a student can understand why it is useful to do the things they are expected to.

Moreover, the findings regarding instructions and support are compatible with those of McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007), who found that even university-level students in Thailand needed time to adapt to task-based learning, as well as continuous teacher feedback in order to be sure that they understood directions correctly and appreciated how performing a task was relevant to the general aims of the course in question. Thus, the amount of support needed cannot be underestimated.

Summary of discussion on student opinions of the task and of authenticity

In conclusion, it seems that authentic materials in the present study or the authentic nature of the task were not automatically experienced as appealing or motivating, and instead, an already motivated student may have found them the most interesting, which is also why such a student may have gained the greatest benefit from them. It is plausible that students who are intrinsically motivated are more open to new approaches to language learning and are more aware of the benefits they may bring. This also means that a student who has higher motivation would probably spend more time preparing for the tasks and would most likely perform better. Moreover, it is difficult to estimate if the task reached the interest of those students who were less motivated to study English, but those who expected to perform worse than they eventually did quite likely find the task motivating. Finally, even if Finnish learners may need extensive teacher encouragement in order to fully engage communicatively in a task and become confident speakers, TBL on an ideological level should not be foreign to Finnish learners. Thus, tasks can benefit English learners in Finland if teacher support is offered and the cultural differences are taken into account, but this requires practitioners who understand TBL and are communicatively skilled themselves.

6.2 Student Opinions of the Task as a Way of Gaining Oral Communicative Skills

Moving on to discuss the second research question, several issues relating to gaining oral communicative skills were raised in the student data. However, as the two research questions are greatly intertwined, some findings, such as the need for more

support, have already been dealt with at length and are only briefly discussed in this section from the perspective of oral communicative skills. The findings could be divided into main categories, which were emotions and language attitudes, self-assessment, and the suitability of the task for practising speaking and further into sub-categories of positive, neutral and/or ambivalent and negative opinions.

Stage three, i.e. the job interview, seemed to be a thought-provoking experience for the students. The nature of these thoughts appeared, to a degree, to depend on preconceived notions on the part of the students of what it was like to speak English and what their English skills were. In general, those who had a positive stance on speaking English performed well in their own views. In addition, positive outcomes were also experienced by students who discovered that they performed better than they had expected. Thus, their perceptions of themselves as English speakers improved or became more accurate, as the authentic situation allowed them to truthfully test their skills. However, as the chance to rely on Finnish did not exist, some students found that they were not able to perform as well as they had anticipated. Differences in student opinions were expected based on the students' backgrounds, as the pre-task questionnaires showed that there was considerable variety among the students e.g. in terms of travelling abroad and having contact with the English language.

In retrospect, the students can be considered to have had the necessary language skills to participate in stage three based on everyone completing the task, and advanced oral skills indeed did not seem to be a prerequisite. However, when critically considering the present study, it seems too much was relied on the students' ability to understand what the task was supposed to offer them and thus, for them to understand why it was beneficial to fully participate in it. This became apparent as one student expressed disappointment in not being asked the sample questions she had practiced at home and another in not being allowed to take her homework with her to the interview. This suggests a misunderstanding regarding the pedagogical aim of the task. Block's (2000) case study on adult EFL learners in Spain found that the two interviewees possessed a great deal of meta-pedagogical awareness and were able to analyse their language learning experiences. In the present study, there were some student participants who were very articulate, while there were others who

were not as capable of understanding the motivation behind the task. It is plausible that adults are better equipped for abstract thinking, and moreover, Block's participants were studying English voluntarily (and paying a language school for it). Thus, they may have also had more motivation to contemplate on their learning. This finding should be taken into account when planning and executing any tasks in the future, as young learners' difficulties in understanding pedagogical aims should not be overlooked.

The findings of the present study also suggest that some students rated their performance at stage three rather critically, which could imply a sense of perfectionism, as it is difficult to know the standards the students had set for themselves. For this reason the interviewers were asked to fill in feedback forms of the students, i.e. so that it could be established if the students' self-assessment were even somewhat accurate. In general, the student self-assessments were lower compared to the assessments that the interviewers gave for them. However, as the interviewers merely commented on the student's ability to take part in the conversation with no detailed instructions or assessment grids, these observations were not processed further. As Finns are often claimed to be modest, this may be one of the reasons behind the self-assessments that tended to be negative. In fact, Finns tend to compare themselves to native speakers instead of assessing themselves as speakers of a foreign language (Sajavaara and Lehtonen 1997: 278). The issue of low student self-assessment is echoed by Meng and Cheng (2010), who studied the opinions of Chinese engineering students regarding a task-based English course. It was found that, initially, the students expressed dissatisfaction at their own performance as well as that of their peers, but later as the course progressed, their opinions of themselves improved. Moreover, in the end the students favoured two-way group tasks, which demanded more of them linguistically and cognitively than one-way tasks, and it seems that either student confidence or skills, or both, improved with practice. Thus, if the group of students in the present study engaged in TBL for an extended period of time, they might firstly, allow more mistakes for themselves, and secondly, start to favour tasks that are demanding after understanding their benefits and becoming more communicatively skilled.

Several participants in the present study reported being nervous about the interview,

which suggests that they were worried about their performance at stage three and clearly aimed reasonably high. On the contrary, Lefkowitz and Hedgcock (1998, 1999, as cited in Lefkowitz and Hedgcock 2002: 225) found that American high school students intentionally underperformed in terms of L2 phonetics for at least three reasons. Firstly, they did not want to stand out from the rest of the class, i.e. to save face, and secondly, they did not want to make less proficient students feel inferior. The first two points illustrate the social nature of classroom discourse. Thirdly, they were not taking the subject of study seriously, even if they did worry about teacher approval. While pronunciation was probably only one issue worrying the students in the present study, it is suggested that due to the authenticity of the interview and the fact that it was conducted with a foreigner, performing well became the only socially acceptable option in that context, as there were no peers or teachers around. Oppositely, typical classroom activities may not motivate learners to put in maximal effort in terms of oral production. Even Lefkowitz and Hedgcock (2002: 240) advocate adding authenticity into teaching to diminish the feeling of distance between the language and its actual use, hence; it is posited that the authenticity affected student concerns regarding output.

Continuing with output, it is important to keep in mind that with English as a target language, there is no single native language model to look up to. However, Finnish learners are mostly acquainted with American and British Englishes in school, not to mention the effects of the media. This argument is supported by Seppälä's (2010) Master's, thesis, which was a case study on Finnish novice EFL teachers' conventions of using English. She found that several of the teacher participants in her study stated favouring either a British or an American model of language, and no other favoured model emerged. Furthermore, a teacher in Seppälä's study (2010: 79) stated that some students perceive non-native speakers' accents as laughable. Thus, it is reasonable to claim that stage three was useful for the students in terms of becoming aware of different types of English and maybe even more tolerant of different varieties. In fact, not one participant in the present study stated considering the near-native speakers' speech as inferior in any way, it was only mentioned that they could be at times more difficult to understand. Moreover, stage three gave the students a realistic image of English as a lingua franca spoken also between non-native speakers. It is only in real life that the English of one's interlocutor is

sometimes difficult to understand to a varying extent, and the fact that all the interviewer participants had different accents, contributed to the authenticity of the task. If the learners in the present study realised that it is permissible to speak English with an accent, they might have become more confident language-users themselves.

