

VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES:
A study on Finnish first-year high school students' independent vocabulary learning

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Oppimisstrategiat ovat olennainen osa vieraan kielen omaksumista, ja ne ovat jo pitkään olleet laajan tutkimuksen kohteena. Sanaston oppiminen nähdään yhä tärkeämpänä osana kielitaitoa ja koulujen opetusohjelmaa, minkä vuoksi sanaston oppimisstrategiat ovat kasvava tutkimuskohde kielitieteessä. Suuri osa uusien sanojen oppimisesta on kuitenkin oppilaiden omalla ajalla tapahtuvaa itsenäistä työskentelyä, ja tutkimus oppilaiden omista käsityksistä eri strategioiden käytöstä ja tehokkuudesta on ollut vähäisempää. Tämä kandidaatin tutkielma keskittyi selvittämään, millaisia strategioita lukion 1. vuoden opiskelijat käyttävät opiskellessaan sanastoa itsenäisesti, kuinka sitoutuneita he ovat sanaston laajentamiseen ajallisesti ja tavoitteellisesti katsottuna, ja mikä heidän mielestä on koulun panos strategioiden opettamisessa.

Aineisto kerättiin kvalitatiivisia teemahaastatteluita sekä kvantitatiivista web-kyselyä käyttäen, ja kaikki tutkimukseen osallistuneet henkilöt olivat Jyväskylän Lyseon lukion 1. vuoden opiskelijoita. Tulokset osoittavat, että opiskelijat käyttivät tiettyjä, lähinnä kognitiivisia ja muististrategioita itsenäisessä opiskelussa, vaikka kokivatkin niiden opetuksen koulussa olleen hyvin vähäistä. Opiskelijoiden käsitykset eri keinojen tehokkuudesta olivat usein ristiriidassa heidän käyttämiensä strategioiden kanssa. Tavoitteiden asettaminen sanaston oppimiseen oli yleistä, joskin jako koulun sisälle ja sen ulkopuolelle rajoittuviin tavoitteisiin oli osallistuneiden kesken ilmeinen.

Asiasanat: vocabulary learning strategies, memory strategies, social strategies, cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, incidental learning

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1 INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary learning is a lifelong and rigorous task that learners mostly have to deal with on their own, since teachers rarely spend numerous hours of class time on teaching vocabulary separately. In order to begin efficiently learning the most frequent words in the English language, as well as the infrequent ones, students need to gain awareness of various kinds of vocabulary learning strategies, and think about which strategies they should start using as a part of their personal language learning plan. Research on vocabulary learning strategies has increased only recently, for instance students' use and perceived usefulness of vocabulary learning strategies was researched by Fan (2003). The results of the study of Hong Kong learners of English as a foreign language showed that the students had contradictory experiences of the usefulness of the most often used strategies; the students did not often use the strategies they regarded as the most useful. A recent study on vocabulary learning strategies of high school students was conducted by Martinen (2008). The results of her study showed that the students use a limited variety of strategies which were mainly repetition (reading and writing), and translation. The results also showed that a significant number of students have never received information on learning strategies.

As we first started researching the field of vocabulary, we realized that there is a lack of research on vocabulary learning strategies from the learners' point-of-view: which strategies students actually use, which strategies are seen as effective, as well as how dedicated students are in learning vocabulary in their own time. Previous research in the field has concentrated on language learning strategies as a whole, yet vocabulary learning strategies as its own field is growing.

The purpose of the present study is to describe from learners' point-of-view the kinds of vocabulary learning strategies used by first-year high school students to learn English vocabulary, the perceived effectiveness of those strategies, the students' goals and independent efforts towards vocabulary learning, as well the source of information on those strategies. Our hypothesis is that first-year high school students often use a limited number of strategies. Firstly, we will introduce previous studies on vocabulary strategies, as well as review the literature on learning strategies and vocabulary strategies as a whole. Secondly, the data and methods will be presented. Thirdly, the results of the quantitative data (web-

questionnaire) will be presented simultaneously with discussion. After this we will present the results of the qualitative data (interviews) along with the discussion. Finally, in the conclusion the results of the questionnaire and the interviews will be discussed simultaneously, and we will explain how the two kinds of data collection supported and complemented each other.

2 VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES

This chapter will provide a framework of the different methods and learning strategies upon which the present study is based. First, we will define language learning strategies in general and discuss earlier research specifically on vocabulary learning strategies. Secondly, we are going to address the importance of vocabulary learning strategies in teaching and the implications for the teaching of vocabulary and vocabulary learning strategies. Third, we are going to review aspects of 'knowing a word' and define receptive and productive knowledge. Fourth, we will briefly define different learning strategies on the basis of Oxford's (1990) division of strategies into two broad areas: indirect and direct strategies and the strategies evolving from these will also be defined. Finally, we will discuss incidental learning.

2.1 Language learning strategies

Learning strategies are ways for students to facilitate their own learning. Vocabulary learning strategies support the learning of a bulk of vocabulary on the learner's own time, since teachers simply do not have the time to teach vocabulary separately in class. Students need to learn the most frequently occurring words in a language, and, in order to learn them independently, vocabulary learning strategies are tools to use along the process.

Research on vocabulary learning has increased at a fast rate since the 1980s. Learning strategies in general have been researched as a whole for quite a while, but research on particular vocabulary learning strategies has not been abundant. According to Schmitt (1997:199), the fields of vocabulary and the newly emerged field, learner strategies, have each been widely researched, but vocabulary learning strategies as its own field has not been researched to a great extent. He goes on to say that one possible way to continue research on vocabulary strategies is to find out what kinds of vocabulary learning strategies learners are

using and asking them how effective they think the strategies are. However, language learning strategies are very personal and they work differently for each person. Nunan (1991:171) mentions that learning style will result from an individual's personality variables, such as psychological and cognitive make-up, sociocultural background and educational experience. Taking into consideration all of these variables, Schmitt (1997:236) points out that there is no evidence from research supporting the assumption that strategies could be applied universally. Thus, because of the highly personal aspect of strategies it is difficult to justify the usefulness of any single vocabulary learning strategy and its validity universally and in the real world.

According to Fan (2003:222), popular strategies today in the communicative language teaching era are for instance memory strategies, which are favoured over rote memorization and repetition. Schmitt (1997:211) explains that memory strategies involve the use of imagery or grouping when relating the new word being learnt with previous knowledge. Fan also adds that memory strategies engage the learner more deeply in vocabulary learning and help the learner remember the vocabulary better, while using rote memorization and repetition strategies do not work so well. In her study, Fan (2003:234) shows that the Hong Kong learners of English as a foreign language reported frequently using dictionary strategies in discovering the meaning of new words. Her study shows that learners have contradictory experiences of the usefulness of the strategies they often use, for instance that the strategies considered very useful outnumbered those reported to be often used. For example, The Key Word method is a highly personalised and imaginative method of memorizing a word, but it is not a very practical way of remembering a bulk of lexical items, and thus many students do not begin to use it at all. Another study on the usefulness of vocabulary learning strategies by Schmitt (1997:221) showed that the Japanese students in FL classes reported that the most used and most helpful strategies were 'bilingual dictionary', 'written repetition', 'verbal repetition', 'say a new word aloud', 'study a word's spelling', and 'take notes in class'.

A recent study on vocabulary learning strategies of Finnish students by Marttinen (2008:91) showed that the three strategies that upper secondary school students used most were repetition (reading and writing) and translation. Clearly, students do not use a wide variety of different strategies. According to Marttinen (2008:91), the study showed that a significant number of students have never received information or help on vocabulary learning strategies. As the results of Marttinen's (2008:90) study also suggest, students think that information on learning strategies should be provided at school. Kojic-Sabo and Lightbown (1999:182-183)

have studied ESL and EFL students' approaches to vocabulary learning and the relationship between strategy use and success. Their findings suggest that learner independence in addition to time is one of the most crucial factors which affect vocabulary learning. The most often used strategy among learners was dictionary use, which emphasizes the importance of having an appropriate up-to-date dictionary. Kojic-Sabo and Lightbown (1990:187-188) argue that if students do not put any apparent effort into enhancing their learning of lexical items, it will result in poor vocabulary knowledge and low level of overall English proficiency. In addition to learner independence and time spent on vocabulary learning, it is important that students have the required resources (e.g. access to computerized or on-line dictionaries while completing a task).

2.2 Teaching vocabulary learning strategies

The status of vocabulary in the curriculum was neglected in the 1950s and 1960s. A shift from audio-lingualism to a more communicative approach to language teaching has considerably enhanced the importance of teaching vocabulary (Nunan 1991:116). However, teaching vocabulary explicitly in class is time-consuming, and this may be the reason why learning the bulk of vocabulary items is left for the students to accomplish independently. Kojib-Sabo and Lightbown (1999:190) stress that EFL students have to put a great deal of independent effort into finding situations where they can practice words because learner initiative and independence are both linked to achievement. Thus, teachers today have to encourage their students to be more independent language learners. Students should also be encouraged to try to expose themselves to as much input in the foreign language as possible outside of school as well.

