

TASKS THAT SUIT THE LEARNING OF L2 ENGLISH
VOCABULARY IN THE FINNISH MIDDLE SCHOOL:
Teachers' and students' perspectives

Master's thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Tutkielman tarkoituksena oli selvittää yläkoulun oppilaiden ja opettajien mielipiteitä sanaston oppimiseen suunnatuista tehtävistä; millaiset tehtävät heidän mielestään sopivat sanaston oppimiseen yläkoulussa. Samalla selvitettiin sanaston oppimista koulun ulkopuolella sekä sanaston oppimiseen käytettyä aikaa. Oppilaiden ja opettajien mielipiteitä verrattiin toisiinsa. Tutkimus toteutettiin Tampereella vuonna 2010. Osallistujina olivat kolme englannin opettajaa ja heidän luokkansa, yksi kutakin luokka-astetta, yhteensä 52 oppilasta. Kaikki osallistujat vastasivat kyselyyn, johon oli ennalta valittu oppikirjoista tietyt tehtävät arvioitaviksi tietyin kriteerein. Lisäksi kysyttiin vapaa-aikana tapahtuvasta sanasto-oppimisesta ja pyydettiin arvioimaan sanaston tärkeyttä sekä sen opiskeluun käytettyä aikaa.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen mukaan oppilailla ja opettajilla on kokonaisuudessaan melko samanlainen käsitys esitettyjen sanastotehtävien soveltuvuudesta sanaston oppimiseen yläkoulussa. Tehtävien tulisi olla mielenkiintoisia, nopeita tehdä sekä tarpeeksi yksinkertaisia. Osallistujien mielestä sanasto on tärkeä osa-alue, jolle jää kuitenkin liian vähän aikaa niin tunneilla kuin vapaa-ajallakin suhteutettuna englannin opiskelun laajuuteen. Sanastoa opiskellaan monin eri tavoin myös koulun ulkopuolella, mutta opettajien ja oppilaiden käsitykset siellä tapahtuvien opiskelutapojen soveltuvuudesta eroavat enemmän kuin koulutehtävien osalta.</p> <p>Sanasto-oppimista on tutkittu laajasti, mutta ei juurikaan tehtävien näkökulmasta. Tarvetta lisätutkimukselle on esimerkiksi laajemmalla otoksella eri alueilta ja tutkimusta varta vasten tehdyillä tehtävillä. Tutkimuksesta on hyötyä sanasto-opiskelun tehtävien valitsemisessa, jolloin voidaan valita tehokkaimmat ja mieluisimmat menetöt parhaiden oppimistulosten saavuttamiseksi ja jotta voidaan edelleen kehittää opetustapoja ja oppimateriaaleja.</p>	
Asiasanat – Keywords Task difficulty, task selection, vocabulary acquisition, language learning	
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1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to find out what types of tasks suit vocabulary learning in the Finnish middle school according to the teachers' as well as the students' views with the help of a questionnaire. The background of this research is connected to second language acquisition/learning and vocabulary studies. Moreover, vocabulary studies have examined the teaching and learning of vocabulary from many points of view but the view of the teacher versus the student, especially in Finland and in other minor language areas, is what is still missing. Also, studies have been conducted mostly on other levels rather than in middle school. I hope to shed some light on the issue in order to better know how L2 English vocabulary can best be learnt in Finland at a particular stage. This paper presents a type of juxtapositioning where the opinions of the teachers and the students are both examined. One object of study in this thesis is to find a common ground for the teachers and students to operate on in choosing tasks that best serve the learning of English vocabulary. The data of the study was compiled by having teachers and students fill out a questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire was to find out if the students and the teachers had similar understanding of tasks and their suitability to learn English vocabulary. Thus, the answers of the students are compared to those of the teachers.

