

ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF THE PURPOSE OF A  
CD CONNECTED TO ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS

Candidate's thesis  
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## HUMANISTINEN TIEDEKUNTA KIELTEN LAITOS

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English teachers' perception of the purpose of a CD  
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Vieraan kielen opiskelussa ja opettamisessa on käytetty pitkään apuvälineinä erilaisia äänitteitä. Kuitenkin vasta lähiaikoina äänitteitä on alettu käyttää myös luokkahuoneen ulkopuolella. Nykyisin monissa suomalaisissa peruskouluissa käytetään englannin kielen oppikirjoja, joissa tulee mukana myös oppilaan CD. Tämä CD on tarkoitettu oppilaan itsenäiseen käyttöön tukemaan vieraan kielen opiskelua kotona. Koska CD:n käyttö on vielä uutta, ei sitä ole tutkittukaan. Aikaisemmat tutkimukset vieraan kielen kuuntelemisesta keskittyvät lähinnä luokkahuonetilanteisiin. Vain muutama aikaisempi tutkimus mainitsee lyhyesti itsenäisen kuuntelun tärkeydestä. Siksi onkin tärkeää tutkia, mikä rooli tällä oppilaan CD:llä on vieraan kielen opettamisessa.

Koska opettajilla on paljon kokemusta erilaisista oppimisvälineistä, heitä voi pitää alan asiantuntijoina. Sen vuoksi tutkimus keskittyi opettajien näkemyksiin CD:n käytöstä ja tarkoituksesta. Kaiken kaikkiaan kahdeksan alakoulun englannin kielen opettajaa ympäri Keski-Suomea osallistui tutkimukseen. Heitä pyydettiin vastaamaan tammikuussa 2009 sähköpostilla lähetettyyn kyselylomakkeeseen, joka sisälsi 11 kysymystä oppilaille jaettavasta CD:stä. Tutkimustulokset analysoitiin laadullisesti ja tarkoituksena oli etsiä yhteneväisyyksiä CD:n käytössä sekä opettajien käsityksissä CD:n tarkoituksesta.

Tutkimuksessa nousi esille, että CD:tä käytetään kahdella eri tavalla. Oppilaiden tuli joko vain kuunnella CD:tä tai sekä kuunnella että toistaa perässä. Opettajat kokivat, että CD:n tarkoituksena on auttaa oppilaita omaksumaan vierasta kieltä sekä antaa malli oikeasta lausumistavasta ja näin ollen opettaa oppilaita oikeaoppiseen lausumiseen. Tutkimuksessa nousi myös esiin, että CD:stä on ollut hyötyä opetuksessa. Opettajien mielestä oppilaiden suullinen viestintä on parantunut CD:n käyttöön oton jälkeen ja se on helpottanut oppimisvaikeuksista kärsivien oppilaiden vieraan kielen opiskelemista. CD:llä siis selvästi on oma paikkansa vieraan kielen opetuksessa.

Tutkimuksessa nousi myös esiin, mitä ongelmia opettajat ovat kohdanneet CD:n käytön aikana. Nämä tulokset olivat kuitenkin tutkielman tarkoituksen kannalta epäoleellisia, koska ongelmat liittyivät lähinnä CD:n käytön valvomiseen tai CD:n säilytykseen. Ongelmista huolimatta opettajat suhtautuivat CD:n käyttöön todella positiivisesti ja pitivät sitä hyvänä lisänä oppimateriaaleihin. Opettajat raportoivat myös oppilaiden innostuksesta käyttää CD:tä, mikä osoittaa, että CD on myös oppilaille mieluinen. Tutkimustuloksia rajaa kuitenkin se, että kyselyyn osallistui vain kahdeksan opettajaa ja kyselyssä painopisteenä oli opettajien oma käsitys. Jotta saataisiin selville kuinka CD toimii käytännössä, tulisi seurata oppilaita ja heidän oppimisensa kehittymistä. Tämä tutkielma lähinnä osoitti sen, että CD:tä käytetään ja sillä on oma roolinsa vieraan kielen oppimisessa.

Asiasanat: second language learning, listening, learning materials, recordings

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Many Finnish elementary schools use nowadays an English textbook that includes a CD for the pupils. Providing this type of listening material to foreign language learners to take home with them is a fairly new practice in the area of language learning and teaching. Therefore, it is important to examine the use of the CD more closely. The CD clearly has some kind of role in the process of foreign language learning and teaching as it has been added to learning materials. For instance, it increases the amount of input provided for learners. Researchers consider input to have a very important part in foreign language learning. It helps the pupils to adopt the language and it provides the pupils with a model of pronunciation of the target language. However, the pupils have been exposed to the target language conventionally only in the classrooms and, thus, the use of listening materials independently at home is rather a new subject. Indeed, previous studies have concentrated on the importance of input and importance of listening in the classroom context, but only a few studies briefly mention pupils listening to a foreign language independently at home. Therefore, it is important to examine what the role of the CD connected to English textbooks in foreign language learning is.