It is, nevertheless, clear that the use of foreign interviewers at stage three had an impact on the communication. This became apparent, as the data suggested that less proficient students might have preferred working with interlocutors with whom they shared their first language. Furthermore, it seemed that some students thought that they would have performed better if they had been interviewed by a peer rather than a foreign adult, which is probably due to the fact that the difficulty of interaction tasks is affected by the language skills of the interlocutors (Nunan 1991: 47). The student opinions of rather working with peers than foreigners seem to convey a wish to put in minimal effort to be understood, but they may also tell of a possible lack of self-confidence. Moreover, some students may not have been aware of how talking to a foreigner was supposed to be different or beneficial for them. Thus, they may have not put in the effort that was assumed they otherwise would, and the use of foreigners, in these cases, may have not proved to be as beneficial in terms of communicative skills as the initial aim of the task was.

From a teacher's point of view, it may often be considered a benefit that parts of language lessons can be conducted in the learners' mother tongue. This may be the case especially when teaching grammar, while it is entirely possible to teach grammar in a non-native language as well. However, a common mother tongue may also create difficulties in terms of authenticity of communication: A study by Tsui (1996, as cited in Carless 2008: 333) found that Hong Kong students of English considered communicating through the target language strange when they shared a mother tongue. Furthermore, it has been claimed that the problem with learning a language in a classroom arises from the students and the teacher sharing a mother tongue and, thus, the use of the target language at all times not being necessary (Swain and Lapkin 1995: 372). This was also established in the present study, as the participants stated that they easily relied on Finnish when there was a breakdown in communication. While language switching may be considered as a normal part of

discourse for people competent in more than one language, it does not, however, dismiss the fact that because of the possibility to switch languages constantly, the typical language classroom does not offer a genuine need for using the target language. This is not a concern merely raised by the findings of the present study but also Littlewood (2007), according to whom language switching was something that Asian language teachers worried about.

Nevertheless, several students in the present study reported noticing a positive difference between "normal" classroom communication and that entailed in the present study, in other words, applying new ways of producing language was recognised as beneficial for language development, however, it still seems to be up to the teacher to actively promote the use of English during oral activities. In addition, it would be advisable to conduct as many oral activities as possible in class, while leaving written output to be produced at home, as students advance in exercises at a very different rate. In this way, it would be possible to maximise the amount of time reserved for speaking and minimise the time spent on waiting for every learner to finish what they are doing.

Summary of discussion on student opinions of the task as a way of gaining oral communicative skills

In conclusion, an extensive range of student opinions was gathered in the present study regarding the second research question. Taking part in stage three was an emotional and thought-provoking process, and in the main, it seemed that the students received a realistic image of themselves as communicators, which for some was a pleasant surprise and for others, a negative one. It appears that when engaging in TBL, it should be explained to the learners why it develops them as language speakers to refrain from using the mother tongue as much as possible during language instruction. However, it is natural that learners experience communicating in the target language with each other as being false, particularly when there is a breakdown in communication and they could be using their mother tongue to get their meaning across more effectively. In this respect, foreign visitors to the classroom are of a great use, if often not very viable, which is why it is up to the teacher to create authentic communication by setting an example themselves as well

as by clearly stating the pedagogical aims at hand.

7 CONCLUSION

The findings and their implications of the present study have now been discussed in the context of previous research conducted in the field. Next, the study is concluded with an examination of both the reliability and the validity of the findings. Furthermore, the strengths and the weaknesses of the present study are pointed out, and finally, suggestions for further research made.

The present study applied the approach of a case study. As with any other method, some limitations for case studies can be found (Duff 2008: 47-57). Firstly, the results of a case study cannot be generalised. Secondly, interest in “abnormal” cases may distort the conception of “normality”. Thirdly, problems may occur regarding subjectivity and objectivity. Fourthly, the data gathered may dictate the research more than any theoretical approach. Fifthly, there may be difficulty in protecting the subjects’ anonymity. However, as case studies do not aim at generalisation (Merriam 1998: 208, as cited in Duff 2008: 48), it is unlikely that “abnormal” cases would distort the understanding of “normality”. In relation to the problem of subjectivity in case studies, all research is, in one way or another, guided by the choices a researcher makes and the preconceptions they have (Duff 2008: 55). In fact, the claim of subjectivity is justified to some extent, as case study research is close to the case and the data because the researchers themselves act as the research instrument. Moreover, the present study was interested in obtaining opinions of a task designed by us, and this respect, claims of subjectivity are understandable. However, also the negative opinions regarding the task have been included. On the other hand, subjectivity may be considered even desirable as it helps a researcher to understand the phenomena (Stake 1995: 45). Nevertheless, the limitations of case studies were acknowledged from the beginning and the importance of not over-evaluating the significance of any theoretical implications has been taken into account in the present study.

When a study is conducted with a limited number of participants, the question of anonymity may present challenges. However, ethical principles are the same for case study research as for any other type or research (Duff 2008: 59). Furthermore, it is

the researcher's responsibility to protect that and thus, sometimes it may be necessary even to change or withhold information that might jeopardise the privacy of the subjects. In the present study, the following steps were taken to provide the participants their anonymity. Firstly, when reporting the results of the study, all students were referred to with the pronoun *she,* as the majority of the students taking part were female. Secondly, the students were not, at any stage of the study, referred to by their names. However, the questionnaires the students filled in did contain their names so that it was possible for us to use that data as a part of the interviews. Thirdly, when adding the parental consent form to this written report (see Appendix 1), personal information regarding the people and the school involved was censored. Furthermore, the task experiment was carried out with 24 students, of which only 13 returned the consent form, in other words, 11 students did not return the form with either their parents' consent or refusal. These missing 11 forms had to be interpreted as refusals, and as agreed with the course teacher, these students participated in the task as part of school work and were not interviewed. Thus, 46% of the original sample size was lost, and had there been more student participants, their anonymity would have been increased as well as the findings probably more robust. Regarding the voluntary interviewers, as it was revealed that both genders were represented equally by two people and that they were taking part in a Master's Degree Programme at the University of Jyväskylä, and in one case also nationality, their anonymity was not as well protected. Nevertheless, as their opinions were not analysed and they were consenting adults who knew the nature of the study, anonymity is not as crucial as for the student participants.

The chosen method of data collection set some restrictions for the study. Regarding the conducting of the student interviews, some factors should be noted. Firstly, it was the first time either of the interviewers either conducted or transcribed an interview for research purposes. However, the interview questions were rehearsed to be asked in such a manner that it was possible for the interviewees to answer freely and closed questions were reserved mainly for clarification or elaboration requests. Moreover, themes for the interviews were developed based on student opinions gained from the post-task questionnaires. Secondly, the setting where the interviews took place was ideal for the participants, as it did not require effort from them to attend, but it did lack in peacefulness and thus, some of the recordings were not of the best of quality.