Furthermore, in this study research on acquisition of words and different teaching techniques is also discussed, along with their relation to L2 learning. There are fewer studies that have focused on the acquisition of English in which the L1 of the students is Finnish. Thus, I find it to be essential to find out what type of tasks work for Finnish L2 learners in learning English vocabulary. Furthermore, teacher's views and opinions many times differ from those of the students, which for example Nunan (1987), Tavakoli (2009a:5) and Hawkey (2006) have found out in their studies, and therefore it is important to examine the possible underlying differences. In addition, much research has aimed at comparing different task types, and to finding out to which type of learning situations they are best suited for. This is something this study will slightly touch upon as well.

The data consists of questionnaires answered by one of each of the three middle school grades (7th, 8th and 9th year) along with interviews conducted with the teachers of those classes. The interviews were conducted in Finnish and each participant answered on an answer sheet especially designed for this study. All the students answered questions concerning their learning habits along with some evaluation on tasks in their own books currently in use. The teachers answered the same questions but from their point of view along with some questions concerning their work related to vocabulary teaching.

The key terms in this study include: task, task selection, task difficulty, learning/vocabulary strategy, vocabulary and vocabulary and word knowledge. These terms are explained in the next two chapters along with different aspects related to this study in the field of vocabulary research. The fourth chapter presents the data and the method of the present study, and in the fifth chapter the findings of the study are presented along with examples from the data. The discussion chapter will then present the relevance and implications of the study and the data and findings are examined more closely. In addition, some suggestions to further study are made in the conclusion.

2 WORD AND VOCABULARY KNOWLEDGE

The purpose of this study is to determine which tasks Finnish L2 English teachers and students see as most suitable and useful for the middle school level in learning English vocabulary. In other words, the aim is to examine task selection in a particular setting. In order to understand the concepts of task and vocabulary some links to the field of vocabulary studies need to be established.

Some basic concepts related to the terms used in this study also need to be explained. Moreover, because vocabulary learning has gained even more interest in the recent years and been studied even more than in the earlier decades, I find it essential to shed some light on the terminology and previous studies to make this study more approachable.

2.1 Defining word and vocabulary

According to Read (2000: 4), in our everyday lives we encounter vocabulary in various contexts and forms. Vocabulary and more specifically words do not merely appear alone nor in vague non-meaningful utterances but rather as parts of bigger entities that convey a larger idea. Furthermore, our interpretation of a word depends largely on the context at a particular moment. The context can also include various factors such as time, place, setting (for example who are the participants of the exchange of words – student/teacher, person/book et cetera) and subject (i.e. what is the topic) for example.

Singleton (1995) also concludes that defining a word is anything but simple and that it can be looked at from three points of view. The first is the *degree of abstraction* which has two main aspects:

On the other hand, words can be thought of in terms of types or tokens, thus the expression *going, going, gone* will be considered to contain two or three words depending on whether one is counting types or tokens. On the other, there is a usage of words according to which *going, going, gone* would be deemed to contain just one word – the lexeme GO, represented by two of its range of forms (*going* and *gone*). (Singleton 1995:2)

The second point is *linguistic “levels”*, which basically means that a word has different entities depending on from which point of view it is being looked at. For example, is one looking at the word’s orthographic, phonetic or phonological form, its morphosyntactic level, or perhaps looking at it from a semantic perspective. And the third point is the meaning elements in the definition of the word unit, where words are roughly divided into *content words* and *grammatical words*. Content words can be described as those having significant meaning even when not a part of a certain context whereas grammatical words are usually considered to have lesser meaning on their own and to possess more of a grammatical purpose. (Singleton 1995:2)

According to Singleton (1995:2-4), a word can be characterised from different perspectives. For example, one can focus on the word’s orthographic form or its phonetic or phonological aspects. Furthermore, a word can be approached from the semantic perspective or it can be looked at from the grammatical point of view. The point one chooses depends on the purpose of study as well as on the vocabulary, and language, available for the study. This also explains the difficult task in proposing a clear and specific definition for any word.