Nation (2001:222) remarks that learners' skills in using strategies vary substantially. Therefore, the teaching of vocabulary should be well planned by the teacher. This involves deciding on strategies and which of them the teaching will focus on, as well as consideration of how much time is spent on exercises. Learners' control of the strategies should be monitored and the teacher is responsible for giving feedback to them. Nation (2001:229) summarizes that in general, studies of strategy use indicate that skills in using a number of different strategies are related to a successful second language vocabulary development. However, he points out that learners do not use different strategies widely enough. The same

is evident in Marttinen's (2008) study – the high school students depend on limited strategies: spoken and written repetition. Nation (2001:223) points out that although teaching strategies is time consuming, it is necessary for students to feel confident in order to use the strategy well. He stresses that it is important for learners to understand the purpose of the strategies they use and in which situations it is best to use certain strategies. This is why thorough information on learning strategies should be provided in schools. Also Nunan (1991:136) emphasizes that it is important to teach students strategies for independent learning so that they can build and maintain an extensive and functional vocabulary in a second language. However, learning style changes as learners mature, and as a result learners need to try new vocabulary learning strategies.

Nation (2001:21) stresses the importance of teaching high-frequency words and that both teachers and learners should spend a sufficient amount of time on them. Nunan (1991:118) also stresses the importance of teaching students the words they are likely to encounter most often. Teachers should not spend too much time on explaining infrequently occurring words, but instead focus on expanding learners' control of vocabulary learning and teaching useful strategies. According to Nunan (1991:118), many word lists suggest that frequency is one of the main criteria when selecting adequate vocabulary for coursebooks.

2.3 Knowing a word: receptive / productive knowledge

According to Nation (2001: 27-28), knowing a word involves knowledge of its form, meaning and use. Nation (2001:23) maintains that different words require different amounts of effort to learn. The learning burden is connected to L1 and L2's relation: if they are closely related, the learning of words will be easy. If there is no relation between them, the learning burden will be heavy. He accentuates that teachers should point out these connections.

Nation (2001) makes a distinction between receptive knowledge and productive knowledge of a word. Receptive knowledge means that learners are able to recognise the word when it is heard / read and that they understand its meaning in the context it has occurred. In addition, Nation (1990:32) points out that receptive knowledge is gained from experience, and usually teaching will not increase receptive knowledge. Productive knowledge then means that learners are capable of pronouncing and spelling the word correctly and producing the word

in different contexts. Melka (1997:99) mentions that the distance between reception and production is unstable, impermanent. It is accepted by the majority of researchers that one's lexicon has a receptive vocabulary that is much larger than productive vocabulary and also that reception precedes production (Aitchison 1987.) The notions of receptive and productive knowledge should be approached with caution since they are quite fuzzy.

2.4 Classification of learning strategies

In this section we will to define the different learning strategies. There have been many attempts to classify language learning strategies; for instance Schmitt (1997) suggests two classifications for L2 vocabulary learning: consolidation and discovery strategies. Nation (2001:219-222) presents a taxonomy of various kinds of vocabulary learning strategies. The idea of the taxonomy is to distinguish aspects of vocabulary knowledge from sources of vocabulary knowledge, and learning processes. The three aspects are 1) planning vocabulary learning (e.g. choosing words and strategies, planning repetition), 2) finding information about words (e.g. analysing word parts, using context, consulting reference source) and 3) establishing vocabulary knowledge (e.g. listing words, making word cards, attaching new knowledge to old). Oxford (1990) classifies strategies into two broad categories, indirect and direct strategies. In this study, Oxford's indirect/direct strategies are used as a basis. The direct strategies can be broken down into memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and social strategies. Indirect strategies are metacognitive strategies and affective strategies (which will not be of main concern in our study). According to Nation (2001:302), direct vocabulary learning enables learners to consciously concentrate on an aspect of word knowledge which is not easy to gain by using dictionaries and learning from context. Furthermore, it gives learners a chance to control the repetition and processing of the vocabulary. Nation (2001:297-301) remarks that direct vocabulary learning is criticized simply because if there is no context, learning will be challenging and that long term vocabulary growth is more efficient when learners concentrate on reading, that is to say, learning incidentally from context. The strategies and their usefulness will be discussed briefly.

1 Memory strategies

Memory strategies involve arranging things in order, making associations and reviewing, all of which involve the manipulation of meaning. The key idea is that the associations and arrangements are personally meaningful to the learner (Oxford 1990:38.) Also, memory strategies often involve pairing different types of material. Oxford (1990:40) gives four reasons for why it is useful to link the verbal to the visual in language learning. First of all, the mind is able to store more visual than verbal information. Second, the information transfers to long-term memory through visual images. Third, visual images may be the best method of recalling verbal material. Finally, many learners are visual learners and thus they prefer visual learning. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that the usefulness of memory strategies varies within the individual as well as the culture. For instance, in Fan's (2003) study, the most proficient language users did not perceive memory as having an important role in L2 vocabulary learning. However, it should be taken into account that proficient language users use different strategies than basic level language students. Memory strategies might work better for beginners who need to build a large sight vocabulary and need help with that.

2 Cognitive strategies

According to Oxford (1990:43), cognitive strategies have a common function: "manipulation or transformation of the target language by the learner." Cognitive strategies are usually very popular strategies. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) claim that they are so entrenched that students do not want to give them up to experiment with other strategies. Oxford (1990) lists some cognitive learning strategies: repetition, taking notes, highlighting, summarizing, and translating. In addition, Schmitt (1997:215) points out that word lists and flash cards are excellent cognitive strategies, and they can be used when encountering new words, but often students continue using them for review. Word lists and flash cards are especially useful when a learner has to quickly develop a large sight vocabulary – that is, having receptive control of the words and being able to recognize them.

3 Social strategies

Some examples of social strategies are asking questions and cooperating with peers. According to Oxford (1990:145), cooperating with peers and with proficient users of the target language is highly beneficial for language learners. Not only do language learners develop their interpersonal skills, but they get involved in the negotiation of meaning and start using other strategies that promote communication. However, competitive attitudes that are a part of the school environment are a threat to the learners' development of social strategies. Oxford (1990:145) suggests that in order to promote cooperative language learning strategies, students should receive help on changing their culturally defined attitudes on cooperation and competition. Even though vocabulary learning is a deeply independent task, some learners benefit greatly from social strategies and working together with their peers.

4 Metacognitive strategies

Metacognitive strategies are very important in language learning. According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990:8): "Students without metacognitive strategies are essentially learners without direction or opportunity to plan their learning, monitor their progress, or review their accomplishments and future learning directions". According to Oxford (1990:151), metacognitive strategies include centering your learning (e.g. overviewing and linking with already known material), arranging and planning your learning (e.g. organizing, setting goals and objectives, seeking practice opportunities), and evaluating your learning (e.g. self-monitoring). Fan's (2003:231) study showed that the most proficient users of the L2 vocabulary planned their vocabulary learning. According to Nation (2001:219), a successful strategy user chooses the most appropriate strategy from known options, decides how to pursue the strategy and observes when it is time to switch to another strategy (e.g. first consulting a dictionary and later establishing knowledge of the word by using word cards). Nation (2001:6) also says that it is useful to set learning goals which meet the learner's needs in using the language. He lists three kinds of information that will help to determine the adequate extent of vocabulary: 1) the number of words in the language, 2) the number of words known by native speakers and 3) the number of words needed to use the language.

Oxford (1990:136) points out that many overwhelmed learners can have trouble retaining their focus when seeing for instance unfamiliar vocabulary, and by using metacognitive strategies the focus can be regained. Learners should organize their time to review vocabulary. Studies have shown that most forgetting occurs quite quickly after the learner has stopped studying. After the initial major loss, the rate of forgetting begins to decrease (Schmitt 1997:216.)

2.5 Incidental learning

Nation (2001:232) discusses guessing from context by using the term **incidental learning**: it does not include deliberate learning of words but rather focuses on the overall understanding of the text. Incidental learning is often seen as the opposite of intentional vocabulary learning. However, Nation considers them as complementary activities which support one another. Recent studies, for instance Sökmen (1997:238), have shown that inferring word meaning from context can be quite an inaccurate process due to students' incorrect guessing. Sökmen maintains that this often causes frustration especially among students with poor L2 proficiency and, moreover, distracts them from their vocabulary learning process. Therefore, it can be argued that guessing word meaning works better for advanced students, who already know the majority of the words used in the text. Nation (2001:232) states that incidental learning via guessing from context is the most important of all vocabulary learning strategies, but many L2 learners do not have the conditions needed for this kind of learning. Nation (2001:233) emphasizes that even though learning from context is incidental, the skills in it should be intentionally developed. Nunan (1991:128) articulates that learners need both dictionary and context strategies and that these strategies are not mutually exclusive. He argues that learners should be made aware of the fact that they do not need to know every word encountered. Evidently, good learners know when to skip a word when reading, and in fact, this is a metacognitive strategy requiring conscious effort.