However, the location where the interviews were conducted was one with which the participants were familiar, and thus, they probably felt more comfortable sharing their thoughts there, as suggested by Eskola and Vastamäki (2001: 28), compared to an unfamiliar, but quieter, environment. Hence, with the resources available, it was not possible to fulfill all the qualifications of an ideal interview venue but the participants' availability was treated as a priority in order to secure as much data as possible. Thirdly, as the methodological choice for the interviews was a focused interview, not all the students were asked exactly the same questions, and thus, not all the intended themes received enough exposure in the data to allow us study them as initially planned. However, the research questions could be satisfactorily answered. Fourthly, regarding convenience sampling, as applied in the present study, Krippendorff (2004: 121) points out the following: "Convenience samples present content analysts with the potential problem of having to undo or compensate for the biases in such data, taking into account the intentions that brought these texts into being and into the analysts' hands -- the idea of sampling entails choosing to include or exclude data, with the intent of being fair to all possible data. Convenience samples do not involve such choices and leave uncertain whether the texts that are being analysed are representative of the phenomena that the analysts intend to infer". Indeed, the problems with the small sample size were previously already discussed, however, it was agreed that a convenience sample was justified in the present study, as the aim was not to make generalisations based on the data. Finally, the information collected with the questionnaires was not used to a great extent, while it could have been employed for also other purposes than merely giving background information for the task design and the interviews. However, as resources were limited, the decision was made not to process this part of the data further.

Inductive content analysis of the data was the option chosen for the present study. The range of possible methods to use was vast, and a different approach may have led to results with emphasis on different issues. One of the challenges of content analysis is that there may be many interesting phenomena arising from the data (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2002: 94). It is not, however, possible for a researcher to explore all of them, and thus, decisions have to be made regarding which findings are to be followed. This was, in fact, the case with the present study as well. Content analysis, like any other method of analysis, has been faced with criticism. For

example, merely presenting results, but not drawing implications from them has been mentioned in the literature (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2002: 105). Moreover, Moilanen and Räihä (2001: 54) point out that with content analysis, the risk of bringing in codes from outside the data exists, although, the risk of it happening can be minimised by emphasising the importance of staying loyal to the data. However, these limitations were known before embarking on the analysis, therefore, it was possible to be careful of decisions and actions influencing the study and its results. Moreover, as advised by Gillham (2005: 7), the preconceptions of the researchers have been considered, even though no hypothesis was formulated. In addition, the steps taken in the data collection and analysis have been thoroughly reported on, which allows the reader to draw conclusions on whether appropriate procedure was followed and, thus, makes the analysis more reliable, particularly when it has been conducted by more than one person (Wiersma and Jurs 2009: 246). Furthermore, there is an extensive collection of appendices available which illustrate both the analysis and the data collection, and the entire range of opinions of each issue has been portrayed, not merely the exceptions or particularly interesting extracts.

The concept of validity can be divided into two aspects: internal and external validity which are now discussed as reported in Wiersma and Jurs (2009: 247). Internal validity refers to how the research has been conducted, thus, if the data has been analysed consistently. External validity, however, refers to how, for example, the study can be replicated. In addition, the research report must be conducted in a way that it is comprehensible to other researchers. In terms of validity, the aforementioned factors have been fulfilled. Furthermore, given the comprehensive report of the task design and execution, replicating the study has been made possible for any future research purposes. However, it must be noted that the categories in the analysis overlap to some extent, and, thus, some extracts could in principle have been placed in two different categories but were presented in the most relevant context. The same applies for the topics in the Discussion, as the research questions were intertwined. Moreover, as there are strict procedures to follow also in the case of qualitative research and content analysis, and because there were two people conducting the study, it was paramount to synchronise the approaches to the analysis. This was successfully achieved by practicing the analysis. While it has to be acknowledged that type of criticism previously mentioned might exist for a reason,

one must consider each study practising content analysis by its merits, not by the general criticism in the literature.

The present study took into consideration the responsibility of upper secondary schools to prepare students for life and provide them with the capacities needed in the areas they choose to further themselves in. It has to be acknowledged that in today's world many people face an international, English-speaking work environment, which, should already be accounted for in school, and as the requirements regarding language competence are changing along with the world, language pedagogy should be able to ready learners for the demands encountered outside the classroom. The present study provided valuable in-depth information of a little-researched area, particularly in Finland, which, nevertheless, is significantly current. The results are interesting for both researchers and teachers alike, and moreover, the experimental nature of the present study may open the field for similar studies to be conducted already on graduate student level.

The findings illustrated how a particular group of students viewed the aspects of authenticity, gaining oral communication skills as well as task(s) as part language learning, which will be of help in the process of task design, as the students pointed out successful and less successful choices made regarding the task in the present study. Indeed, while the results are not, and were not aimed to be, generalisable, they suggest that TBL is *not* an approach that does, for some fundamental reason, *not* work with Finnish upper secondary school students. The present study also illustrated how authentic materials may be used as part of teaching and learning, which may inspire practitioners to explore these opportunities. Furthermore, it was shown that the task could be conducted as part of "normal" language instruction without the need for an exclusively task-based syllabus. Moreover, the results suggested that students of different competence levels were, in fact, capable of working with authentic materials, which may also encourage a number of teachers to explore the options available. In addition, the varying nature of authenticity was exploited, as the students both read and produced authentic materials, as well engaged in authentic communication, during one task sequence.

The results of the present study indicated that tasks seem to be applicable with *this*

group of students in gaining oral communicative skills, provided that all students become accustomed to the method. Future research is needed to determine whether this applies to a greater number of students. Moreover, it would be interesting to examine the students in the present study further and compile extensive profiles of them as language users and compare that data to their views of the task. Alternatively a replication of the present study with different participants could be conducted, but with an extended the focus onto the connections between learner opinions and learner characteristics. In addition, we suggest that more research into TBL in Finland would be welcome, as the field is yet to be fully explored. The compatibility of the Finnish language learning culture and tasks would be a useful area of interest, as it has been argued (Swan 2005) and shown (Burrows 2008) that TBL does not suit all environments. Moreover, most TBL research so far has been conducted with qualitative methodology, and if quantitative information was available, more generalisable results could be achieved. Previous research has also focused on adults, instead of adolescent or younger learners. This may be due to practical reasons, as adult participants may be easier to find. Hence, different age groups employing task-based methodology should be covered more widely. The present study did not take into account the teacher's views, because the learners conducted the first two stages rather independently, and we organised stage three. Still, exploring teacher opinions of TBL in practice would be an interesting topic, especially since teachers easily misunderstand the essence of communicative teaching and TBL, which prevents them from engaging in it, as stated by Littlewood (2007). While extensive studies have already been conducted on authentic materials, it would also be beneficial to study the use of authentic material further both from the points of view of learners and practitioners in a Finnish context in particular. Finally, we suggest that the topic of L2 communicative competence in terms of Finnish learners would be widely covered in the future research, as there is a true need of information on how to effectively teach spoken language skills to Finnish learners, particularly as learning is culturally dependent.

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APPENDIX 1: PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

Hyvä ENA3-kurssilaisen huoltaja,

Olemme kaksi englannin kielen pääaineopiskelijaa Jyväskylän yliopistosta. Tällä hetkellä työstämme pro gradu –tutkielmaamme, jossa tutkimme lukio-opiskelijoiden näkemyksiä erilaisista kielenopiskelutavoista sekä opiskelijan omasta kielitaidosta.

Lähestymme Teitä, koska huollettavanne on ilmoittautunut X-koulun viidennessä jaksossa toteutettavalle ENA3-kursille, jonka opettajana toimii X. Olemme sopineet kurssin opettajan kanssa aineiston keräämisestä osana kurssia.

Tulemme keräämään aineistoa opiskelijoilta kyselylomakkeiden ja mahdollisesti pienimuotoisen haastattelun kautta. Tutkimuksemme kannalta on oleellista kerätä taustatietoja opiskelijasta englannin kielen käyttäjänä. Kaikki keräämämme materiaali tullaan käsittelemään nimettömästi ja ehdottoman luottamuksellisesti ja sitä käytetään vain tutkimuksemme tarkoituksiin.