A word as we know it can have many interpretations and forms. Sometimes, something that seems like a word to us can be many words to someone else or when put in to a different context. This can sometimes also be in the so called concept level, meaning how one perceives things. For example, the English word ‘*bus stop*’ consists of two separate entities that can be referred to as words but they mean one thing i.e. the place where one waits for the bus and gets on the bus or exits it. To compare, in Finnish the word ‘*bus stop*’ is written ‘*bussipysäkki*’ where the two words are together. Furthermore, the same occurs with many other compound words, they are written separately in English but together in Finnish. For example; ‘*snow plow*’ (*lumiaura*), meaning the machine that clears the roads of snow; ‘*opening night*’ (*ensi-ilta*), meaning the first time a play or a movie is shown to an audience or ‘*hotel room*’ (*hotellihuone*), meaning the place where you can stay when on a holiday for example. These words can be understood as two words or as one depending on how they are looked at.

In the past years our conception of the definition of what is meant by a word has become wider. As Thornbury (2002: 2-3) and Nation and Gu (2007: 18-33) explain, it is not easy for a teacher to determine what to teach exactly when referring to a word. A teacher needs to look not only at the context and try to address as to what is the need of the students and but also how much they already know. Furthermore, on the basis of that the teacher has to make a decision on what to teach and how to explain the information to the students. On the other hand the student also needs to know that a word is not a simple concept and that in certain situations a word can actually be many words or perhaps an even more vague entity.

Thornbury (2002) begins with explaining word classes and word families then moving on to larger and more complicated issues such as multi-word units (e.g. words that are in a specific order and appear together such as *knife and fork* or phrasal verbs such as *look for* or *call for*) and collocations, which are usually somewhat difficult for a learner to comprehend and remember. This is because even though such units are many times present in the learners' mother tongue, they may look different and be used differently in context than to which the learner is used to, in other words they can seem more abstract. Furthermore, the learner's mother tongue (in this case Finnish) may be very different from the outside, meaning that in English for example the words are not pronounced as they are written which can add to the difficulty of understanding and comprehending the multi-word units. Below is one definition of collocations:

Collocation, then, is best seen as part of continuum of strength of association: a continuum that moves from compound words (*second-hand, record player*), through multi-word units – or lexical chunks – (*bits and pieces*), including idioms (*out of the blue*) and phrasal verbs (*do up*), to collocations of more or less fixedness (*set the record straight, set a new world record*) (Thornbury 2002: 7).

The two latter ones most of us everyday language users probably would not see as words but as sentences or utterances of many words simply appearing together. In addition, Thornbury concludes the following:

- words have different functions, some carrying mainly grammatical meaning
- the same word can have a variety of forms
- words can be added to, or combined, to form new units
- words can group together to form units that behave as if they were single words

- many words commonly co-occur with other words
- words may look and/or sound the same but have quite different meanings
- different words may share similar meanings, or may have opposite meanings
- some words can be defined in terms of their relationship with other words – whether, for example, they belong to the same set, or co-occur in similar texts
- words can have the same or similar meanings but be used in different situations or for different effects (Thornbury 2002: 12)

When put simply, vocabulary means the words we know but it is not, yet again, easily determined what it means to know a word. According to Thornbury (2002), by the simplest definition, knowing a word includes understanding its form and its meaning. Nation and Gu (2007: 13) present a table (see Table 1 below) by Nation (2001:27) of the aspects that are involved in knowing a word. This includes all the word's forms such as the spoken and the written form. In addition, the complete meaning of the word is in focus in Nation & Gu's study. Understanding the meaning incorporates the different forms of the word, the concept level of the word and the associations that the word evokes. Thirdly, the word's functions are examined including the grammatical functions (word patterns), the collocations (with which words is the particular word associated with and related to) and the constraints limiting the use of the word.