As teachers have experience of different kinds of learning materials, I decided to explore teachers' opinions about the CD and the ways they use the CD as part of their teaching. The focus of the present study is to examine the role of the CD in foreign language learning and the attitudes towards the CD as well as to explore the ways the CD is used. There were overall eight English teachers from different elementary schools from Central Finland participating in the present study. The data was gathered through a questionnaire which consisted of 11 questions concerning the CD and its use. The goal was to find out whether there are any general ways how to use the CD and if there are any other clear roles for the CD except that it increases the amount of input the pupils are exposed to and allows them to listen to the target language also at home.

Initially, I will introduce some previous studies that I found relevant for the present study and discuss the theoretical background in more detail in the following chapter. Then I will move on to the research question and to the study itself. The data and the methods of analysis are introduced, and after that I will concentrate on the analysis of the data. The analysis is followed by a discussion of the results which conclude the present study.

## 2 LISTENING SKILLS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

As the present study focuses on a CD used in foreign language learning, it is obvious that the role of listening in foreign language learning becomes an important part of the present study. After all, the use of a CD requires learners to use their listening skills and thus, the CD can be used in practising listening to a foreign language and in acquiring the sound system of the target language. Therefore, it is vital to examine how the role of listening is seen in foreign language learning and second language acquisition. In addition, it is important to explore whether the Finnish curriculum acknowledges the role of listening as a part of the foreign language learning and teaching.

I found several studies about listening both in foreign language learning and second language acquisition. All the studies are in agreement about listening to the target language being an essential part of the foreign language learning (Wode 1981:302-303; Mitchell and Myles 2004:20). However, this matter is dealt with only briefly and superficially in most of the studies. It seems that researchers think it is self-evident that listening is part of the language learning process. Few of the studies make any attempt to approach the matter in more detail, that is, to discuss what the role and the purpose of listening in language learning exactly are. In addition, many studies focus only on listening in a classroom without any reference to the importance of listening at home. After all, the CD connected to English language textbook in the present study is used independently by learners at home. It can be seen from previous studies that giving listening material to learners to take home with them is a new subject in the area of language learning and teaching. Few of the studies refer to learners also listening to the language at home (Rixon 1986:121-130; Rost 1990:233-235), but there are no real attempts to go further in that subject.

The goals and the grounds for teaching that the Finnish National Board of Education has set for the foreign language learning in Finland are described in Framework curriculum for the comprehensive school 1994 (*Peruskoulun opetussuunnitelman perusteet OPS 1994* 2000:68-71). The main goal for learners is to cope with a foreign language in everyday communication situations (*OPS* 2000:68). In other words, learners should be able to have normal everyday conversations in real-life with speakers of the other language. One has to remember that communication is not only speaking, but also listening is involved. Indeed, it is crucial to understand what the other participant is saying to be able to participate in a conversation. Therefore, one can conclude that developing listening skills is an important part

of foreign language learning. In addition, the grounds for teaching support this view (*OPS* 2000:70-71). It is said that the grounds for teaching are based on developing learners' communication skills. Furthermore, it is mentioned that it is very important to give learners an opportunity to listen to the target language as much as possible for them to acquire fluent pronunciation, stress, rhythm and intonation of the target language. Therefore, the use of the CD supports the goals of the Finnish curriculum as it provides the learners with a model of the pronunciation and as it helps pupils in practising pronunciation as well as listening skills.

## **2.1 Importance of language input in foreign language learning**

Ur (1984:12) and Rixon (1986:8) claim that by listening the learner can be familiarized with the target language and especially with the sound system of that particular language. Therefore, one can conclude that listening to a target language has a role in teaching the learner how the language sounds and listening also gives the learner a model how to pronounce the target language correctly. Ur (1984:12) also considers that it is important to expose the learner to the new language as early as possible in order to make him/her an efficient listener. Feyten (1991:173) and Dunkel (1991:435) also acknowledge the importance of listening right at the beginning of learning. According to Feyten, the learner should listen to the target language before he/she should do any other activities. Obviously there needs to be some language input with which the learner can start the learning. Moreover, Wode (1981:302-303) considers the language input to be obligatory for language learning to occur. Wode (1981:33) also points out that "learners acquire a language from what they are exposed to" and that the input is needed for the learner to produce output. That is, the input gives a model for the output.

Mitchell and Myles (2004:20) also support the view that it is always important to have some kind of language input in language learning for the learner to operate with. They argue that it is necessary to expose the learner to language input for the learner to learn to interpret the language data, because they see that the ability to interpret the language that the learners hear is one of the main goals in language learning. Rost (1990:27-28) agrees that understanding the target language is important for the learner when acquiring the language. On the other hand, Ur (1984:2) sees that the goal of teaching listening skills is to help the learners to listen in real-life situations. This is the same goal that was introduced above by the Finnish National Board of Education (*OPS* 2000) and briefly discussed also by Rixon

(1986:128). Thus, it seems that teaching to listen to a foreign language aims to prepare the learners for real-life listening.