Pyydämme Teidän ilmoittavan meille **17.2.2010 mennessä** suostumuksestanne tutkimukseen osallistumiseen palauttamalla alla olevan lapun tai sähköpostitse. Viestistä tulisi käydä ilmi huollettavan nimen lisäksi suostumuksenne antaminen tai tutkimukseen osallistumisen kieltäminen.

Jos Teillä on kysymyksiä tutkimustamme koskien, annamme mielellämme lisätietoja.

Jyväskylässä 8.2.2010.

Ystävällisin terveisin,

Salla Marttila	Outi Viskari
salla.p.marttila@jyu.fi	outi.viskari@jyu.fi
xxx-xxx xxxx	xxx-xxx xxxx

– –

Ympyröikää valintaanne vastaava vaihtoehto.

Annan / en anna suostumustani ________________________ (opiskelijan nimi) osallistumiseen pro gradu –tutkielman aineiston keräämiseen osana ENA3-kurssia keväällä 2010.

Paikka ja aika ______________________________

____
Allekirjoitus ja nimenselvennys

APPENDIX 2: PRE-TASK QUESTIONNAIRE

KYSELY
Kiitos, että osallistut tutkielmamme tekemiseen osana tätä englannin kurssia. Olemme kiinnostuneet kuulemaan opiskelijoiden näkemyksiä englannin kielen opiskelusta, joten mielipiteesi on meille tärkeä! Kaikki antamasi vastaukset tullaan käsittelemään luottamuksellisesti ja nimettöminä eivätkä ne tule vaikuttamaan kurssiarvosanaasi.

Aluksi haluaisimme tietää hieman taustatietoja sinusta englanninkäyttäjänä. Vastaa alla oleviin kysymyksiin joko *kirjoittamalla vastaus annettuun tilaan tai ympyröimällä sinuun sopiva vaihtoehto*.

Nimi _____ Sukupuoli: nainen / mies Ikä: _____

Viimeisen englannin kurssin arvosana _____ Äidinkieli _____

Mitä muita kieliä puhut?

_____

Oletko vieraillut englanninkielisissä maissa? KYLLÄ / EI

Jos vastasit kyllä, luettele maat ja vierailujen kestot.

_____

_____

_____

Oletko muuten matkaillessasi käyttänyt englantia? KYLLÄ / EI

Jos vastasit kyllä, kerro missä maissa.

_____

_____

_____

Kuinka monta tuntia päivässä keskimäärin katsot **televisiosta englanninkielisiä ohjelmia**?

0 1 2 3 enemmän

Kuinka monta tuntia päivässä keskimäärin kuuntelet **englanninkielistä musiikkia**?

0 1 2 3 enemmän

Kuinka monta tuntia käytät päivässä pelaamalla **englanninkielisiä tietokonepelejä**?

0 1 2 3 enemmän

Kuinka monta tuntia päivässä käytät **englantia Internetissä**?

0 1 2 3 enemmän

Kuinka usein **luet** sanomalehtiä, aikakausilehtiä tai kirjoja **englanniksi**?

päivittäin 2-3 krt /viikko joka toinen viikko kuukausittain muu: _____

Tunnetko ihmisiä, joiden **äidinkieli on englanti**? KYLLÄ / EI

Jos valitsit ei, sinun ei tarvitse vastata seuraaviin a ja b -kysymyksiin.

a) Kuinka usein keskimäärin olet yhteydessä heidän kanssaan **englanniksi kirjoittaen** (esim. sähköposti, chat, kirjeet, tekstiviesti)?

päivittäin 2-3 krt /viikko joka toinen viikko kuukausittain muu:_____

b) Kuinka usein keskimäärin keskustelet heidän kanssaan **englanniksi puhuen** (esim. kasvotusten, Skype, puhelin)?

päivittäin 2-3 krt /viikko joka toinen viikko kuukausittain muu: _____

Tunnetko ihmisiä, joiden **äidinkieli on jokin muu kuin suomi tai englanti**? KYLLÄ / EI

Jos valitsit ei, sinun ei tarvitse vastata seuraaviin a ja b -kysymyksiin.

a) Kuinka usein keskimäärin olet yhteydessä heidän kanssaan **englanniksi kirjoittaen** (esim. sähköposti, chat, kirjeet, tekstiviesti)?

päivittäin 2-3 krt /viikko joka toinen viikko kuukausittain muu:_____

b) Kuinka usein keskimäärin keskustelet heidän kanssaan **englanniksi puhuen** (esim. kasvotusten, Skype, puhelin)?

päivittäin 2-3 krt /viikko joka toinen viikko kuukausittain muu: _____

Vastaa alla oleviin väittämiin **ympyröimällä** sinun mielipidettäsi vastaava vaihtoehto. Muista, että väittämiin ei ole oikeita tai vääriä vastauksia – vastaathan siis rehellisesti oman mielipiteesi mukaan.

1) Pidän englannin opiskelusta. KYLLÄ / EI
2) Pidän englannin puhumisesta. KYLLÄ / EI
3) Puhun englantia aina, kun siihen tarjoutuu mahdollisuus. KYLLÄ / EI
4) Minua jännittää/hermostuttaa englannin puhuminen englannin tuntien ulkopuolella. KYLLÄ / EI
5) Minua jännittää/hermostuttaa puhua englantia englannin tunneilla. KYLLÄ / EI
6) Mielestäni pelkästään englannin oppitunneilla tehtyjen harjoitusten avulla olen oppinut puhumaan englantia niin, että uskon selviäväni erilaisissa tilanteissa luokkahuoneen ulkopuolella englantia käyttämällä. KYLLÄ / EI
7) Mielestäni suullisten pariharjoitusten tekeminen auttaa minua kehittymään englannin puhujana. KYLLÄ / EI
8) Kun teen suullisia pari- tai ryhmäharjoituksia englannin tunnilla, puhun ainoastaan englantia. KYLLÄ/ EI
9) Kun teemme tunnilla pariharjoituksia, käytän osan ajasta omista asioista juttelemiseen suomeksi englanninkielisenpariharjoituksen teon sijasta. KYLLÄ / EI
10)Keskustelutilanne, jossa minun tulee vapaasti tuottaa englantia suullisesti hermostuttaa minua. KYLLÄ / EI

11) Mielestäni englannin tunneilla harjoitellaan tarpeeksi suullista kielitaitoa. KYLLÄ / EI

12) Mielestäni tarvitsen lisää harjoitusta englannin puhumiseen ennen kuin uskallan puhua englantia muiden kuin luokkatovereiden ja opettajan kanssa**.** KYLLÄ / EI

13) En käytä englantia missään muodossa englannin tuntien ulkopuolella. KYLLÄ / EI

14) Mielestäni on tärkeää, että käytän niin suullista kuin kirjallista englantia oppituntien ulkopuolella. KYLLÄ / EI

15)Luotan omaan englannin suulliseen kielitaitooni. KYLLÄ / EI

16) Mielestäni on tärkeämpää oppia englannin kielioppia kuin harjoitella englanniksi puhumista. KYLLÄ / EI

17) Mielestäni englannin oppikirjat tarjoavat tarpeeksi erilaisia tehtäviä kielen opiskeluun. KYLLÄ / EI

18)Mielestäni kielen oppitunneilla on hyvä käyttää myös oppikirjan ulkopuolista materiaalia. KYLLÄ / EI

19)Puhuminen englanniksi ei tuota minulle ongelmia. KYLLÄ / EI

20)Mielestäni on tärkeämpää harjoitella englantia ylioppilaskirjoituksia varten kuin harjoitella englanniksi puhumista. KYLLÄ / EI

21) Minulla on kokemusta työpaikan hakemisesta. KYLLÄ / EI

22) Olen ollut työpaikkahaastattelussa. KYLLÄ / EI

23) Kerro omin sanoin, mikä sinun mielestäsi on paras tapa oppia **puhumaan** englantia? Voit miettiä esimerkiksi, millä tavalla sinä itse olet oppinut **puhumaan** englantia (esim. luokkahuoneessa vai sen ulkopuolella, puhumalla, kuuntelemalla, pariharjoitusten avulla, television avulla, ystävien kautta).