Table 1. The Aspects involved in knowing a word (Nation 2001:27)

Form	spoken	R P	What does the word sound like? How is the word pronounced?
	written	R P	What does the word look like? How is the word written and spelled?
	word parts	R P	What parts are recognisable in this word? What word parts are needed to express the meaning?
Meaning	form and meaning	R P	What meaning does this word form signal? What word form can be used to express this meaning?
	concept and referents	R P	What is included in the concept? What items can the concept refer to?
	associations	R P	What other words does this make us think of? What other words could we use instead of this one?
Use	grammatical functions	R P	In what patterns does the word occur? In what patterns must we use this word?
	collocations*	R P	What words or types of words occur with this one? What words or types of words must we use with this one?
	constraints on use (register, frequency ...)	R P	Where, when and how often would we expect to meet this word? Where, when and how often can we use this word?

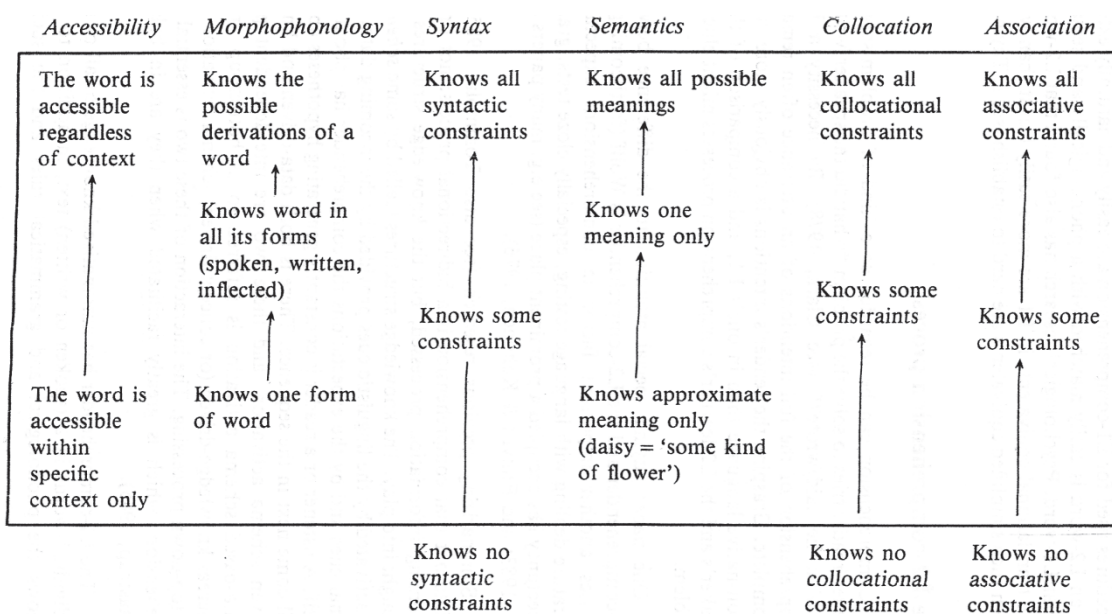
* A collocation is a group of words that typically occur together, for example *tousled* typically occurs with *hair*.

Moreover, it is usually the case that our receptive vocabulary knowledge is much larger than our productive vocabulary knowledge. In other words this means that we understand and recognise a larger amount of words than what we can actually produce when communicating (Thornbury 2002: 15). This is something that in addition to Thornbury for example Mondria & Wiersma (2004), Nation & Gu (2007) and Schmitt (2008) discuss. A familiar situation to most language users is the one in which we notice when for example either reading a text or listening to someone talk, that we are able to understand a great deal. However, when we should write something or speak ourselves, we are lost for words.