Wode (1981:22) claims that “the learner must be exposed to language data” for the acquisition to take place. In addition, Dunkel (1991:435) says “input plays a critical role in second language acquisition”. One should be careful with the terms **acquisition** and **learning**, because the difference between the two might not always be very clear. However, language learning and language acquisition can appear simultaneously in foreign language learning situations. Wode (1981:20) calls this acquisition type **tutored acquisition** of a second language. Indeed, tutored acquisition can happen in foreign language learning in the classrooms. In addition, I think that learners can acquire language outside the classroom by themselves also. For example, English is nowadays seen in all kinds of media and therefore, learners may acquire words and phrases from the surrounding world and not only from the learning materials. Therefore, it is very difficult to trace back how the learner might have learnt some phrase, in a classroom or from the media. However, it is not always good for the learner to acquire the language from the media, because it might not be a correct or appropriate sample of the target language. Therefore, I think it is essentially important to give the learners as much formal and correct target language samples as possible for them to learn what the standard of the target language is.

As a result, there are many different aspects to consider when defining the role and the purpose of foreign language listening. First, the language input familiarizes the learner with the target language and gives a model of the correct pronunciation and sound system of the target language. In addition, listening to a target language also helps the learner to develop his/her listening skills. Therefore, the input helps in developing communication skills which is part of the goals in foreign language learning. It also enables acquisition to take place. Moreover, language input is always needed in the process of language learning and by listening the learner learns to interpret the language data he/she hears. Lastly, listening prepares the learner for real-life situations.

One controversial but yet interesting study introduced by Mitchell and Myles (2004:164-166) is Krashen’s (1985) ‘Input Hypothesis’. According to this hypothesis, it is necessary to expose the learner to comprehensible input in order for second language learning to occur (Mitchell and Myles 2004:164). There are two main ideas developed from this hypothesis. First of all, speaking is considered a result of acquisition instead of a cause. Secondly, it is claimed that grammar can be automatically learnt from input as long as there is enough of input and it is understood as well. Clearly, this statement is questionable, because

in short it claims that a language could be learnt only by exposing the learner to language input. Mitchell and Myles (2004:165) criticize Krashen for not basing his hypothesis on any empirical study. Indeed, any study is unconvincing if there is no real evidence and study behind the results.

However, although there are clear gaps in Krashen's hypothesis, I find it interesting for the present study because the hypothesis considers the importance of input in language learning. The language input can be both read and heard; therefore, listening is also a part of this hypothesis. Even though I do not agree that a language could be solely acquired from the input, I still think that input is an important part of the language learning process and, as mentioned above several times, also many researchers think that is the case.

## **2.2 Learning independently**

As mentioned above, the CD examined in the present study is used independently by the learners at home. Therefore, it is important to examine what previous studies say about independent listening outside the classroom. Unfortunately, this topic was mentioned only briefly in two of the studies (Rixon 1986:121-130; Rost 1990:233-235) and it was discussed quite superficially. However, there are a few points that are worth mentioning. First of all, Rixon (1986:121) mentions that listening is something that learners can do independently and, thus, it is important to encourage them to listen to the foreign language by themselves. Rost (1990:234) agrees that listening independently is important when acquiring a foreign language and he claims that only "simple exposure to spoken language is not sufficient to develop language skills". Therefore, one might consider if the amount of input the learners are exposed to should be increased and perhaps provide the learners also input they can use outside the classroom.

Rixon (1986:121-130) gives examples of how the teacher can provide the learners with materials and what the teacher's role is in this independent listening. Both Rost (1990:234) and Rixon (1986:128) mention the use of authentic materials. However, as Rost (1990:234) points out, there is a problem with learners using authentic materials by themselves. Indeed, on many occasions these materials do not represent the same level of language competence as the level of the learners. Therefore, it is not always simple to use for example English radio broadcast as listening material. Rixon (1986:122-125) suggests that the teacher should provide the materials. However, there is a great amount of work involved in



this sort of task. One should remember that as both of these studies have been made a number of years ago, learning materials have changed since then, and the possibilities for independent listening have increased. Therefore, the situation now is slightly different from that of the researchers Rixon and Rost. However, I want to emphasize the fact that independent listening is important and that teachers should encourage it. In addition, as Rost (1990:234) and Rixon (1986:121-122) argue, it is the teacher's responsibility to provide useful material for the learners to listen to. Therefore, I think the CD is a solution to the problem of using authentic materials and collecting a selection of listening materials for the learners to use independently. The teachers do not have to spend their time collecting the listening materials for different levels of learners when the listening material is already provided with the textbook.

Lastly, I want to point out the aspect of independence in language learning, which was briefly mentioned in a few studies. This area is important for the present study as the CD encourages independent studying. Initially, Framework curriculum for the comprehensive school 1994 (*OPS* 2000:68,70) proposes that learners should develop their learning skills both alone and in groups and that the learners should be encouraged to study independently and to take responsibility of their studies. Rixon (1986:121) also claims that learners should be given more freedom and a chance to work by themselves. He considers these facts to promote the autonomy of learners and, on the other hand, there is a shift away from the teacher dominant learning process. Rost (1990:233-234) also acknowledges that there can be advantages in independent listening especially for learners who have difficulties in the area of listening. From my experience, some learners may have difficulties concentrating in the classroom or feel too much pressure to understand the language input. Therefore, it is important to give learners an opportunity to develop their listening skills at home without the pressure of the classroom.