3 DATA AND METHODS

3.1 The research question

Strategies are one of the key factors in understanding the processes of learners' lexical acquisition and, therefore, it is relevant to survey what learners do to facilitate their vocabulary learning. The study will focus on participants' views on their strategic behaviour as independent language learners. By using questionnaires and interviews as methods of data collection we are able to gain new information about the students' goals in vocabulary learning, the amount of time they spend on engaging in different vocabulary learning activities and whether the strategies are used consciously or subconsciously. The main research question is the following:

“What kinds of vocabulary learning strategies do Finnish first-year high school students use to learn English vocabulary independently?” The question can be broken down to more specific questions such as:

1. Have vocabulary learning strategies been explicitly taught to the students at school?
2. What kinds of goals do the students have towards learning English vocabulary?
3. How much time is spent on independent vocabulary learning?
4. How effective do the students perceive the different vocabulary learning strategies to be?
5. Do hobbies and travelling have an effect on the students' willingness to study English?
6. What is the best source of learning new English words?

3.2 Data: interviews and a web-questionnaire

The data of this study consists of five theme-based interviews and 50 responses to a web-questionnaire.

Interviews:

As a qualitative method we used semi-structured theme interviews. This enabled us to rely on questions that were written down but also gave us a chance to add further questions during the interviews if relevant. The questions were divided into three main themes: 1) independent studying manners, 2) strategies learned at school and 3) students' learning goals. The first theme concentrated on the students' use of different vocabulary learning strategies as well as on their interest towards the English language outside the classroom. Questions dealt with things such as hobbies, social contacts with English native speakers and their habits of studying for a word test. The purpose of the second theme was to explore the school's contribution to teaching learning strategies and to find out whether the students were taught strategies that they thought were helpful for them. Finally, the interview focused on questions related to the participants' learning goals and their experiences in travelling in English-speaking countries.

In order to get permission for the interviews, we contacted the vice principal of Lyseo high school by e-mail. The voluntary participants were selected by an English language teacher who helped us in the organization of the process. The interviews were conducted in Lyseo high school in a calm library environment. All of the participants were first-year high school students who studied English as A1 language and each of them was interviewed individually. The language used was Finnish and we took turns in interviewing the students. Four of the interviewees were female and only one of them was male. However, this was insignificant as we do not examine any differences between the genders. The length of the interviews varied from five to ten minutes which was well below the estimated 15 minutes duration time. Factors such as anxiety or reluctance may have had an impact on the participants' length of answers. Overall, the interviewees were calm, mature and easy to co-operate with. The original plan was to conduct all of the five interviews during one day, but due to illness three of the participants had to cancel it. After some rescheduling the rest of the interviews were completed a few days later. The interviews took place in November 2008, and they were recorded in order to help the process of analysis.

Web-questionnaire:

The number of respondents who had completed the questionnaire successfully was 50. Unfortunately, quite a few students had timed out their participation in the web-questionnaire. Those results have been ignored in the analysis. Overall, we were positively surprised by the fairly high number of the participants.

The web-questionnaire was created by using the MrInterview programme. The students were able to access the questionnaire through a link which they could find from the official web-site of Lyseo high school. In addition to an advertisement on the web-site, we had produced posters to inform first-year students more concretely about the questionnaire. After closing the link to the questionnaire, a free movie ticket was randomly posted to one of the participants. The questionnaire consisted of 12 questions of which two were open text questions. The ability to write freely in those two questions gave the respondents a chance to describe their learning strategies and goals in more detail. A multiple response question examined which strategies the learners used from given options. The other questions dealt with themes such as time management, dictionary use, sources of knowledge about different strategies and planning of studies. Furthermore, the respondents' opinions were asked about the usefulness of listed strategies. Some of the questions concerning the level of interest towards English and experiences in travelling in English-speaking countries were similar to the questions used in the interviews. We were also interested in the students' attitudes towards the teaching of different strategies at school.

3.3 Methods of analysis

The data was collected by using both qualitative and quantitative methods which complement each other. The interviews enabled us to get more specific information about students' opinions on vocabulary learning strategies that may have not emerged from the answers on the web-questionnaire. All of the interviews are transcribed. After transcription, the interviews will be analyzed according to their themes, and in dividing the data into themes, we will be observing similarities and patterns that come forth from the interviews. Moreover, new and more interesting themes might emerge from these observations. Similarly, the questionnaire gave us a quantitative perspective of the students' strategies that the interviews could not have offered. The results of the web-questionnaire will be analyzed with SPSS-software and Excel for Windows by using descriptive analysis. With the help of these analysis programmes we will be able to present the data in different formats. Firstly, we will find out the mean, percentual frequencies and illustrative portrayals. The data of the web-questionnaire is mainly analyzed descriptively. The two open text questions will be analyzed separately according to their themes.

4 STUDENTS' USE OF STRATEGIES AND DEDICATION TO STUDYING VOCABULARY INDEPENDENTLY

4.1 Web-questionnaire

In this section, the results and discussion of the web-questionnaire (excluding the open text-questions) will be presented simultaneously.

4.1.1 Time spent on learning vocabulary

Based on the questionnaire answers of 50 students, the mean amount of time spent on vocabulary learning per week is 1.44 hours: the minimum being zero hours and maximum was reported being six hours.

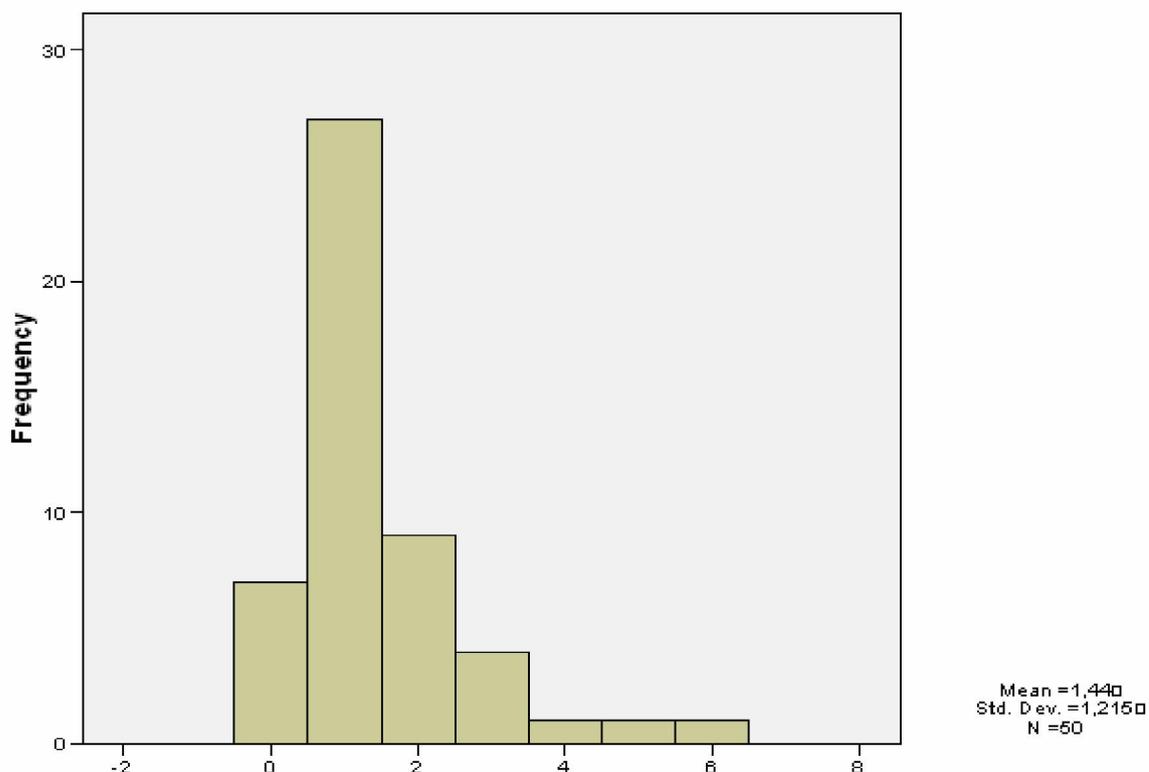


Figure 1 Hours per week spent on learning vocabulary.