Ringbom (1987) explains the role of the first language in learning a foreign language. He especially elicits the concept of similarity when studying foreign language learning and states that “When the learner relates what has to be learnt to previous linguistic

knowledge, cross-linguistic as well as intra-linguistic similarity is of crucial importance...” (Ringbom 1987:33) and has also created a list of the similarities that ought to be under investigation (Ringbom 1987:33-34). Furthermore, according to Ringbom (1987:35-36) people tend not to have full knowledge of all the words and grammar in their native language, and that there are seldom two languages that would possess a very similar linguistic system i.e. there is a clear difference between any two languages. In addition he states: “...distance between L1 and L2 can be assumed to play an important role in the storage of lexical items.” (Ringbom 1987:35) This basically means that the words and vocabulary of a language are not restored in the mind the same way in both languages. Below is a table (Table 2) by Ringbom (1987:37) which presents a notion of the lexical knowledge system.

Table 2. The Construction of the lexical knowledge system (Ringbom 1987:37)



2.2 Teaching vocabulary

When acquiring vocabulary a learner needs to encounter a word in many different situations and contexts in order to fully understand all its functions. This is crucial for a teacher to acknowledge in order to obtain the best possible learning results especially in the early stages of L2 acquisition (Carter 1998: 191-195, Sökmen 1997: 241-242). Furthermore, as learners progress new levels of vocabulary knowledge are achieved. As

presented previously, there are different levels of vocabulary knowledge, and both receptive and productive knowledge are involved in knowing a word thoroughly. The learner should recognise the words' spoken and written form, its grammatical patterns and collocations, its functions in the language (i.e. frequency and appropriateness) and its meaning (concept and associations related to the word). (Nation 1991: 30-33)

It is important for a teacher to take into account the richness of language which can clearly be seen as Thornbury (2002: 3-7) explains, elaborating different ways of looking at vocabulary and words. Therefore teachers need to take notice of this fact while choosing vocabulary tasks. Furthermore, as it can be seen from the thorough presentation by Nation (2008), different aspects of language learning i.e. writing, reading and speaking require knowledge of different amount and different types of words in order for a person to be successful in the process of language use in each of these areas. Nation (2008: 3-7) explains that both the teacher and the student need to work towards a common goal in language learning but that they in a way have different areas of responsibility in the matter. The learning of useful everyday vocabulary, and words, is seen as most important, the vocabulary from which the student will benefit in his or her learning process and that can be used in real life situations.

I hope that from this short presentation it is fairly effortless to acknowledge the difficult task that teachers face, when trying to have a foreign language make sense to a learner and to explain its ambiguities while at the same time making the vocabulary useful to the student. Furthermore, it is evident that students face perhaps an even more complicated issue when trying to learn words and understand the objects of tasks – what can I learn from this, why is this useful to me?

Next I will go on to explain what is meant by *task-based language teaching* and the key term of the study, *task*, as it has many different interpretations by various researchers.

3 SPECIFYING THE TERM TASK

As there are different definitions of words, the word *task* is no different. Therefore in this chapter some explanations and definitions to this key term are presented. Furthermore

3.1 The term task

Currently and especially during the past two decades the trend in language teaching has been changing and TBLT (task based language teaching) has gained foothold instead of the previously more popular CLT (communicative language teaching). Though, it must be concluded that this does not mean that communication would be forsaken in teaching, it still is and will always be an extremely essential part of the programme. As presented by de la Fuente (2006: 265), in current research, many writers conclude that “although meaning processing should be primary to task, a certain amount of focus on form is needed in order to acquire the L2”. Many studies bring about the fact that interaction is an effective and recommended way for teachers to teach not only vocabulary but language (and more specifically L2) in general as well as for learners to acquire a new language. The need for combining interaction with focus on form to gain the best possible learning outcome is also mentioned (de la Fuente 2006).

Moreover, here I will introduce the important term that has a major role in this study as well, that is, task. In many studies as well as in teaching materials it is the key term that everything is based on. However, defining what the term task actually means is not easy and many have a definition of their own. In this study I will lean on the definition compiled by Ellis (2003: 16):

A task is a workplan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources although the design of the task may predispose them to choose particular forms. A task is intended to result in language use that bears a resemblance, direct or indirect, to the way language is used in the real world. Like other language activities, a task can engage productive or receptive, and oral or written skills, and also various cognitive processes. (Ellis 2003: 16).