24) Millä tavoilla uskot nyt alkavan englannin kurssin ja sen työmaailmaan liittyvän aihepiirin kehittävän sinua englannin **puhujana**?

Lue vielä alla olevat kuvaukset ja valitse niistä se, mikä **mielestäsi** kuvaa parhaiten **tämänhetkistä suullista englanninkielentaitoasi**. Merkitse valitsemasi kuvaus **ympyröimällä** sen edessä oleva numero.

1) Selviydyn kaikkein yksinkertaisimmista keskusteluista, jos puhekumppanini on valmis toistamaan sanottavansa tai ilmaisemaan asian toisin, puhumaan tavallista hitaammin ja auttamaan minua muotoilemaan sen, mitä yritän sanoa. Pystyn esittämään yksinkertaisia kysymyksiä ja vastaamaan sellaisiin arkisia tarpeita tai hyvin tuttuja aiheita käsittelevissä keskusteluissa.

2) Pystyn kommunikoimaan yksinkertaisissa ja rutiininomaisissa tehtävissä, jotka edellyttävät yksinkertaista ja suoraa tiedonvaihtoa tutuista aiheista ja toiminnoista. Selviydyn hyvin lyhyistä keskusteluista, mutta ymmärrän harvoin kylliksi pitääkseni keskustelua itse yllä.

3) Selviydyn useimmista tilanteista, joita syntyy englanninkielisillä alueilla matkustettaessa. Pystyn osallistumaan valmistautumatta keskusteluun aiheista, jotka ovat tuttuja, itseäni kiinnostavia tai jotka liittyvät arkielämään, esimerkiksi perheeseen, harrastuksiin, työhön, matkustamiseen ja ajankohtaisiin asioihin.

4) Pystyn viestimään niin sujuvasti ja spontaanisti, että säännöllinen yhteydenpito englanniksi on mahdollista ilman että kumpikaan osapuoli kokee sen hankalaksi. Pystyn osallistumaan aktiivisesti tutuista aihepiireistä käytävään keskusteluun, esittämään näkemyksiäni ja puolustamaan niitä.

5) Pystyn ilmaisemaan ajatuksiani sujuvasti ja spontaanisti ilman että minun juurikaan tarvitsee hakea ilmauksia. Osaan käyttää kieltä joustavasti ja tehokkaasti sosiaalisiin tarkoituksiin. Osaan muotoilla ajatuksia ja mielipiteitä täsmällisesti ja liittää oman puheenvuoroni taitavasti muiden puhujien puheenvuoroihin.

6) Pystyn ottamaan vaivatta osaa asioiden käsittelyyn ja kaikkiin keskusteluihin. Tunnen hyvin kielelle tyypilliset sanonnat ja puhekieliset ilmaukset. Pystyn tuomaan esille ajatuksiani sujuvasti ja välittämään täsmällisesti hienojakin merkitysvivahteita. Osaan perääntyä ja kiertää mahdolliset ongelmat niin sujuvasti, että muut tuskin havaitsevat ollenkaan ongelmia.

KIITOS VASTAUKSISTASI!

APPENDIX 3: TASK INSTRUCTIONS

APPLYING FOR A JOB

Your task is to apply for a job. Looking for a job and writing job applications is something that everyone has to do at some stage of their lives. You may already have applied for a job, or maybe this is the first time you have to do so. In any case, here are some tips for you on how to get started.

Before you can write an application for a job, **you need to find a job to apply for**. Look for a job that really interests you – if you already know what you want to work as when you grow up, why not look for a job advert that matches your dreams! The job can be in any country, even in Finland, but the job advert should be written in English and likewise, you must write your application in English.

Nowadays the best place for job hunting is probably the Internet. Below you will find some examples of websites from which you can find job adverts. These are only examples and if you wish to look for a job in a country not listed here, we suggest you use a search engine, such as Google, and you are sure to find a list of websites in the country of your choice.

London	www.justlondonjobs.co.uk
England	www.1job.co.uk
Ireland	www.jobs.ie
Canada	www.bestjobsca.com/bt-jobs.htm
Scotland	www.scottishjobs.com
USA	www.jobsearchusa.org
Jobs on cruise ships	www.cruiseshipjob.com
Nanny jobs	www.nannyjobs.co.uk
Jobs all over the world	www.jobsabroad.com
Summer jobs	www.summerjobs.com, www.backdoorjobs.com

Once you have found a job ad that interests you, the next step is to **write an application for that job**. Good instructions and tips for writing a job application can be found on UK Jobcentreplus' "Job Kit – Practical help and advice when applying for jobs" booklet. You can find help writing a cover letter on pages 20-24.

Job Kit
www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/stellent/groups/jcp/documents/sitestudio/dev_015519.pdf

You can also find some tips for cover letters on pages 85-86 of your textbooks. While writing your cover letter, please pay attention to the layout and include all the necessary details that are required. Please type your application by computer, if possible.

When you apply for a job, you have to include your CV (Curriculum Vitae) with the cover letter. **Write your CV** and hand it in along with your job application to your teacher. Again, you can find help writing your CV from the Job Kit, and tips and examples of CVs can be found there on pages 27-30. You can also find an example of a CV and some tips on pages 87-89 of your textbooks.

It does not matter if you do not have any work experience yet – for example, you can include the school work experience that you have done in secondary school. You should also write down the education that you have received so far, and what you are studying for at the moment. Make sure that you include also your computer skills, language skills and hobbies in your CV, as these help the employer build a better picture of you as a person than the work experience alone would.

Please hand in your cover letter and your CV to your teacher by Monday 22nd March, 2010.

APPENDIX 4: STAGE THREE EVALUATION FORM

Name of student _____

1. Overall, how did the student perform in the interview? (Fluency, ability to engage in conversation, appropriate language in the context etc.?)

2. What was good about the interview?

3. What could be improved upon?

4. Was it difficult to understand the student's English? If yes, please elaborate.

APPENDIX 5: POST-TASK QUESTIONNAIRE

Nimi: _____

Vastaa alla oleviin kysymyksiin **ympyröimällä** sinun mielipidettäsi vastaava vaihtoehto. Kysymyksiin ei ole oikeita tai vääriä vastauksia eivätkä vastauksesi vaikuta tämän englannin kurssin arvosanaasi.