As expected, students do not use a great deal of time on learning vocabulary. However, it must be taken into account that the students who reported spending an hour each week on vocabulary might be spending a lot more time learning vocabulary incidentally, such as when they are using the Internet or watching movies with English subtitles. Nation (2001:232) states that incidental and intentional learning support one another. Students may be unaware of the amount of time they use in incidental vocabulary learning, yet for receptive control of vocabulary it is necessary to have extra input as much as possible, in addition to intentional vocabulary learning.

4.1.2 Frequency of strategy use

The respondents were asked to report the strategies they use when learning vocabulary independently. The multiple response question enabled the participants to choose more than one option. The question contained 14 different direct and indirect strategies which are all listed below in figure 2, which also shows the frequency of their use. According to the data of the present study, the most frequently used strategy among the respondents was saying the word in one's mind (mental repetition). Only four of the respondents did not report using this strategy. Another common strategy, as we expected, was music, movies and TV. The Internet was also a frequently used way of learning vocabulary. Out of all options, flashcards and working in a group were the most infrequently used strategies.

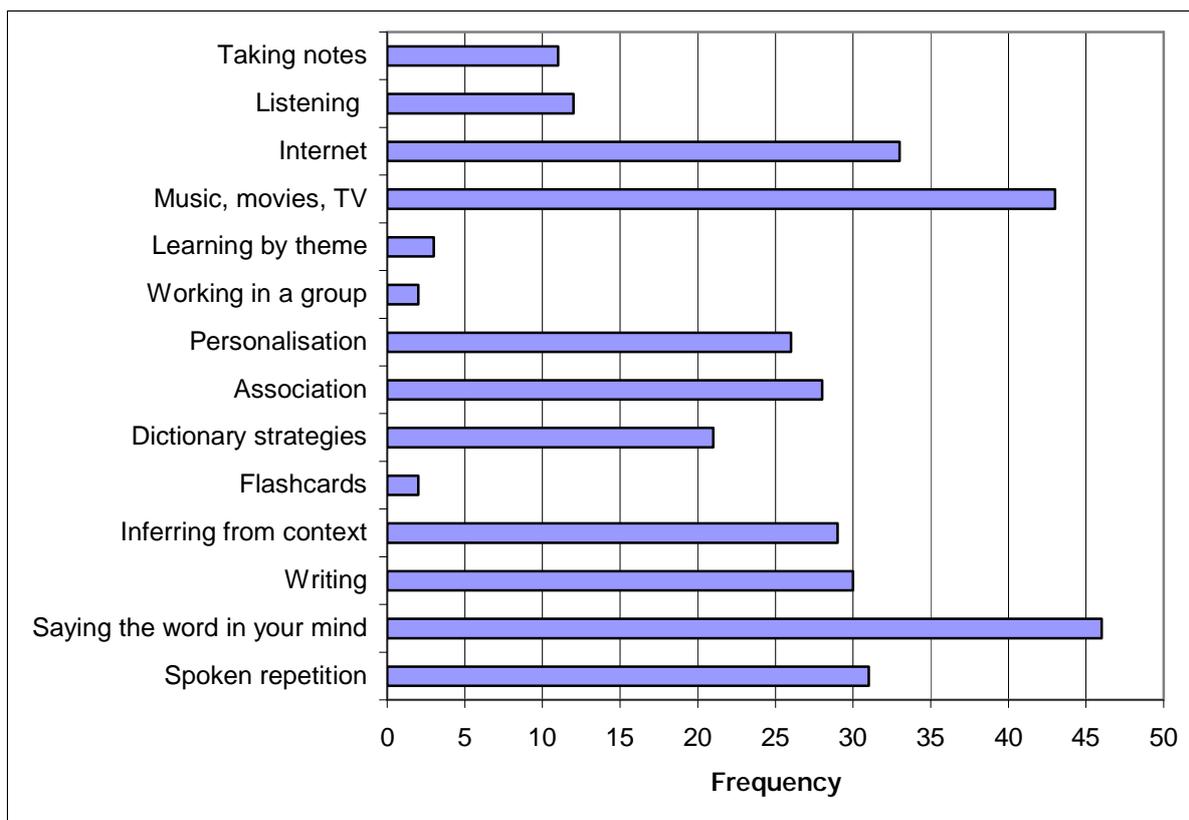


Figure 2 The most frequently used vocabulary learning strategies.

Oxford (1990:42) states that learners rely on cognitive strategies more often than any other methods when learning a new language. The results of our study support this view with cognitive strategies being the most commonly used methods of learning vocabulary independently. Contrary to the results of Marttinen's (2000:65) study, spoken repetition in comparison with writing and taking notes was slightly more popular among the students. The most frequently used strategies also appear to be simple to use and they do not require too much effort from the students. Watching a movie or surfing the Internet are good examples of this kind of language learning. The strategies that require a lot of preparation in advance, such as using flashcards, seem to be less used. A social strategy, working in a group did not receive much of endorsement either. Similarly, the data of Marttinen's (2000:67) study supports the unpopularity of flashcards and social strategies.

4.1.3 Effectiveness of strategies

One of the objectives of the web-questionnaire was to find out how effective the students thought the strategies were. For this purpose a single response grid was used with the same

options as when asking about the use of strategies (Figure 2). The respondents were asked to report how effective they considered each strategy on a scale from 1 to 4 (very effective, quite effective, effective, ineffectual). Figure 3 presents the mean value (median) of the respondents' opinions towards each strategy.

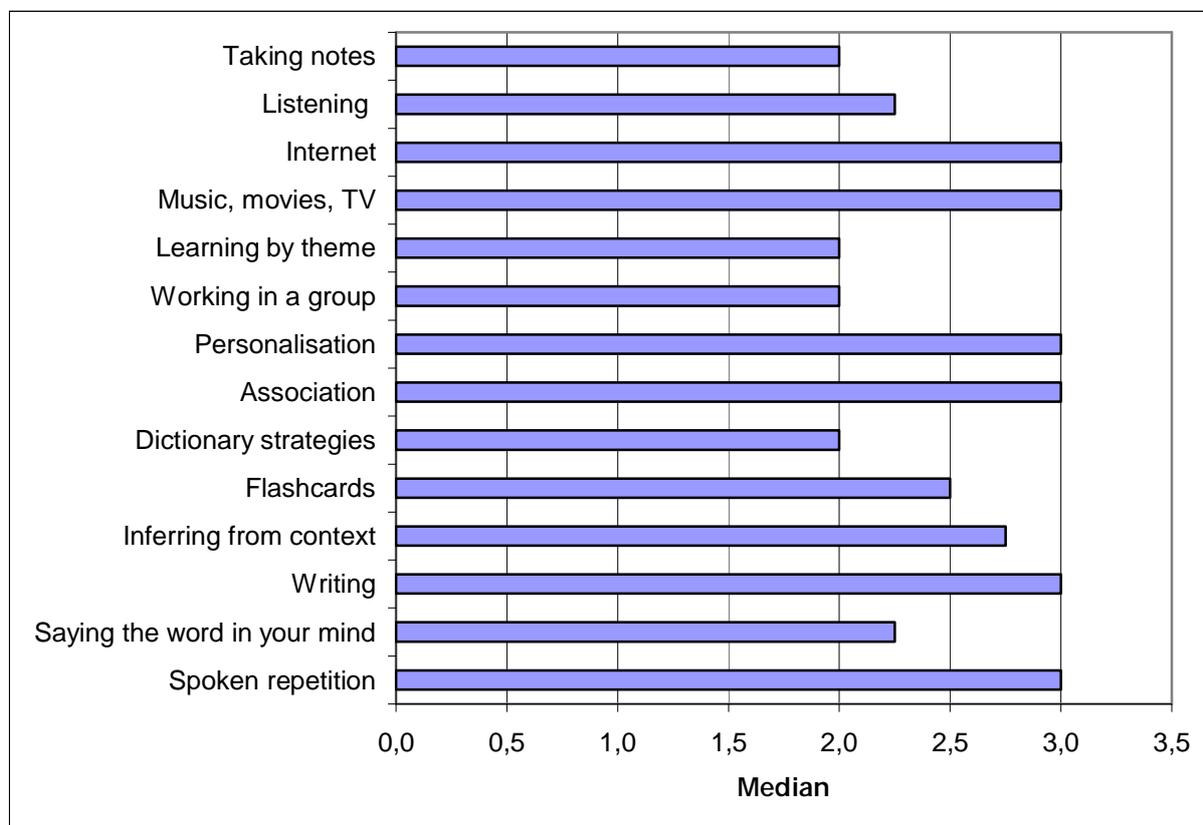


Figure 3 Effectiveness of vocabulary learning strategies as perceived by students.