I find this definition to suit my own conception of task as I find Ellis to best and most thoroughly to explain the term, which is to be something that helps the learner in the process of learning. Furthermore, Ellis's definition is easy to understand and he makes a valid point that tasks are the basis to what teaching relies on as well, and that they convey language use as we see it in our everyday lives. Moreover, task can have many meanings and many forms all of which have the same aim – to be the medium of teaching and learning vocabulary.

With regard to the present study, it must be pointed out that the term *task* is used here as a synonym for the term *exercise*. To further clarify the perspective of the word *task* in this study would be as followed: *a task/an exercise* is a type of rehearsal designed to practise a language, and in this case vocabulary, either in the classroom during lessons or at home as a homework assignment. There are different types of tasks, with which different areas of vocabulary can be practised and those tasks and their suitability to vocabulary learning are under investigation.

There are other definitions of task, one of which I will briefly introduce next. This is to present a comparison and to elaborate the versatility of the area, and to introduce different conceptions to make it more evident that there are many definitions to choose from.

Kumaradivelu (1993, as quoted by Kumaradivelu 2006: 65) poses a three-part classification for tasks; they include language-centred, learner-centred and learning-centred tasks. According to him the first concentrates on linguistic forms, the second on formal and functional attributes of language and the third on guiding the learner to actual, authentic practice in the language, where the focus is on production rather than on the right form. Kumaradivelu's definition differs from Ellis' in the way that it is divided in parts that in a way layers the term whereas Ellis generally determines the concept and its purpose. I find Kumaradivelu's definition to be to an extent more difficult to comprehend. In his three-part classification tasks are harder to place to represent just one of the three parts as in my experience many tasks often employ more than one purpose within them though there are tasks that concentrate specifically on one aspect as well.

3.2 Task types

In this section the way of rehearsing vocabulary in Finnish schools is briefly discussed from the researcher's viewpoint and experiences in order to give insight on the tasks chosen for evaluation in the present study. The different task types are presented in order to elaborate the amount and versatility of how vocabulary can be practised.

In Finnish schools vocabulary is taught simultaneously with grammar and the skills of reading and writing, thus being constantly present in the learning process. Learning a language basically begins with learning simple everyday words and vocabulary from which we begin to get the knowledge of a foreign language system and gradually progress to larger entities such as longer phrases and sentences. In Finland the first foreign language is currently presented in the third grade when students are approximately 10-years old and for most the language is English, which is then learnt until the ninth grade. When it comes to vocabulary tasks, a variety of them is presented to the students right from the beginning and gradually the exercises become longer and more difficult. Different types of vocabulary exercises are often those that are given as homework but are done during lessons as well. For the students in elementary school (from 3rd to 6th grade) the tasks are introduced fairly slowly and one at a time for them to be familiarised. Many times vocabulary is also rehearsed and introduced through song and games. Then later on in the middle school these tasks are already "familiar territory" and some new, a little more demanding tasks can be rehearsed also. In this study the focus is on the middle school setting but many of the same types of exercises have been familiar to the students from the third grade onwards.

A very common task for language and vocabulary rehearsing is a cloze exercise, also known as fill-in-the-blanks exercise. These types of tasks are often for rehearsing for example prepositions, phrasal verbs, pronouns et cetera; perhaps more common when learning grammar related vocabulary. Another common task is a translation exercise, which are also very much used in the middle school level. The translating can be both ways, either from Finnish to English or vice versa. Moreover, they are mostly related to the chapter that the students are currently studying. Furthermore, a discussion exercise, which is the most common when spoken language and pronouncing is being learnt, can

also be considered quite popular. These are also mostly related to the chapter at hand, to give the students the possibility to act out the situations and try and use the vocabulary in various ways. Moreover, a task which many times appears in exercise books is a word combining exercise/word maze, in which students are to match two words to each other (for example synonyms, opposites or word associations) or locate words from a maze of letters.