### **3 THE STUDY**

In this chapter, the present study will be introduced by focusing on the research questions and hypotheses as well as explaining about the data collection and the data itself. Lastly I will introduce the methods of analysis.

#### **3.1 Research question and hypotheses**

The present study focuses on a CD connected to an English language textbook, which learners use independently at home. Though different types of records have been used for a long time in language classrooms, it is fairly recent to give listening material to learners to take home with them. Many different English language textbooks include also a CD nowadays. Therefore, one can assume that there are reasons why the CD has been added to the learning materials and that it has a specific purpose in the process of foreign language learning. As the English teachers are the ones who control the use of the CD, it is important to explore how they see the role of the CD and how they use it in their teaching. In addition, the teachers have plenty of experience of different types of learning materials and one can assume that they are the experts in evaluating learning materials. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to find out what the purpose of the CD is according to English teachers of Finnish elementary schools and how they use it in their teaching. The present study helps in evaluating the CD as learning material and the ways it is used in foreign language teaching and to discover if there is a clear purpose for the CD.

As pointed out above, there is clearly some purpose for the CD and the present study will examine what the teachers' perception of it is. When considering the ways of using the CD, it is obvious that it is used for listening the target language. Therefore, one can assume that the CD increases the language input and one of its main purposes is to provide more language input. With the help of the CD, learners can develop their listening skills independently. However, it is important to examine if there is more to it than only that. In addition, although it has been said that the learners are supposed to listen to the CD at home, one can assume that teachers decide how they want their pupils to use the CD and for what purposes. Therefore, it is important to compare how different teachers advise their pupils in using the CD and how they use it in their teaching. There are supposedly different ways which to apply in the use of the CD.

### 3.2 The data and the methods of analysis

As the present study focuses on the teachers' view of the CD, I decided to administer a questionnaire for English teachers of Finnish elementary schools. Initially, I planned a preliminary questionnaire for three teachers before doing the real questionnaire. As I did not make any major alterations in the questionnaire, I decided to use also the answers of the preliminary questionnaire as my data. All in all, eight different English teachers from different Finnish elementary schools in Central Finland were chosen to take part in the present study. The precondition was that the teachers were currently using an English textbook that included a CD for the learners. All of the participants were females and were currently teaching English as a foreign language in elementary schools for students between grades 3 and 6. When asking about the textbook used in teaching, all of the participants said they are currently using a book called *WOW* by WSOY and three of the teachers said that they also use *Surprise* by Otava. The questionnaire was administered during January 2009 and it was delivered to the participants via email.

The questionnaire (see Appendix) includes 11 questions with both open and closed questions and one background question. The first six questions (questions 2 to 7) are statements and they measure how much the teachers agree or disagree with the statements, the scale being:

- 1=totally disagree
- 2=disagree
- 3=neither disagree nor agree
- 4=agree
- 5=totally agree

The first two statements concern the teachers' views of the importance of listening in language learning and how important it is for the learners to listen to a foreign language at home. All the next four statements concern the teachers' perceptions about the CD, asking if the learners use the CD at home and if the CD is an important part of foreign language learning as well as asking about the teachers' perception of how positive the students' attitude is towards the use of the CD and lastly about whether the CD is being used as much as it could be. Question number eight is linked to the previous question and asks if there are any ways the CD could be used more efficiently.

Question number nine measures what the teachers think to be one of the most important areas the CD benefits in foreign language learning. The question is difficult because

all of the options are important and the teachers had difficulty in choosing only one of them. However, I wanted to force the teachers to think what could be the most important area which the CD benefits. I wanted to find out whether one of the alternatives was above the others. I also wanted to give the teachers an opportunity to reason their decision and therefore, I added the additional question. The tenth question asks the teachers to explain how they advise their pupils to use the CD and the last question, question number eleven, is for general comments about the CD and the use of it.

The data includes the questionnaire results, which will be analysed by comparing the different results qualitatively. The goal is to find out whether there exist any general views about the CD and its use among the teachers. The results of the closed questions will be presented with the help of bar charts.

## **4 THE CD AND ITS USE IN FINNISH ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

In this chapter, I will be going through the data by analysing the teachers' answers to the questionnaire. I have divided the questions under three different topics according to which aspects the questions concentrate on. The topics are the role of listening and the role of the CD in language learning, the ways how to use the CD and the teachers' and pupils' attitudes towards the CD. As question 11 was more a general question and the answers were mostly related to the other questions, I have divided the answers to question 11 according to the topics mentioned above and I am using the answers to question 11 as a basis for the analysis of other questions.

### **4.1 The role of the CD in foreign language learning**

In this section, I will be analysing questions 2, 3 and 9 which all concentrate on the role of listening and the role of the CD in foreign language learning. All the questions were closed questions where the participant had to choose one of the given alternatives. In questions 2 and 3 the participants were asked to choose one of the five alternatives which best reflected their feelings towards the different statements. In question 9 the participants had to choose according to what is the best option in their opinion and they were also asked to give reasons for their choice.