By comparing the frequency of strategy use and the effectiveness of different strategies perceived by students one can conclude that generally the most frequent strategies were also seen as the most effective strategies. An example of the relation between frequency and effectiveness (3,0) is the strategies related to media (music, movies, TV and the Internet). However, this coherence is not self-evident, and there is often a contradiction between the strategies used by the students and the ones they find most helpful. For instance, writing and spoken repetition (3,0) were also among the most effective strategies, but the use of these two strategies was not as common as one might expect. The results show that even though the students perceive a strategy as effective, it does not necessarily mean that they would use it. This kind of discrepancy between strategy use and frequency can occur the other way round

as well: mental repetition was the most commonly used strategy even though its effectiveness median was less than 2.5.

4.1.4 Sources of information on vocabulary learning strategies

As is evident in Figure 4, out of the 50 respondents, 46 reported receiving information on vocabulary learning strategies at school. In Marttinen's (2008) study, students thought that school did not inform enough about strategies. 23 respondents received information from friends, 17 respondents received information from the Internet, seven respondents received information from their parents, and three from somewhere else.

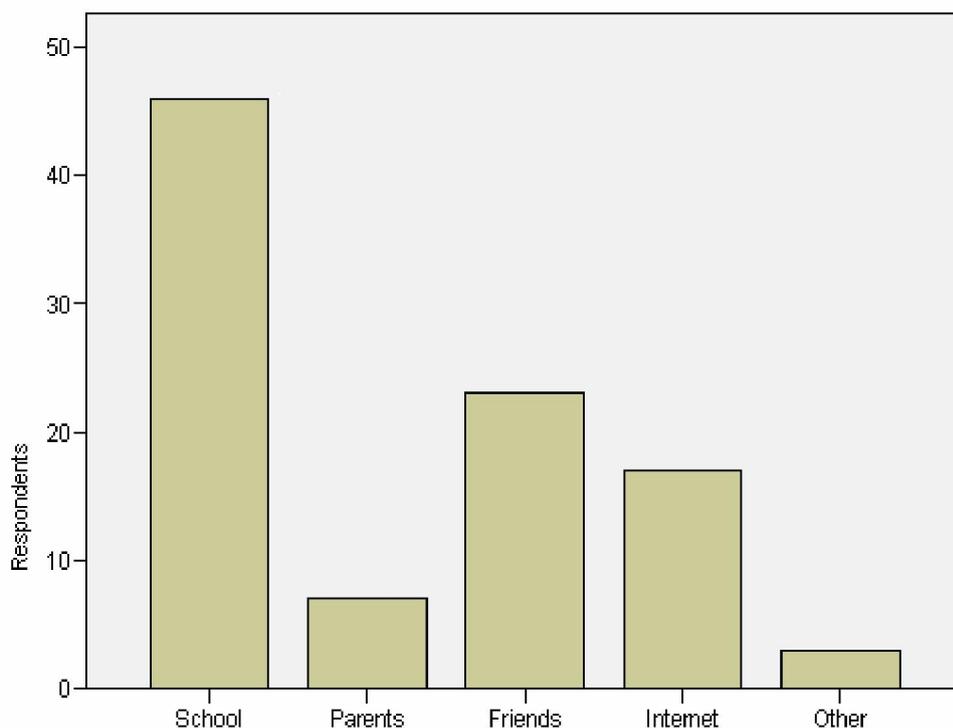


Figure 4 Sources of information on vocabulary learning strategies.

In Marttinen's study (2008:91), it was reported that a significant number of students have never received information on vocabulary learning strategies, and that the information should be provided at school. Contrary to the results of Marttinen's study, the results of the present study show that students receive most information on strategies at school.

4.2 Interviews

In this section we will firstly present and discuss the results of the five interviews, which were all analyzed according to six themes. Secondly, we will present and discuss the results of the open text questions of the web-questionnaire, as they are also analyzed according to their two themes.

4.2.1 The best source of learning new words in English

When the students were asked about the best source of learning new words in English, most of them mentioned the Internet and movies. The students responded in the following ways:

(1) jotain sähköpostia tai sitte mesessä tai jossain (Student 2)
< E-mail or then messenger or somewhere (Student 2)>

(2) Kun katoo telkkaria ja –
sieltä ja sit just netistä, oppii (Student 3)
< When watching TV and – then the from the Internet, I learn (Student 3)>

(3) No varmaan just ku mä oon niinku yhteyksissä niihin mun ulkomaalaisiin kavereihin ja sukulaisiin ja sitte mää katon jonki verran, yritän katoo jotai ohjelmia sillee et siinä ei oo sitä, (öö) suomenkielistä tekstitystä (Student 5)
<Well probably when I am in contact with my foreign friends and relatives, and then I watch some, try to watch some programs without the Finnish translation. (Student 5)>

As in examples (1), (2) and (3), students thought that they learned most of their English vocabulary when watching TV and when they are using the Internet as well as instant messengers to keep in touch with relatives in other countries.

In order to get background information on the students' need to use English in real life and in their own time, one of the themes had to concentrate on the source of learning new English words. In these instances, it is evident that most of the students realize the importance of the media as a tool for providing input, but the students do not mention any strategies that they use to help in memorising or practicing the words that they learn. As Oxford (1990: 45) mentions, language learners are often confused by the massive amount of input they are exposed to in conversations, television, films, and stories; thus they need to use strategies that help with the structuring of the information, for instance taking notes, summarizing, and

highlighting. A major motivating factor to use English for the participants in the interviews seemed to be the ability to communicate via the Internet with friends from abroad.

4.2.2 Vocabulary learning strategies

All of the five students who were interviewed have quite limited vocabulary learning strategies at hand when they study English vocabulary. For instance, when revising each chapter's vocabulary, a student (4) informed that she reads words. Also, as is evident in examples (5), (6), and (7), the students usually depend on a limited number of strategies, such as written repetition and reading. One of the students reported using social strategies when learning vocabulary, as shown in example (6).

(4) Haastattelija: Aivan. Noo mites sä kertaat oppikirjan kappaleiden sanastoa itsenäisesti kotona?
 S2: Noo niitäki mää aikalailla vaa luen, mut sit just ku mä oon merkkailu sinne niitä vaikeita ni niitä sitte just katon enemmän (Student 2)
 <Interviewer: Right. So how do you go over the vocabulary in the textbook's chapters?
 S2: Well I pretty much just read them, but then when I've marked all of the hard ones then I just look at those more (Student 2)>

(5) No, kirjotan niitä ja luen niitä sillee –
 ja käytän kaikkia alleviivaus - - juttuja (Student 3)
 < Well, I write them down and read them – and use all kinds of underlining (Student 3)>

(6) Sitä sanastoa mä niinku luen niitä läpi ja sitten yleensä ennen koetta kirjotan niitä, ja sitten no joskus mä pyydän jotai kaveria kyselemään mutta. sillee. mutta yleensä luen niitä. ja alleviivaan jos en osaa nii sit sen muistaa paremmin. ja yritän sitä sitten kirjottaa (Student 4)
 <The vocabulary, I just kind of read through it and then usually before the test I write them down. and then well sometimes I ask some friend to test me but. like that. but usually I just read over them. and underline them if I don't know them, then I remember them better. and then I try to write them down (Student 4)>

(7) mää vaan luen niitä (Student 5)
 < I just read over them (Student 5) >

Obviously the students use a limited number of strategies, which in turn could reflect in their vocabulary learning success. The student in instance (7) clearly does not have very much awareness of the kinds of strategies she uses while studying words. In the questionnaire part of the results, we showed that students received information on vocabulary learning strategies from school. However, here it appears that although the students are aware of different strategies, they still tend to use the same strategies that other students use. It is possible that the students are not taught the strategies that are right for them, or that the students do not

have awareness of their learning style; thus they have difficulties in applying the vocabulary learning strategies into their own learning.

The web-questionnaire's open-response part showed several diverse strategies used by the students. Quite a few students mentioned using the Internet and watching movies as helpful ways of learning English vocabulary, as is apparent in examples (10), (11), (12). On the other hand, some students relied more on traditional ways of studying words, such as grammar-translation, written and spoken repetition. Ten out of the 50 respondents described using written repetition, as in instances (13) and (14). A few students reported using social strategies, such as asking a friend, or making the event more fun by attaching personalised meanings to words together with a friend (8 and 9).