Lastly, one of the tasks often used to learn vocabulary is a short vocabulary test to which students are given a certain amount of words to study, usually at home, and which are then questioned during a lesson for example the next day. The words could for example be from a particular study chapter, irregular verbs or another word category such as positive adjectives or words related to nature. In this study an example vocabulary test was about animal names, and it was the last exercise to be assessed.

The aforementioned tasks are very typical in the Finnish school books. Thornbury (2002) deals with various tasks in his book 'How to Teach Vocabulary', some of them very similar to the ones at scope in this study. He also makes a valid point that many times tasks in study books are chosen based on their usefulness, frequency, learnability and teachability (Thornbury 2002:51) and therefore the tasks in the books used in this study can be said to be very common. All types of translation and conversation exercises are usually quite well known and not that hard to find in the field of research and thus they are not discussed here more. However, the two other task types in this study were more challenging when it comes to finding studies reviewing and discussing different task types. Thornbury (2002) however presents these using other names for them. The word maze task is referred to as 'a wordsquare' and word combination exercises are either 'word matching' or 'word pairing' (Thornbury 2002:94-98). According to Thornbury (2002:95), finding words in a maze of letters is *an identification task* and that the next difficulty level is *a selecting task*, which is more challenging. To match or pair words is then the next level, which is also one of the tasks in the present study (see Chapter 5). These can be of various types, for example matching verbs to nouns, pictures to words, synonyms, words to their definitions et cetera (Thornbury 2002:97). Additionally, Thornbury (2002:100) also presents the fill-in-the-blanks exercise, which is *a sentence or text completion task*. They can be of two types, open or closed. The

open type is one where the student makes up the word needed from previous knowledge, making conclusions based on the text. Closed task is one where words are given in advance and the learner merely has to choose the correct one to fill each gap (Thornbury 2002:100). These types of tasks are often used in testing vocabulary knowledge (Thornbury 2002:130-135)..

The following section will look at the question of what to teach to students and presents the difficulty of choice in vocabulary teaching. Learning strategies and factors influencing vocabulary learning are also discussed.

4 STUDYING VOCABULARY

4.1 What to teach and what to learn

Naturally when talking about vocabulary there is not only the question of how to teach but also the question of what to teach i.e. which words are useful to the learner, which should be learnt first and at which particular level/age to match the learners' capacity and needs. In addition, it should be determined in what form the words should be learnt (see e.g. Wallace 1982: 13-15, Thornbury 2002: 1-31, Nation and Gu 2007: 13-33). This is because a word can appear in many forms and have many meanings depending on the context. For example, the word *bank* can mean the bank of a river or the place where we handle our financial matters. Another example would be the word *fair*, which can mean 1) a blond haired person 2) a person acting equally towards others 3) an event organised somewhere in which goods can be sold and various amusements are on offer. The word is written exactly the same way in both and in all three cases but has a different meaning that is determined by the context in which the word appears. In addition, any word that is in a different word class depending on the meaning and context and changes only very little (e.g. only one letter is different) or in some cases not at all can be confusing to a learner. Examples of these would be such as *practice* or *practise*, where the first is a noun and the second a verb, or the word *bear*, which can be both a verb (as in not tolerate something) and a noun (a large furry animal). Furthermore, there are also words that sound similar when pronounced but are written differently and have different meanings, such as homonyms and homophones. Examples of such would be *peer* and *pier*, the first meaning someone equal to you and the second meaning a dock; or *deer* and *dear*, the first meaning a horse-like animal living wild in the forests and the second is a word that is used when expressing affection towards someone. Moreover, according to Nation and Gu (2007: 19) word families that consist of a certain headword and other forms which can be derived from it or are closely linked, need to be taken into consideration.