Question 2 asked whether the teachers think that listening is a very important part of language learning. All the teachers chose alternative 5 (totally agree), that is, they all agreed that listening is a very important part of language learning. As said above (chapter 2), researchers also agree on the importance of listening to a target language. The researchers seem to think that listening is a self-evident part of the language learning process and when comparing that statement to the results of question 2, it is clear that the teachers also think that listening is self-evidently part of the language learning process. Therefore, as the CD can be used especially in practising listening skills, one can assume that also the CD has an important role in the foreign language learning.

Question 3 asked the teachers' opinion about whether it is important for the pupils to listen to a foreign language independently at home. Again there was a consensus amongst the teachers that it is very important that pupils can listen to a foreign language at home, that is, all chose alternative 5. As mentioned above (chapter 2), Rixon (1986:121) claims that the learners should be encouraged to study independently and as listening is something the pupils can do independently, I think it is important to invest in it. I think that it may be even easier for the pupils to concentrate on listening at home and, as Rost (1990:234) also points out, it is not enough that the pupils are exposed to the target language only in classrooms (see chapter 2). As there is only a limited amount of time in the classroom and as listening takes a lot of time, it is important to consider the advantages of listening at home and the advantages of using the CD. Indeed, the CD promotes independent learning because the pupils can use it without the teacher's guidance.

Question 9 asked the teachers' opinion of what is the most important area the CD benefits in foreign language learning. The teachers could choose only one option and they were asked to comment on their answers. The alternatives were acquiring a language, listening comprehension, pronunciation, learning vocabulary and phrases or something else. As this question was altered after the pilot study, there are only five answers to be analysed. The results divided quite evenly, that is, two of the teachers chose acquiring a language and the other two chose pronunciation. The fifth teacher chose the alternative something else and had written down both learning vocabulary and phrases and pronunciation. However, one of the teachers who chose pronunciation said that the CD benefits also acquiring a language (see extract 1 below).

(1) Oppilas saa ääntämismallin... Edistää myös kielen omaksumista, mutta vain yhden vaihtoehdoista sai valita.

[The pupil receives a model of the pronunciation... Benefits also acquiring a language, but only one option could be chosen.]

(2) Olisin rastinut edellisestä kaikki 4 ensimmäistä mikäli se olisi ollut mahdollista. Mutta mielestäni tuo kielen omaksuminen pitää sisällään myös kuullun ymmärtämisen, kielen lausumisen ja sanojen ja sanaston oppimisen.

[I would have chosen all the four alternatives if it had been possible. But I think that acquiring a language includes also listening comprehension, pronunciation and learning vocabulary and phrases.]

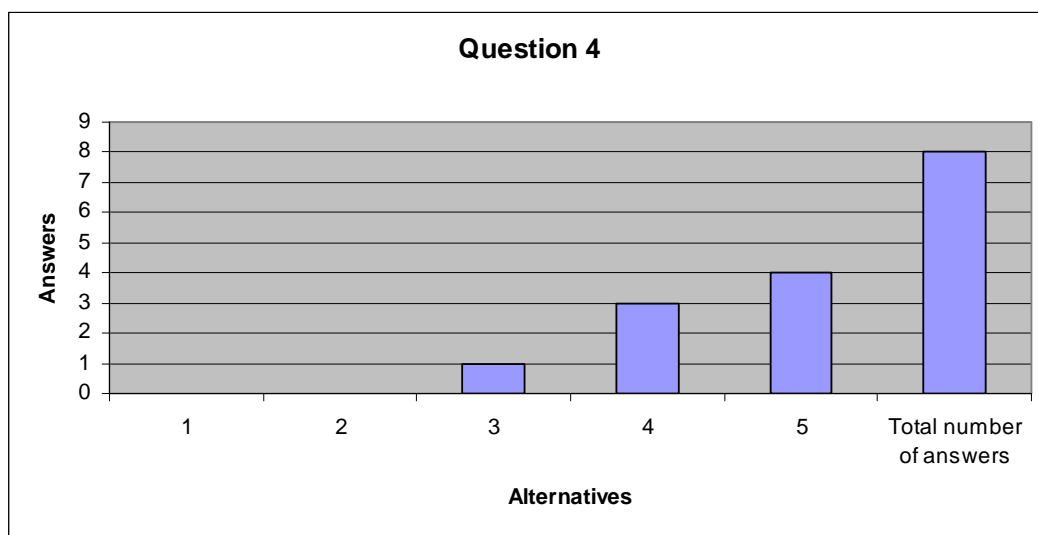
Those who chose pronunciation said that the CD gives a good model for the pronunciation (extract 1 above). On the other hand, those who chose acquiring a language considered that it includes all the other alternatives (extract 2 above). The one who chose both pronunciation and learning vocabulary and phrases said that the CD helps the pupils to recognize how the words are written and pronounced which, according to her, is very challenging in the early stages of foreign language learning.

Some teachers also mentioned the CD's role in their answers to question 11. One teacher pointed out that with the help of the CD the pupils adopt a beautiful pronunciation and idiomatic phrases. Two of the teachers even said that they had noticed some improvement in the pupils' pronunciation after the CD was adopted for use. In addition, one teacher mentioned that pupils are more confident in using the language and also their listening comprehension has improved. Therefore, the CD benefits clearly many aspects in foreign language learning, though acquiring a language and pronunciation are seen as the most important ones.