(8) Kaverit vaan kyselee. Ihan tehokkaita.
< Friends just ask. Quite efficient. >

(9) Yritän yhdistää sanaan jonkin muiston tai luoda sellaisen esim. kysymällä kaverilta mitä sanasta tulee mieleen. Teen tilanteesta hauskan kommentoimalla itsekin. Keksin myös samalta kuulostavia sanoja suomen kielestä.
< I try to connect the word with a memory or create one by for instance asking a friend what the word makes him/her think of. I make the situation fun by commenting myself as well. I also think of words in Finnish that resemble the sound of the word. >

(10) Englannin kielisten pelien pelaaminen, kirjojen lukeminen, internet-sivustoilla käynti, TV/elokuvat alkuperäiskielellä tai englanninkielisellä tekstillä. Ovat hyvin tehokkaita.
< Playing games in English, reading books, going to internet-websites, TV/movies in their original language or in English subtitles. They are really efficient. >

(11) En opiskele sanoja erikseen. Sanavarastoni karttuu mm. pelatessa ja netissä oleskeltaessa.
< I don't study words separately. My vocabulary increases while playing games and being on the net. >

(12) Yritän bongata oppimiani fraaseja ja uusia sanoja leffoissa ja teksteissä.
< I try to pick out new phrases and words that I've learned in movies and texts. >

(13) Itselleni tehokkainta on ihan peruspänttäminen: sanojen jankkaaminen, niiden "suussa maistelu" ja kirjoittaminen. Opin sanat oikein hyvin, vaikken käytäkään mitään hienoja ja kamalasti aikaavieviä kikkoja, mitä aina välillä ehdotellaan.
< What works best for me is really basic cramming: repeating words, pronouncing the words and writing them. I learn the words really well, even though I don't use any fancy and really time-consuming gimmicks that are offered from time to time. >

(14) Kirjoitan ne ylös englanniksi ja sitten suomennan
< I write them down in English and then I translate them to Finnish. >

The web-questionnaire provided more diverse answers than the interviews about the kinds of vocabulary learning strategies that the participants use, which is in part due to the fact that the participants had more time to develop more detailed answers in the written section of the questionnaire. According to the findings of the present study, the students mentioned 18

different strategies. Out of these strategies, written repetition, word lists and reading were the most used. The results of the present study are similar to those of Marttinen's study (2008:91), as she showed that for the most part the upper secondary school students used three strategies: written repetition (reading and writing), and translation. Although the present study showed that the students had awareness of different strategies, they were viewed as "gimmicky" and "fancy", as exemplified in example (13), where the student viewed new methods as time-consuming.

4.2.3 Learning English through hobbies and travelling

4.2.3.1 Hobbies

A common, yet unsurprising, response of the interviewees was that they used the media as a tool for getting more input in English, for instance when surfing on the Internet or using the instant messenger. A major advantage is having contacts to English speakers, and three of the five students keep in contact with English speakers via the Internet, as in examples (15), (17), and (18). One student (16) lacked any contact with English speakers, and so her use of English is limited to surfing websites on the Internet.

(15)

Haastattelija: onko sulla kontakteja englanninkielisiin ihmisiin?

S2: (Öö), pitää ihan.. No kyllä siis, on mulla justiinsa niinku kyl mää sit jotain, just jotain sähköpostia tai, sitte mesessä tai jossain ni -

S2: ihan englannin kielellä juttelen.

Haastattelija: Joo. No osaatko kertoa et mistä maista sulla on tuttuja?

S2: no ihan just jostain Ruotsista ja, sitten, mistä ihan Englannista sitte ja...

< Interviewer: do you have contacts to English speaking people?

S2: Um, I have to.. Well yes, I have like, yeah I do like some e-mail or, in instant messenger or somewhere -

S2: I chat in English

Interviewer: Yeah. Well can you tell me from which countries you have acquaintances?

S2: well like from Sweden and, then, even England and then... >

(16)

Haastattelija: Käytätkö vapaa-ajalla tai harrastuksissa englannin kieltä?

S3: No, sillee, ku vaik netissä lukee jotai, englanninkielisiä sivustoja, mutta, en mä nyt muuta kauheesti.

Haastattelija: Se on niinku ainut, jota teet? Sulla ei oo mitään semmosta harrastusta?

S3: No ei oikeestaa.

Haastattelija: Okei. no onko sulla kontakteja englanninkielisiin ihmisiin?

S3: No, eei, oikeestaa.

< Interviewer: Do you use English during your spare-time or in your hobbies?

S3: Well, like, when in the Internet, there are English web pages, but, I don't really anywhere else.

Interviewer: That's like the only one? You don't have like a hobby?

S3: Well not really.

Interviewer: Okay. Well do you have contacts to English speaking people?

S3: Well, noo, not really. >

(17)

Haastattelija: ootko sä kiinnostunu englannin kielen oppimisesta?

S4: joo...kyllä oon

Haastattelija: omalla ajalla?

S4: joo no mä luen kirjoja ja silleen

S4: nii sitten sillei, ja sitten..no nii..sitten mesessä puhun joskus niinku ulkomaalaisille kavereille nii sitten niitten kaa englantia yleensä

< Interviewer: are you interested in learning English?

S4: yeah...I am

Interviewer: in your spare-time?

S4: yeah well I read books

S4: yeah and then like, and then...well..then in instant messenger I sometimes like speak to my foreign friends then with them it's usually English >

(18)

Haastattelija: Käytätkö vapaa-ajalla tai harrastuksissa englannin kieltä, osaatko tarkemmin sanoa?

S5: (Öö), en oikeestaan käytä. Käytän tosi vähän.

Haastattelija: Et, ei tuu missään internetissä –

S5: Joo no internetissä tulee ja, niin no internet. Mulla on yks semmonen niinkun kaveri joka, niinku (öö), Amerikasta ni sit mä jonkiverran sen kanssa oon yhteyksissä.

< Interviewer: Do you use English in your spare-time or in your hobbies, can you specify?

S5: Um, not really. I use it very rarely.

Interviewer: You don't use it in the Internet –

S5: Yeah well in the Internet I do, yeah well the Internet. I have like this one friend who, like (um), from America, so then I'm in contact with her to some extent. >

(19)

Mä kirjottelen aina välillä englanninkieliselle nettifoorumille. aah..no silloin vapaa-aikana en oikeen muuten koska mulla ei oo silleen englanninkielisiä tuttavuuksia tai mitään (Student 1)

< Sometimes I write on an English web-forum. Umm...well then in spare-time I don't really anything else because I don't have English speaking acquaintances or anything (Student 1) >

Having contacts with English-speaking people has a direct positive effect on the students' willingness to use English and gain more input in this way. It was interesting to find out that one of the participants (19) spends some of his free-time writing in English web-forums. This kind of active involvement with studying English would have positive effects on the chance of encountering real-world or slang vocabulary.

4.2.3.2 Travelling

Altogether three of the students had visited an English-speaking country at a certain point in their lives, and all of the participants had had to use English as a lingua franca when travelling abroad. The interviewees were unanimous of the fact that travelling to English-speaking areas was something they would like to do in the future as well. The extracts (20-23) below present some of the students' views on the link between travelling and motivation.

(20)Haastattelija: Onko, sun mielestä matkustelulla ollut vaikutusta englannin kielen opiskelumotivaatioon?
 S2: On siis on tosi paljo ja sitte, että on matkustellu ni, ku siellä on päässy puhuu sitä ni sillai mun mielestä oppii kaikista parhaiten (Student 2)

< Interviewer: Has, in your opinion, travelling had an effect on your studying motivation?

S2: Yes it has a lot and then, that having travelled so, when you've had a chance to talk so in my opinion that's how you learn the best. (Student 2) >

(21) No ehkä vähän, sillee et ohan se, vähä tyhmää mennä sinne jos ei osaa yhtään puhua englantia että se on aina iso apu. (Student 3)

< Well maybe a little, like it is, a bit stupid to go there if you can't speak any English so it's always a big help. (Student 3) >

(22) No on siitä sillee. että kun jos käy jossain nii sit sen jälkeen tavallaan tulee sellanen paljon vapautuneempi olo puhua. (Student 4)

< Well yeah it kind of has. so that when you go somewhere then after it you feel more relaxed to speak. (Student 4) >

(23) Haastattelija: Tuntuuko susta siltä että tällä matkustelulla on ollut sitten vaikutusta sun englannin opiskelumotivaatioon?

S1: Ei.

Interviewer: Do you feel that travelling has had an effect on your studying motivation?

< No. (Student 1) >

The connection between travelling and study motivation towards English was evident among the majority of the participants, and only one of the students did not feel that travelling had had any effect on his learning motivation (example 23 above). When travelling, students are able to use English in authentic situations. Indeed, the factor that motivated them the most was the opportunity for oral communication in every day life situations.

4.2.4 Learning vocabulary learning strategies at school

The participants were asked if they had learned any effective vocabulary learning strategies at school. All of the five students said that there had been some discussion in class about different learning strategies. The teacher had usually given some advice on how to learn new vocabulary independently, but there were no signs in the answers of any thorough teaching of strategy use (example 25 and 26). Moreover, the majority of the participants did not find the teacher's advice useful (26). The strategies they recalled having been taught varied, but mostly they were cognitive strategies, such as repetition, taking notes and highlighting (see examples 24 and 25).