1) Pidän englannin puhumisesta. KYLLÄ / EI
2) Minua jännittää/hermostuttaa englannin puhuminen englannin tuntien ulkopuolella. KYLLÄ / EI
3) Minua jännittää/hermostuttaa puhua englantia englannin tunnilla. KYLLÄ / EI
4) Mielestäni **kurssilla tehty suullinen työhaastattelu** lisäsi luottamustani omaa englannin suullista kielentaitoani kohtaan. KYLLÄ / EI
5) Mielestäni tarvitsen lisää harjoitusta englannin puhumisesta ennen kuin uskallan puhua englantia muiden kuin luokkatovereiden ja opettajan kanssa. KYLLÄ / EI

Vastaa muutamaan kysymykseen siitä, miltä sinusta tuntui **ENNEN** työpaikkahaastattelua.

6) **Ennen** työpaikkahaastattelua suhtautumiseni siihen oli
   a) innostunut/positiivinen
   b) samantekevä
   c) epävarma/hermostunut
   d) muu, mikä? _____

7) **Ennen** keskusteluharjoitusta, arvioin että suoriudun siitä (suoriutuminen tarkoittaa tässä sitä, että pystyit vastaamaan kysyttyihin kysymyksiin ilman pitkiä mietintätaukoja)
   a) hyvin
   b) kohtalaisesti
   c) huonosti
   d) en ollenkaan

8) Koitko tunnilla **ennen** työpaikkahaastattelua tehdyt harjoitukset (video, parin kanssa harjoittelu) hyödyllisiksi työpaikkahaastattelua ajatellen?

   a) kyllä
   b) en

Vastaa muutamaan kysymykseen siitä, miltä sinusta tuntui työpaikkahaastattelun **JÄLKEEN.**

9) Työpaikkahaastattelun **jälkeen**, arvioin suoriutuneeni siitä (suoriutuminen tarkoittaa tässä sitä, että pystyit vastaamaan kysyttyihin kysymyksiin ilman pitkiä mietintätaukoja
   a) hyvin
   b) kohtalaisesti
   c) huonosti
   d) en ollenkaan

10) Ympyröi jokainen alla oleva vaihtoehto, joka mielestäsi kuvaa tehtyä työhaastattelua.

vaikea	hyödyllinen	helppo
hyödytön	pelottava	kohtalaisen vaikea
kohtalaisen helppo	motivoiva	lannistava
mukava	epämukava	muu, mikä?_____

Alla on muutamia väittämiä koskien tätä englannin kurssia. Lue väittämät ja valitse sen jälkeen vaihtoehto, joka kuvaa mielipidettäsi.

11) Tällä englannin kurssilla tehtiin harjoituksia, joihin etsittiin materiaalia oppikirjan ulkopuolelta, kuten työpaikkailmoituksen kohdalla. Mielestäni oppikirjan ulkopuolisen materiaalin käyttö oli

a) hyödyllistä – mielestäni oli hyvä juttu, että työpaikat etsittiin itse
b) turhaa – olisin mieluummin tehnyt tehtävän kirjan materiaalin pohjalta
c) samantekevää – mielestäni ei ole väliä mitä materiaalia tunnilla käytetään

12) Tällä englannin kurssilla tehtiin työhaastattelu, jossa käytettiin englantia ihmisen kanssa, jonka kanssa ei voinut puhua ollenkaan suomea. Oman suullisen englannin kielitaitoni kannalta harjoituksen teko oli

a) hyödyllistä
b) hyödytöntä
c) samantekevää

13) Tällä englannin kurssilla tehtiin työnhakuun liittyvä harjoituskokonaisuus, johon liittyi työpaikkailmoituksen etsiminen, työpaikkahakemuksen ja ansioluettelon kirjoittaminen sekä työpaikkahaastattelu. Mielestäni tämä harjoituskokonaisuus oli

a) hyödyllinen – erottui edukseen kielten tuntien tehtävistä
b) ok – mielestäni samanlainen kuin muut kieltentuntien tehtävät
c) turha – ei sopinut kielten opiskeluun

14) Tällä englannin kurssilla työpaikkahaastattelu järjestettiin niin, että se muistuttaisi oikeaa työpaikkahaastattelua. Mielestäni tämä oli

a) hyvä – muillakin kursseilla pitäisi tehdä oikeaa elämää vastaavia harjoituksia
b) ei hyvä eikä huono – harjoitus menetteli
c) huono – mieluummin teen pariharjoituksia kirjan pohjalta

15) Uskotko enemmän omaan kielitaitoosi ja kykyysi käyttää englantia ulkomaalaisten ihmisten kanssa kurssilla tehdyn suullisen työpaikkahaastattelun jälkeen?

a) kyllä
b) ei vaikuttanut positiivisesti eikä negatiivisesti
c) ei

Vastaa vielä kysymykseen sinua haastatelleesta henkilöstä ja hänen kanssaan keskustelemisesta.

Kuka sinua haastatteli? _____

Haastattelijan puheen ymmärtäminen oli

a) helppoa
b) kohtalaisen helppoa
c) vaikeaa
d) mahdotonta

Mitkä asiat tekivät haastattelijan puheen ymmärtämisessä helppoa tai vaikeaa (ääntäminen, puhenopeus, vieraat sanat jne.)?

Lue alla olevat kuvaukset ja valitse niistä se, mikä **mielestäsi** kuvaa parhaiten **tämänhetkistä SUULLISTA englannin kielentaitoasi**. **Ympyröi** valitsemasi kuvaus.

1) Selviydyn kaikkein yksinkertaisimmista keskusteluista, jos puhekumppanini on valmis toistamaan sanottavansa tai ilmaisemaan asian toisin, puhumaan tavallista hitaammin ja auttamaan minua muotoilemaan sen, mitä yritän sanoa. Pystyn esittämään yksinkertaisia kysymyksiä ja vastaamaan sellaisiin arkisia tarpeita tai hyvin tuttuja aiheita käsittelevissä keskusteluissa.

2) Pystyn kommunikoimaan yksinkertaisissa ja rutiininomaisissa tehtävissä, jotka edellyttävät yksinkertaista ja suoraa tiedonvaihtoa tutuista aiheista ja toiminnoista. Selviydyn hyvin lyhyistä keskusteluista, mutta ymmärrän harvoin kylliksi pitääkseni keskustelua itse yllä.

3) Selviydyn useimmista tilanteista, joita syntyy englanninkielisillä alueilla matkustettaessa. Pystyn osallistumaan valmistautumatta keskusteluun aiheista, jotka ovat tuttuja, itseäni kiinnostavia tai jotka liittyvät arkielämään, esimerkiksi perheeseen, harrastuksiin, työhön, matkustamiseen ja ajankohtaisiin asioihin.

4) Pystyn viestimään niin sujuvasti ja spontaanisti, että säännöllinen yhteydenpito englanniksi on mahdollista ilman että kumpikaan osapuoli kokee sen hankalaksi. Pystyn osallistumaan aktiivisesti tutuista aihepiireistä käytävään keskusteluun, esittämään näkemyksiäni ja puolustamaan niitä.

5) Pystyn ilmaisemaan ajatuksiani sujuvasti ja spontaanisti ilman että minun juurikaan tarvitsee hakea ilmauksia. Osaan käyttää kieltä joustavasti ja tehokkaasti sosiaalisiin tarkoituksiin. Osaan muotoilla ajatuksia ja mielipiteitä täsmällisesti ja liittää oman puheenvuoroni taitavasti muiden puhujien puheenvuoroihin.