## **4.2 The ways of using the CD**

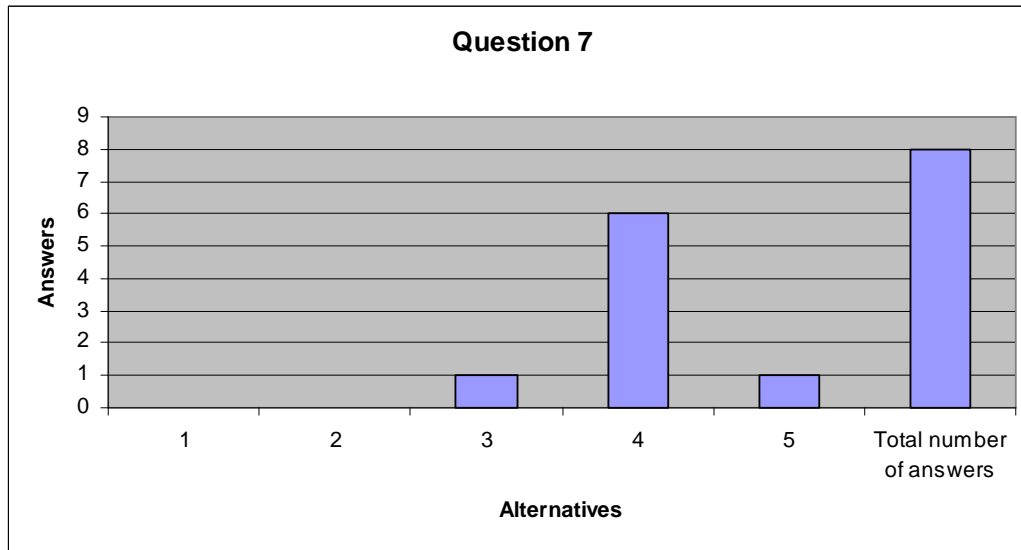
In this section I will be analysing questions 4, 7, 8 and 10, which all relate to the use of the CD. In question 4 the teachers were asked to consider if the pupils were actually using the CD to support their language learning at home. In this section there was some distribution in the results. As one can see in Figure 4.1 below, four of the teachers totally agreed with the statement (alternative 5), when three of the teachers only agreed (alternative 4) and one neither disagreed nor agreed (alternative 3) with the statement that pupils are using the CD independently at home to support their language learning. Therefore, one can assume that

pupils seem to use the CD. However, according to the teachers it is somewhat difficult to supervise the use because the teachers are not always sure if the pupils actually use the CD or they do not know if the pupils are using the CD the way the teachers expect and advise them to use it.



*1=totally disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither disagree nor agree, 4= agree, 5=totally agree*  
 Figure 4.1 4. Pupils use the CD independently at home to support their language learning.

Question 7 asked the teachers to consider whether the CD is being used as efficiently as possible. Here as well there was some distribution with the results. The majority, that is six teachers, agreed with the statement (alternative 4) when one teacher totally agreed (alternative 5) and one neither disagreed nor agreed (alternative 3). (See Figure 4.2 below.) Question 8 was an additional question to the previous question and asked how one could use the CD more efficiently. Four of the teachers mentioned some improvements in the CD itself, for example, that the CD should include more songs and discussion activities in addition to the vocabulary and texts. They also mentioned that the CD is fragile and it breaks easily. Two teachers mentioned improvements in the use of the CD by saying that the parents should supervise the use of the CD more because the teacher cannot always know if the pupils are really using the CD. However, all in all the teachers were satisfied with the way the CD was being used. This can be due to the fact that there are not that many ways how to use the CD and that the CD is quite simple to use.



1=totally disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither disagree nor agree, 4= agree, 5=totally agree

Figure 4.2 7. *I think the CD is being used as efficiently as is possible.*

Considering that the problems the teachers mentioned they had have with the CD concerned the supervision of the CD, one can assume that the effectiveness and the supervision of the use are linked together. One of the teachers actually mentioned that the parents could be reminded of the importance of listening to the CD. In addition, as many teachers pointed out, it is good to remind also the pupils about the CD. Therefore, I think that to use the CD effectively one has to remind both pupils and their parents of the importance of listening to the CD. Furthermore, one can question whether it is important to supervise the use at all. Rather it might be better to encourage the pupils to use the CD and remind them why it is important to listen to it. However, this issue is not the focus of the present study.

Question 10 asked the teachers to explain how they advise the pupils to use the CD. According to the answers, there are two different ways to use the CD, either only listening to the CD or both listening and repeating after the CD. Three of the teachers advised the pupils to only listen to the CD, when four of the teachers also asked the pupils to repeat the vocabulary and parts of the texts after the CD in addition to listening. Most of the teachers said that listening to the CD is always part of the homework, when few teachers said that they sometimes ask the pupils to listen to the CD. Clearly there is more advantage when the CD is used regularly and kept as part of the homework, because that way the teacher can remind the pupils to listen to the CD. I believe that when the CD is part of homework, there is a bigger chance that the pupils will actually listen to the CD.