(24) Haastattelija: Oletko oppinut koulussa tehokkaita tapoja opiskella sanastoa?

S1: Siis mä oon auditivinen oppija. ja mulla on sen takia annettu näitä tavanomasia. että pistä yliviivaustussilla ja sitä rataa. kirjota sanoja sun muita mut eei ne oo sillee toiminu. (Student 1)

< Interviewer: Have you learned any effective ways of studying vocabulary at school?

S1: Well I'm an auditive learner. and therefore I've been given these conventional ones. such as use highlighting and so on. write down words and things like that but those haven't really worked. (Student 1) >

(25) No on meillä ollu jonkun verran siitä puhetta. niinku kirjottaa niitä että peittää sen toisen (sanan). Mut ei silleen hirveesti niinku oikeestaan et aika silleen niinku huomautettu aina välillä vaan. (Student 4)
 < Well there's been some discussion about it. like write them down so that the other one (word) is covered. but not a lot really like it's been notified only occasionally. (Student 4) >

(26) Haastattelija: Ei oo opettajat ikinä, niinku suoraan opettanu niitä?
 S2: No ei tai jos ne on joskus sillain ni en mä tiiä onks siinä ollu sit semmosia mitkä mun kohalla, niin toimis tai sillai. Mut en mä muista kyllä hirveesti että ois ees, niinku opetettu tai mitään. (Student 2)
 < Interviewer: Have the teachers ever, like explicitly taught them?
 S2: Well no or if they have sometimes so I don't know if they've been the kinds of that work for me or so. But I don't remember that they would've even, like been taught or anything. (Student 2) >

When asked about the learning of vocabulary strategies in other than English classes, the general opinion was that there was no significant difference in teaching of strategies between the languages studied. Nevertheless, one of the interviewees (example 27) found more useful strategies from other language classes than English. This shows that there are differences between teachers and their ways of teaching vocabulary learning strategies.

(27) Haastattelija: No onko muilla kielten tunneilla opetettu sitte tämmösiä sanaston oppimiskeinoja?
 S3: No siel o ollu jotai semmosia et ollaan tehty kaikkii tarinoita, et niinku esim kappaleesta just. Siitä oppii kyl aika hyvin. (Student 3)
 < Interviewer: Well have these learning strategies been taught in any other language class?
 S3: Well there's been the kinds of that we've done stories, like for example just from the chapter. You learn through that quite well. (Student 3) >

On the whole, the school's contribution to teaching different strategies seemed limited from the students' point of view. Nation (2001:222) suggests that one of the teachers' obligations is to plan the teaching of vocabulary well. According to him, teachers should make a decision of strategies which are given attention to and consider the amount of time used on training. Moreover, Nation stresses the importance of giving feedback on learners' control of the strategies. Unfortunately, the data of the present study reveals that too little time is spent on teaching vocabulary strategies at school.

4.2.5 Goals for vocabulary learning

The participants answered the question about setting goals for learning English by first describing their short-term goals. These were all connected to studies at school as can be seen in examples (28) and (29) below. A further question of setting any long-term objectives showed that in addition to their short-term goals, three of the participants had thought of how they might need English for example in the working life or as an exchange student in the future (examples 30-32).

Short-term goals:

(28) Haastattelija: asetatko itsellesi englannin kielen oppimiseen liittyviä tavoitteita?

S1: Kurssit pitäis päästä läpi. (Student 1)

< Interviewer: do you set any goals concerning the learning of English?

S1: The courses should be passed. (Student 1) >

(29) No olis kiva oppii paremmin nostaa englannin numeroa, sillee –

ja et ymmärtäis semmosii vaikeimpiiki tekstejä. (Student 3)

< Well it would be nice to learn how to raise the English grade better, kind of like – and that you'd be able to understand even the more difficult texts. (student 3) >

Long-term goals:

(30) Haastattelija: Onks sulla mitään pidemmälle ajalle tai tulevaisuudelle tavoitteita?

S2: No, just et niinku joskus osais ihan puhua sillai niinku ihan sujuvasti ja – sillai, että ymmärtäis ihan, melkeen kaiken. (Student 2)

< Interviewer: Have you got any goals in the long term or for the future?

S2: Well, so that like you would someday be able to speak like fluently and – like, that you would understand, almost everything. (Student 2) >

(31) No, ku mä oon aatellu et mä haluisin toimittajaks ni siinä ainaki tarvii englannin kieltä. (Student 3)

< Well, as I've thought of becoming a journalist so at least in that English is needed. (Student 3) >

(32) ... yritän sillee et mä pystyisin seurata niitä sarjoja ja elokuvia ilman tekstejä ja. jos menis sitte joskus ulkomaille opiskelee nii sitte. että pystyis mennä ja silleen. (Student 4)

< I'm trying to be able to watch series and movies without subtitles and. if I went to study abroad someday so then. so that I would be able to go (Student 4) >

Only one of the students had not set any kinds of goals concerning the learning of the English language (33).

(33) Haastattelija: No, sitte viimeseks tavoitteista. Elikkä asetatko itselles englannin kielen oppimiseen liittyviä tavoitteita?

S5: En kyllä kauheesti. Ois kyllä ihan hyvä asettaa.

Haastattelija: Ei oo mitään semmosia pieniäkään opiskeluun liittyviä?

S5: Ei.

< Interviewer: So the last thing I'm going to ask about is the goals. Do you set any goals for yourself related to learning English?

S5: Well not really. It would be good to do that.

Interviewer: You don't have any short-term goals concerning studying?

S5 No. >

Clearly, there is a division between the students who, in addition to their short-term goals, aim at learning English for personal purposes outside the school and those whose goals are completely restricted to school. In other words, the results suggest that students who are interested in using English after high school are not as narrow minded in the setting of goals as their peers who solely concentrate on doing well in their studies. The same division can be seen in the results of the Web-questionnaire's open-response below.

As mentioned above, the respondents' goals concerning the learning of English vocabulary can be divided into two groups. The open-response part of the web-questionnaire revealed that some students saw vocabulary learning as a task happening at school and restrained to the book/quiz. Their objectives had features of the kind of learning that is focused on mechanical repetition and learning the words by heart (examples 34-37 below).

(34) Haluan muistaa kaikki kirjan sanat vielä seuraavassakin jaksossa.
< I want to remember all of the words in the book in the next period as well. >

(35) Sanakokeista pyrin aina saamaan kaikki oikein. Pystyisin lukemaan kappaleen ilman, että jatkuvasti katson kappalekohtaista sanastoa.”
< I always try to get everything correct in the word tests. I want to be able to read the text without constantly looking at the wordlist. >

(36) Pyrin saamaan sanavarastoni mahdollisimman laajaksi, ettei esim. esseissä tarvitse tukeutua toistoon.”
< I'm aiming at extending my vocabulary as much as possible, so that for instance I don't have to rely on repetition in essays. >

(37) Yksinkertaisesti, että osaan sanat vaikka unissani.”
< Simply that I will know the words even in my dreams. >

Secondly, others had planned their learning further and wanted to learn new vocabulary in the long term. Their goals appeared to be more general and concentrated on how they will benefit from the vocabulary in the future (examples 38-40 below).

(38) Tarkoituksena olisi hankkia mahdollisimman laaja sanavarasto, joten yritän panostaa sanojen oppimiseen ja ennen kaikkea niiden pidempiaikaiseen muistamiseen.”
< My intention is to get a wide vocabulary so I try to put some effort into learning words and most of all remembering them in the long term. >

(39) Että osaa käyttää niitä puhuessa ja muistaa ne.”
< So that I can remember them and use them while talking. >

(40) Haluan matkustella tulevaisuudessa, joten sanaston tulisi olla erittäin hyvä.”
< I want to travel in the future and therefore the vocabulary should be very good. >

As one of the respondents puts it, the goal should not be to learn every word through mechanical repetition, but rather focus on the words that are useful in real life (example 41). Moreover, some of the respondents stated that it is important to learn the vocabulary that one is most likely to come across in the future (example 42).

(41) Että opin sanaston suurin piirtein, mutta en mekaanisesti; totta kai opin kaikki sanat, mutta en todellakaan pänttää jokaista sanaa välittämättä, vaikka sana ei olisikaan tärkeä. Olen huomannut, että monet lukevat englannin sanoja, koska ne pitää osata ja ne olivat läksynä, eikä se minusta ole englannin opettelua vaan tympeää todellisuudesta irrotettua tankkaamista.”