6) Pystyn ottamaan vaivatta osaa asioiden käsittelyyn ja kaikkiin keskusteluihin. Tunnen hyvin kielelle tyypilliset sanonnat ja puhekieliset ilmaukset. Pystyn tuomaan esille ajatuksiani sujuvasti ja välittämään täsmällisesti hienojakin merkitysvivahteita. Osaan perääntyä ja kiertää mahdolliset ongelmat niin sujuvasti, että muut tuskin havaitsevat ollenkaan ongelmia.

KIITOS VASTAUKSISTASI!

APPENDIX 6: SCHEDULE OF THE THEME INTERVIEW

Pro gradu –tutkielma
Puolistrukturoitu teemahaastattelu

TEEMAT: työskentelytavat, suullinen kielitaito, autenttisuus

1. TYÖSKENTELYTAVAT: TASK-BASED LEARNING, TYÖHAASTATTELU

Miltä koko prosessi tuntui?
Miltä tuntui etsiä itse kiinnostava ”oikea” työpaikka verrattuna kirjan työpaikkailmoituksiin?
Auttoivatko muut tehtävät (paritehtävä, video, kotiläksy) suoriutumaan työhaastattelussa? Miten? Miksi ei?
Tekisitkö mieluummin kirjan tehtäviä? Miksi?
Haluaisitko että vastaavia harjoituskokonaisuuksia/teemoja olisi usein, silloin tällöin vai ei koskaan? Miksi?
Mitä mieltä olet harjoituskokonaisuuden järjestelyistä? Häiritsikö jokin sinua haastattelun aikana? Luokkakaverit, opettaja? Olisiko ollut parempi olla ihan kahdestaan haastattelijan kanssa?

2. SUULLINEN KIELITAITO: OMA ARVIO, KEHITYS, MOTIVAATIO, ASENTEET

Kuinka keskustelu sujui?
Oliko ensimmäinen kerta, kun puhuit englantia tässä mittakaavassa suomea osaamattoman henkilön kanssa? Miltä se tuntui?
Millaista oli puhua englanninkielisen ihmisen kanssa verrattuna luokkakaveriin?
Mikä oli erilaista kuin kuvittelit? Mikä vaikeampaa/helpompaa?
Millaista oli, kun ei voinut sanoa epäselvää asiaa suomeksi?
Millaista oli, kun joutui sekä puhumaan että kuuntelemaan ilman miettimisaikaa?
Tekisitkö mieluummin parin kanssa suullisia harjoituksia? Miksi?
Miksi luulet, että ennen haastattelua sinua pelotti (jos pelotti)? Mikä erityisesti?

Muuttuiko oma kuvasi sinusta englannin kielen puhujana? Löysitkö uusia vahvuuksia? Luuletko, että sait realistisen kuvan itsestäsi englannin puhujana?

Tuntuuko englannin puhuminen sinusta nyt erilaiselta? Kivemmalta, helpommalta, kiinnostavammalta, epämukavammalta, pelottavammalta?

3. AUTENTTISUUS: HYÖDYLLISYYS ”OIKEASSA ELÄMÄSSÄ”

Luuletko, että voit hyödyntää myöhemmin tätä kokemusta? Miten?

Pystyitkö samaan aikaan tietoisesti miettimään sitä, miten haastattelussa pitää käyttäytyä vai tuliko se luonnostaan?

Haluaisitko, että englannin tunneilla ja muissakin aineissa otettaisiin enemmän huomioon ”tosielämän tarpeita”?

Olisitko valmistautunut eri tavalla/työskennellyt eri tavalla, jos olisit tiennyt, että haastattelemaan tulee aikuisia ulkomaalaisia ihmisiä? Miten? Miksi?

Tekikö haastattelija, hänen puheensa, kulttuurierot tms. tilanteen helpoksi tai vaikeaksi? Miten?

Mitä englannin kielen opiskelu sinulle tarkoittaa? Mikä on sinulle tärkeintä? Vaikuttavatko tulevaisuuden suunnitelmasi siihen, miten näet nyt englannin opiskelun?

APPENDIX 7: SAMPLE ILLUSTRATION OF ANALYSIS 1

Table 2. Illustration of the analysis on student opinions of authenticity and the task

ILLUSTRATION OF THE ANALYSIS - RESEARCH QUESTION 1			
Extracts from the data	Pre-categories	Sub-categories	Main categories
(2) varsinkin sellanen joka tietää et ei tuu ikinä hakee englanniks mihinkään työhaastatteluun tai sellaseen menemään.. niin tavallaan se on sellaselle ihan turha.. tehtävä (S9, 36–38)	uselessness of the task	negative opinion/ task in general	Opinions of the task
(4) henkisesti hyödyllistä mutta ei se varmaan mitenkään kauheesti opettanut englantii (S5, 61–62)	beneficial only in mental way	neutral opinion/ task in terms of learning E.	
(9) tää oli aika hyvin järjestetty kyllä kaikin puolin (S1, 122)	well-organised	positive opinion/ task execution	
(13) ne kaikki työt oli semmosia mihin ei oikeesti ees voinu hakee niinku tän ikäsenä tai tällä koulutuksella (S12, 7–8)	unrealistic scenario, inauthenticity	negative opinion/ authenticity of material	Opinions of the authenticity of the task
(16) joo oli siinä valinnan vaikeus.. että sit löytää sellasen työn.. muuten se oli kyllä kiva (S1, 39)	amount of material	ambivalent opinion/ authenticity of material	
(19) pääs puhumaan niinkö kieltä niinkö ihan ulkomaalaiselle ihmiselle ku --- ihan normaalissa elämässä niinku harva suomalainen puhuu ulkomaalaiselle just niinku tän ikäsenä	opportunity to use language	positive opinion/ authenticity of context	
(23) ei tää mun mielestä silleen opeta kauheesti mitään (S5, 49)	the task did not teach anything	negative opinion/ authenticity in terms of learning & the future	Opinions of authenticity in relation to the students' future
(26) tulee testattua miten edes osaa vastata mihinkään kysymyksiin ei oikein ole ikinä ollut edes työhaastattelussa niin sekin hyöty että tietää millasia ne oikeestaan on (S3, 12–13)	practice for real-life situation	positive opinion/ authenticity in terms of the future	

APPENDIX 8: SAMPLE ILLUSTRATION OF ANALYSIS 2

Table 3. Illustration of the analysis on the task as part of acquiring oral skills