These two different conventions in the use of the CD promote different learning goals. On one hand, the CD can be used to familiarize the pupils to the target language and its sound systems, that is, to help in acquiring a language, when, on the other hand, it can also be used to practise the pronunciation and to learn to recognize how the words are both written and pronounced. These results fit the teachers' answers to question 9, where the teachers considered acquiring a language and pronunciation to be the most important areas the CD benefits in foreign language learning. However, it seems that there is more emphasis on the correct pronunciation than on the acquiring a language. It is very difficult to separate these two, because the improvement of pronunciation can be a result of acquiring a language. Therefore, though the pupils do not necessarily repeat after the CD, they can still acquire the conventions of the pronunciation. However, if the teacher's aim is to teach the pupils to pronounce, I think that the repetition is also needed.

The teachers also mentioned the different ways how they supervise or control the use of the CD. Two of the teachers said that the parents have to supervise the use of the CD and mark in the pupil's notebook that the pupil has listened to the CD. Three teachers mentioned that the parents get the instructions how to use the CD and that they should support the use of the CD. It differs from the first one in that sense that the parents do not actually have to supervise the use and they do not have to report back to the teacher what the pupils do with the CD. One of the teachers said that the pupils themselves mark in some type of homework list that they have listened to the CD. As mentioned above, the supervision may affect the actual use of the CD and the teachers consider the supervision to be important when using the CD. One teacher even said that the pupils do not use the CD if the teacher does not ask the parents to supervise the use. Clearly this issue is important when considering the use of the CD.

### **4.3 Attitudes towards the CD**

Questions 5 and 6 consider the attitudes the teachers and pupils have towards the CD. Both of these questions were closed questions where the participants had to choose one of the given alternatives according to how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement. In question 5 the focus was on whether the teachers consider the CD to be an important part of foreign language learning. Five of the teachers totally agreed with the statement (alternative 5), when three of the teachers agreed with the statement (alternative 4). Therefore, it seems

that the teachers all consider the CD to be an important part of foreign language learning. When considering also the answers to question 11, the teachers' general view of the CD was very positive and they all thought that the CD is a good addition to the teaching materials (see extracts 3 and 4 below).

(3) ... mielestäni loistava opetusväline/-materiaali...

[...in my opinion it is a great learning material...]

(4) ... se on erittäin hyvä lisä ja tuki kielten opiskeluun.

[... it is a very good addition and support for language learning.]

This positive attitude may reflect the fact that many teachers have found the CD useful in their teaching. In fact, there were a couple of teachers who mentioned that they have noticed some improvement with the pupils' language skills after the CD has been introduced in use. It seems the CD is fulfilling its purpose and the teachers are content with it. On the other hand, the teachers also mentioned some problems with the use of the CD, but these problems do not seem to affect the teachers' attitudes towards the CD's importance. However, it can be assumed that as there have been some problems with the CD, this might have affected the results to some extent as the majority of the teachers only agreed with the statement but did not totally agree with it.

Many teachers pointed out in their answers to question 11 that the CD benefits especially pupils with learning difficulties because they can listen to the CD repeatedly. Rost (1990:233-234) also agrees that independent listening can help pupils who have difficulties in listening. One teacher also mentioned that for pupils who have dyslexia it is easier to learn the language through listening and in these cases the CD offers very important support for the foreign language learning. From my perspective as a teacher trainee, I think the CD is a very good addition to the learning materials as it diversifies the studying at home and as it makes possible for the pupils to practise their pronunciation after a model. With the help of the CD, the studying becomes livelier and the pupils are not only exposed to hearing the target language in the classroom. As mentioned above (chapter 2), researchers think that it is very important to expose the pupils to the target language at the beginning of learning. I also agree that the more the pupils hear the target language especially at the beginning of learning a new language, the easier it is to acquire the language and especially the pronunciation of it. It has been proven that pronunciation is easier to learn at a younger age and, therefore, it is important to emphasize also the practice of pronunciation already at the beginning of learning.

Question 6 asked whether the teachers think that pupils have a positive attitude towards the use of the CD. Seven of the teachers chose alternative 4 and one chose alternative 5. In other words, seven agreed and one totally agreed with the statement. Three of the teachers also mentioned the pupils' enthusiasm towards the use of the CD in their answers to question 11. They said that especially the younger pupils are very eager to listen to the CD. Therefore, it seems that not only the teachers think the CD is a good addition to the teaching materials but also the pupils have liked using it.

## **5 CONCLUSION**

The focus of the present study was to find out what the purpose of the CD connected to English textbooks is and how the Finnish elementary school teachers use it in their teaching as well as to examine both the teachers' and pupils' attitudes towards the CD. The results indicate that the CD has a clear role and purpose in the process of foreign language learning. When using the CD, one can increase the amount of input provided for the learners as well as provide a model of pronunciation of the target language and encourage the pupils to study independently by listening to the CD. Furthermore, as the teachers had noticed some improvement in the pupils' pronunciation and vocabulary after the CD had been adopted for use, one can assume that the CD is also fulfilling its purpose. In addition, the overall attitude towards the CD was very positive both among the teachers and their pupils which shows that the CD has been a success and a pleasant learning material so far.