< I want to learn the vocabulary by large, but not mechanically; of course I learn every word, but I really don't pännää every word, even though it wasn't an important one. I have noticed that many students read English words because they must be learned and they're homework, and that, in my opinion, is not learning English but rather gross repeating of words which is not related to reality. >

(42) Tavoitteitani ovat, että osaan laajan perussanaston, jolla pärjään hankalemmisakin tilanteissa. Esim ydinfysiikan termejä tms. en aio opetella.”

< My goal is to learn an extensive basic vocabulary which helps me through even more difficult situations. E.g. I have no intention of learning the terms of nuclear physics or the like. >

According to Oxford (1990:156-157), one of the strategies for planning one's own learning is setting objectives. She stresses that in order to develop one's language skills it is relevant to set some goals. Few of the respondents had no goals for vocabulary learning and therefore, the data of the present study suggests that a great number of students use metacognitive strategies, such as planning their studies.

5 CONCLUSION

We will firstly review the answers to the research questions. One of the questionnaire's main findings concerned the most frequently used strategies. The most frequently used strategy was saying the word in one's mind (mental repetition), as well as learning through the media (music, movies, TV, Internet). The most infrequently used strategies were flashcards and working in a group. The most frequent strategies were also seen as the most effective; however, as also shown in previous studies, there is often a contradiction between the strategies used by the students and the ones they find the most effective.

Students spent 1.44 hours on learning English vocabulary per week. Unsurprisingly, the best source for learning new words was the Internet, TV, instant messengers, and being in contact with native speakers or foreigners via the Internet. In the interviews, students reported using limited vocabulary learning strategies, while in the open-response questions of the questionnaire students provided more diverse answers and mentioned many different kinds of strategies, altogether 18. However, the most-used strategies were the same in both the interviews and the web-questionnaire's open-response part: written repetition and reading. The usefulness of the interviews with regard to asking about which strategies the students use was small compared to the same question in the web-questionnaire. Students had more time to prepare and think about their answers for the open-response question.

According to the results of the questionnaire, students received most information on strategies from school. However, in the interviews, it was apparent that the schools' contribution to teaching strategies was limited and that only one student found the teacher's advice useful. The interviews also showed that the connection between travelling and studying motivation was evident, and students used English in situations that involved real communication, for instance writing in English web-forums or keeping in contact with friends living abroad through the Internet.

The results of both the interviews and the questionnaire revealed that a great number of students used metacognitive strategies, such as planning their studies. This involved setting objectives for one's own learning. When asked about the goals, the participants' answers clearly divided into two different categories: students who are interested in using English after

high school are not as narrow minded in the setting of goals as their peers who solely concentrate on doing well in their studies.

The present study could offer useful information to teachers who are incorporating the teaching of vocabulary learning strategies to high school students into their syllabus. Teachers should take into account that vocabulary learning strategies used by learners change over time, and that diverse strategies should be taught. However, one of the limitations of the present study is that we did not interview any teachers, mainly because the study was completed from the students' point-of-view. Consequently, we did not get specific information on to what extent teachers encourage their students to study vocabulary and what is their stand on teaching strategies.

The data of the present study was analyzed by using both qualitative and quantitative methods which support each other. In spite of this, the number of interviews conducted for the study is rather small and the results cannot be generalised. Another limitation of the study was that the participants were all from the same high school. Therefore, it is reasonable to question whether the study would apply to other Finnish high schools. Using a web-questionnaire was an efficient way to reach the target group and gain a large amount of information. However, when collecting the data via the Internet there are always some issues involved, such as the reliability of the respondents' answers.

There has been extensive research on vocabulary learning strategies. However, there is still a lack of research concentrated on the students' views on different strategies and how they use the strategies independently. For example, an area of studies that has received only little attention is the effectiveness of strategies perceived by students. In this study, we have examined the students' strategic behaviour outside the classroom and their opinions about the usefulness and effectiveness of different vocabulary strategies. Nevertheless, a neglected aspect is that students are individuals who have varied learning styles. Further studies should concentrate on individual differences between students and how these differences may affect lexical learning.

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Appendix I

Teemahaastattelu: englannin sanaston oppiminen

Opiskelutavat

1. Oletko kiinnostunut englannin kielestä ja sen oppimisesta omalla ajalla?
2. Käytätkö vapaa-ajalla tai harrastuksissa englannin kieltä?
3. Onko sinulla kontakteja englanninkielisiin ihmisiin?
4. Millä tavalla opettelet uusia englannin kielen sanoja, eli mitä keinoja käytät?
5. Mistä luulet eniten oppivasi uusia englannin sanoja?
6. Miten kuvailisit valmistautumistasi sanakokeisiin?
7. Miten kertaat oppikirjan kappaleiden sanastoa itsenäisesti kotona?
8. Kerrotko vähän tietokonesanakirjan ja perinteisen sanakirjan hyvistä ja huonoista puolista.

Koulusta opitut sanaston opiskelutyökalut

1. Oletko oppinut koulussa tehokkaita tapoja opiskella sanastoa?
2. Kuinka hyödyllisinä pidät koulusta opittuja sanaston oppimiskeinoja?
3. Oletko oppinut sanaston oppimiskeinoja muilla kielten tunneilla?

Tavoitteet

1. Asetatko itsellesi englannin kielen oppimiseen liittyviä tavoitteita?
2. Oletko matkustellut englanninkielisissä maissa?
3. Haluaisitko tulevaisuudessa matkustaa englanninkielisiin maihin?
4. Onko matkustelulla ollut vaikutusta englannin kielen opiskelumotivaatioon?

Appendix II

Web-kyselyn kysymykset

1. Oletko kiinnostunut englannin kielen opiskelusta?

- Erittäin kiinnostunut
- Hyvin kiinnostunut
- Melko kiinnostunut
- En yhtään kiinnostunut
- En osaa sanoa

2. Kuinka monta tuntia viikossa käytät sanaston oppimiseen?

3. Onko sinulla itse keksimiä sanastonoppimiskeinoja, mitä? Ovatko ne mielestäsi tehokkaita?

4. Käytätkö seuraavia keinoja?

- Ääneen toistaminen
- Mielessä toistaminen
- Sanojen kirjoittaminen
- Asiayhteydestä päättely
- Muistikortit
- Sanakirjan käyttö
- Assosioiminen (esim. sanan yhdistäminen toiseen asiaan)
- Omien muistisääntöjen tekeminen
- Ryhmätyöskentely
- Sanojen oppiminen teemoittain
- Musiikki, elokuvat, TV
- Internet
- Tekstin kuunteleminen
- Muistiinpanojen kirjoittaminen

5. Kuinka tehokkaina pidät seuraavia keinoja opiskella englannin sanastoa?

	Erittäin tehokas	Hyvin tehokas	Melko tehokas	Ei lainkaan tehokas	En osaa sanoa
Ääneen toistaminen	<input type="radio"/>				
Mielessä toistaminen	<input type="radio"/>				
Sanojen kirjoittaminen	<input type="radio"/>				
Asiayhteydestä päättely	<input type="radio"/>				
Muistikortit	<input type="radio"/>				
Sanakirjan käyttö	<input type="radio"/>				
Assosioiminen (esim. sanan yhdistäminen toiseen asiaan)	<input type="radio"/>				
Omien muistisääntöjen tekeminen	<input type="radio"/>				
Ryhmätyöskentely	<input type="radio"/>				
Sanojen oppiminen teemoittain	<input type="radio"/>				
Musiikki, elokuvat, TV	<input type="radio"/>				
Internet	<input type="radio"/>				
Tekstin kuunteleminen	<input type="radio"/>				
Muistiinpanojen kirjoittaminen	<input type="radio"/>				

6. Mitä seuraavista sanakirjoista käytät?

- Perinteinen sanakirja
- Internet sanakirja
- Tietokonepohjainen sanakirja

7. Oletko matkustellut seuraavissa maissa?

- USA
- Australia
- Uusi-Seelanti

- Iso-Britannia
- Kanada
- En missään näistä maista

8. Miten voimakkaasti koet matkustelun vaikuttavan englannin kielen oppimismotivaatioosi?

- Erittäin paljon
- Hyvin paljon
- Melko paljon
- Ei lainkaan
- En ole matkustellut

9. Mitä seuraavista keinoista käytät, kun suunnittelet omaa englannin oppimista?

- Ajan käytön organisointi
- Tavoitteiden asettaminen
- Tehtävän tarkoituksen ymmärtäminen
- Valmistautuminen tehtävään
- Aktiivinen omatoimisuus

10. Minkälaisia tavoitteita asetat itsellesi sanastonoppimiseen liittyen?

11. Mistä olet saanut tietoa eri keinoista opiskella englannin sanastoa?

- Koulu
- Vanhemmat
- Kaverit
- Internet
- Muu, mikä?

12. Pitäisikö koulussa informoida enemmän sanastonoppimiseen liittyvistä keinoista?

- Kyllä
- Ei