ILLUSTRATION OF THE ANALYSIS – RESEARCH QUESTION 2			
Extracts from the data	Pre-categories	Sub-categories	Main categories
(28) mua aina jännittää hirveesti tollaset tilanteet ylipäätään varsinkin kun pitää puhua kieliä ja sit jotenkin koulun puolesta tuplasti ärsyttävää ja pelottavaa (S3, 6–8)	nervousness, anxiety	negative opinion/ feelings	Emotional experiences
(31) se nyt vaan oli silleen mä panikoin sitä niin paljon ei se sitten ollutkaan niin kauhee siinä mielessä positiivinen .. se oli ihan mukava kokemus sillein (S3, 184-185)	negative feeling about task in advance, positive after	ambivalent opinion/ feelings	
(33) oli hauska päästä puhumaan (S7, 11)	enjoyment of talking	positive opinion/ feelings	
(34) ohan se [englannin puhuminen] silleen periaatteessa tosi työlästä (S2, 64)	troublesome activity ”in principle”	negative opinion/ speaking English in task / attitude	Attitudinal experiences
(36) [englannin puhuminen non-natiivin kanssa] on paljon mukavempaa kuitenkin pitää keskittyä enemmän mutta jos on äidinkielenä englanti --- [sillä] joka puhuu niin sitten on jotenkin hirveet --- suoriutumispaineet (S3, 96–99)	nice task, but performance pressure	ambivalent opinion/ speaking English in task/ attitude to speakers of E.	
(39) mun omasta mielestä mun pitäis kehittää puhumista ni niinku autto siinä että sai sitä rohkeutta puhua ja pääs puhumaan niinku henkilön kanssa joka on niinku ulkomaalainen eikä oo kukaan tuttu.. silleen hyvä (S2, 42–45)	beneficial to talk to a foreigner	positive opinion/ speaking English in task/ attitude to foreigners	
(44) en mä sitten ihan niin hyvin puhu sitä englantii ku tarvis ja kaikkii niitä sanoja ei sitte löydy (S4, 96–97)	own skills not adequate for the task	negative opinion of self / task	Self-assessment of task performance and oral skills
(46) mun mielestä se ei numero tavallaan mun keskustelujuttuihin se ei pidä paikkaansa… et se on enemmänkin se et mä pystyn kirjottamaan ja ehkä muistan jotain sanoja ja tällastä (S9, 94–96)	self-assessment of oral skills	ambivalent opinion of self/ in general but discussed in relation to the task	
(47) tää haastattelu ja sitte ne hakemusten teot niin siinä tuli semmonen että osaanhan tätä paremminkin vaikka (S1, 99–100)	sense of success	positive opinion of self/ task	

APPENDIX 9: TRANSLATIONS OF EXTRACTS

(1) the questions asked in the job interview could have been given to us in advance in order to prepare for the job interview well we were given these papers but I wasn't asked more than one question from those so it was very difficult to come up with answers or try to form them in English at the same time (S8, 17-20)

(2) especially someone who knows that they will never be applying for any job in English or to go to an interview.. so for someone like that it's a totally useless.. task (S9, 36-38)

(3) that it wouldn't be done because…you need to put in effort (S5, 57)

(4) mentally useful but it probably didn't teach a lot of English (S5, 61-62)

(5) well it depends on how they are carried out but this was rather good in the way that it was easy to do and didn't require much planning and long-term work but if it does require them then it's not good (S13, 172-174)

(6) they were very helpful as I paid attention to them (S7, 20-21)

(7) I didn't think of the video but now that I think about it afterwards I can see that I quite likely used the tips that were on the video to my benefit (S10, 43-44)

(8) I didn't write down anything I went through the things on my mind – it was good that as.. if there hadn't been anything like.. how to prepare so then I would have been panicking a bit about what to tell about myself (S11, 74-77)

(9) this was organised quite well all around (S1, 122)

(10) it was actually quite well set up so it felt real (S13, 77)

(11) the course book.. it's always the same in that there is a text and there are sentences to be looked up from the text so of course this made a good change (S2, 13-14)

(12) of course this should be done again as it is surely beneficial for everyone (S11, 103-106)

(13) all the jobs were ones that someone of my age or my education couldn't actually apply for (S12, 7-8)

(14) at first I didn't really want to look for the job because it was quite bothersome to find an advert that I was actually able to understand (S5, 4-7)

(15) this horrible feeling that I couldn't speak English at all when they were speaking so fast and fluently (S8, 35-36)

(16) yeah there were too many job adverts to choose from…to find a job.. but otherwise it was nice (S1, 39)

(17) I probably would have prepared better in terms if the cv and written a bit more about myself (S10, 62-63)

(18) because I had found the job myself I knew more about the job that I wanted to apply for (S3, 45-46)

(19) got the chance to speak the language with a foreigner as --- normally only few Finns speak to foreigners at this age (S11, 37-39)

(20) had to think much harder for myself which is a lot more beneficial because if you do pair work and can't think of a word right away you easily ask what the word is in Finnish (S11, 125-127)

(21) and then [the interviewer] noticed that I was hesitating and the interviewer completed the question or asked it in a different way that helped a lot (S10, 103-105)

(22) I could think ahead a little about what was going to happen next and what to say and I sort of had processed the situations already in my head (S3, 63-63)

(23) in my opinion, this didn't teach much of anything (S5, 49)

(24) things that are part of the National Curriculum (S5, 51)

(25) I hadn't been to a real job interview like this so now that I go to one I will perhaps feel a bit more secure (S7, 41-42)

(26) it was a chance to test out how to answer any of the questions as I hadn't been to a job interview before so it too was a benefit to find out what they are actually like (S3, 12-13)

(27) it was useful as when I go to a job interview even if it is in Finnish it will still be useful as they are the same anyway (S10, 76-77)

(28) in general I get always very nervous in that sort of situations especially when I need to speak in languages and then because it's a part of school work it is double as annoying and scary (S3, 6-8)

(29) it was very frustrating because in my head I had lots of things to say but I got a horrible blackout at the time and I couldn't remember some basic words (S8, 135-137)

(30) well that you had to speak in English to a stranger (S13, 11-12)

(31) I just had panicked a lot in advance but it wasn't that horrible after all so in that sense it was a positive thing.. it was a nice experience (S3, 184-185)

(32) it showed that I should or that there is always something new to learn so maybe a bit depressing on the other hand it uplifted my mood a bit that I could do something (S3, 165-166)

(33) it was fun to get the chance to speak (S7, 11)

(34) speaking English is basically quite burdensome (S2, 64)

(35) it does not matter who is there (S12, 82)

(36) speaking English with a non-native is much nicer even if I have to concentrate on it more but if the speaker's first language is English, then I have --- performance pressure (S3, 96-99)

(37) these things where you get to talk with foreigners probably bring more self-confidence… and if you do well (S1, 114-115)

(38) because of the foreign exchange student and this job search and having used more English in general I have understood more of it and it has become more natural to use English now that I have used it more (S2, 82-85)

(39) in my opinion I should develop my speaking skills so it helped as I got more courage to speak and had the chance to speak with a person who was a foreigner and not someone I knew.. so good in that sense (S2, 42-45)

(40) I want to go to work abroad if I have the chance so I know that it is useful and as.. I study four other foreign languages so --- I like to talk a lot (S11, 97-99)

(41) I have considered studying English at university so that's why I try a lot --- I just try to study as much as I can but my only priority is to be able to talk English like this (S6, 118-121)

(42) I know that I will always need English and it's the most popular and spoken language that there is (S1, 88-89)

(43) I am not going to go abroad or study English but I am trying to learn the basic skills (S13, 70-71)

(44) I don’t speak English as well as needed and I don’t know all the words I need (S4, 96-97)

(45) well I’m not able to have a conversation in English… like in a natural way (S9, 90)

(46) in my opinion my mark in English is not truthful in terms of spoken language… it is more about being able to write and remembering words and so on (S9, 94-96)

(47) from the interview and then writing the applications I got this feeling that I can do this better than I expected (S1, 99-100)

(48) in the beginning I thought that I don’t have enough vocabulary so I thought that it would affect the way I speak in that all the explaining and so on would make it worse... but now after the foreign exchange thing and partly this as well and the whole course.. I realise that it doesn’t matter if I have to explain things and it doesn’t matter if I don’t know the words --- (S10, 55-60)