The present study found out that there are two different ways the CD can be used in foreign language teaching. One emphasizes listening and acquiring a language through listening, while the other one emphasizes the practice of pronunciation. The majority of the teachers used the latter one, with the emphasis on pronunciation. As discussed in chapter 2, one of the goals in foreign language learning in Finland is to provide the learners enough opportunities to listen to the target language for them to acquire fluent pronunciation, stress, rhythm and intonation. Therefore, the CD seems to fulfill this goal perfectly as it increases the amount of input. In addition, researchers and teachers agreed that listening is an important part of foreign language learning.

I personally feel that the CD has its place in the process of foreign language learning and when considering the results of the present study, it is clear that the CD has found its place. I cannot help wondering what the results of the use of the CD are. As some teachers

said, the use of the CD has improved the pupils' pronunciation and they are more willing to use the language. Indeed, the purpose of language learning is to learn how to use the language and especially to communicate with the language. It was mentioned above (chapter 2) that one of the goals in language learning is to be able to cope with the language in real-life situations. Correct and clear pronunciation in addition to understanding the language are the essential parts of communicative competence. Therefore, I think the CD supports this goal and helps to achieve it. Clearly this goal can be achieved without the CD, but I believe the CD makes it easier to reach the goal.

The results seemed to highlight a very positive attitude towards the use of the CD. In addition, the present study encourages to consider how the CD could be used more effectively and to develop the use of the CD further. The present study also shows that the CD has been a good addition to the learning materials and that it benefits the foreign language learning. However, there are also limitations to the present study. As there were only eight teachers participating in the questionnaire, one cannot be sure if the English teachers overall think the same about the CD and if they use the CD the same way. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized. In addition, the questionnaire only asked the teachers' perceptions, but it did not actually discover how the CD works in practice and what the results of using the CD are. To explore how the CD affects the process of foreign language learning, further studies are needed to discover that in more detail.

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## APPENDIX

### KYSELY ENGLANNINKIELEN OPPIKIRJOJEN MUKANA JAETTAVAN CD:N TARKOITUKSESTA ALOITETTAESSA TOISEN KIELEN OPPIMINEN.

Tämä kysely on osa proseminaarityötä ja kyselyn avulla pyritään selvittämään alakoulun englanninkielen opettajien näkemyksiä oppikirjan mukana jaettavan CD:n tarkoituksesta ja sen käyttötavoista osana toisen kielen oppimista alakoulussa. Koulussanne käytetään kirjasarjaa, jonka mukana tulee oppilaille jaettava CD ja tämän vuoksi olen lähettänyt kyselyn teille. Kyselyyn vastaaminen kestää noin 15 minuuttia ja vastaukset ovat erittäin arvokkaita tutkimuksen kannalta. Vastaukset käsitellään anonyymisti ja tutkimus tullaan julkaisemaan Jyväskylän yliopiston kirjaston tietoverkossa. Avoimissa kysymyksissä vastatkaa kirjoittamalla harmaaseen kenttään ja monivalintakysymyksissä ruksittakaa sopivin vaihtoehto.

1. Mitä kirjasarjaa koulussanne käytetään? (max. 65 merkkiä)

**Vastatkaa alla oleviin väittämiin valitsemalla yksi vaihtoehto.**  
(1=täysin eri mieltä ... 5=täysin samaa mieltä)

2. Pidän kielen kuuntelua erittäin tärkeänä osana kielen oppimista.

1.       2.       3.       4.       5.

3. Koen erittäin tärkeänä sen, että oppilas voi itsenäisesti kuunnella vierasta kieltä kotonaan.

1.       2.       3.       4.       5.

4. Oppilaat käyttävät CD:tä itsenäisesti kotona kielen opiskelun tukena.

1.       2.       3.       4.       5.

5. Koen CD:n erittäin tärkeänä osana kielen oppimista.

1.       2.       3.       4.       5.

6. Uskon oppilaiden suhtautuvan CD:n käyttöön positiivisesti.

1.  2.  3.  4.  5.

7. Mielestäni CD:tä hyödynnetään kielen opetuksessa niin hyvin kuin mahdollista.

1.  2.  3.  4.  5.

8. Mikäli vastasitte edelliseen kysymykseen kieltävästi, niin miten CD:tä voitaisiin mielestänne hyödyntää paremmin? (max. 2000 merkkiä)

9. Minkä kielen osa-alueen oppimista CD:n käyttö mielestänne edistää eniten? (Valitkaa vain yksi vaihtoehto)

- Kielen omaksuminen
- Kuullun ymmärtäminen
- Kielen lausuminen
- Sanaston ja sanontojen oppiminen
- Muu mikä?

Perustelkaa vastauksenne (max. 2000).

10. Kuinka olette ohjeistanut oppilaita käyttämään CD:tä? (max. 2000 merkkiä)

11. Muuta yleistä kommentoitavaa CD:n käytöstä? (max. 4000 merkkiä)

**KIITOS VASTAUKSESTANNE!**