As mentioned previously, we need to ask if knowing a word means we know how to use it properly in all situations. This is one problem presented by Wallace (1982: 14-16) when referring to word-lists, which propose the most commonly used vocabulary in English, not all considering the aspect of multi-meanings. Moreover, it is also crucial to

consider the frequency of a word i.e. how often it appears and is it thus worth learning (Nation and Gu 2007: 32-33). Is it a word the learner can use (Nation 1990: 18-21, Nation 2008: 7-15)? Furthermore, teachers need to acknowledge the question of availability (Wallace 1982: 16). This means that in some cases an unusual word to most situations may prove to be most useful in others, again depending on for example the student's interests as well as their advance level. There are also many more aspects related to vocabulary teaching and learning, and to what needs to be taken into account, such as structure and content, meaning, connotations and word relations e.g. subcategories of words as well as pronunciation and spelling. I will not go on to those here in more detail but for further information see for example: Wallace (1982: 18-26), Carter (1998), Thornbury (2002) and Schmitt (2008).

According to Nunan (1991: 177) and Meara (2002), during the past decades the status of vocabulary and knowledge of words in a foreign language teaching have become increasingly important. One reason for this was the enhancement of communicative approaches to language teaching, and the fact that communication skills became more valued and needed in interaction with others. Moreover, as we know, communication is at part limited by one's knowledge of vocabulary. Thus, since then more weight has been put to vocabulary teaching in a foreign language as vocabulary can many times be taught in relation to a specific context or an area of expertise even such as ESP (English for specific purposes).

Many researchers (see e.g. Read 2000, Thornbury 2002, Nation 2008) have more recently come to the conclusion that specifically in the early stages of learning a foreign language as well as in using it, it is more beneficial to have a larger vocabulary than to know grammar. This is true, especially when meaning of content is concerned, and when one wishes to engage in, at least to some extent, comprehensible communication. In my opinion, this is still a valid notion. Furthermore, at the early stages of learning English, an orientation of a more detailed perspective toward form-meaning association is seen to be cogent, whereas at a later stage it is thought that more ample exposure is to benefit the learner in improving contextual knowledge (Schmitt 2008: 334). In Finnish schools grammar has always been seen as essential in language learning. Only recently have communication and interaction become more prominent and emphasized. Thus, I

can fairly well imagine vocabulary becoming more and more important as well, which is why all elements related to vocabulary learning, should be examined in more detail.

4.2 Vocabulary strategies

This section will present the issue of vocabulary learning strategies as they are closely linked to the major theme of the present study i.e. vocabulary task selection. First, the taxonomies of Nation (1990; 2001) and Schmitt (1993; 1997) are presented as a basis for strategy selection along with Nation's four part approach to strategies (2001; and with Gu 2007). Second, the learning strategy issue is also presented from the perspectives of different eras; Oxford (1990) from earlier on, and Macaro (2009) as a more recent one. This is to express how the issue of strategy use has developed in the course of time.

In learning a language there are many different styles to acquire it just like in anything a person might wish to learn. When learning a language, and especially vocabulary, we often have to try different strategies to find the best one that suits us as well as one that is best for the particular vocabulary in question - irregular verbs, specific terminological vocabulary or names of objects for example. Furthermore, at times the language itself might be easier to learn using a specific strategy. Perhaps the mother tongue of the person learning another language, the learning environment and even the culture and traditions of the language area might have an effect on the choice of strategy. Moreover, the age of the learner also has an effect on the choosing and using vocabulary learning strategies. It is important that a language teacher presents the students with different strategies and encourages students to try them in order to find the best one for each. Because language and especially vocabulary learning strategies are in connection to the present study as well, being an influential factor in task selection, the issue of choosing and using various strategies is therefore discussed here.

According to Nation (2008), teachers have to be aware of the students' capabilities and present as much tools for learning as possible, including a particular set of four learning strategies. Furthermore, students have to be ready to use the language and intentionally make use of the strategies offered, and must "eventually take on responsibility for their own vocabulary learning" (Nation 2008: 6). Nations' strategies to be taught (2007, as

quoted by Nation 2008:1) include: “strategies of guessing from context, learning to use word cards, using word parts, and dictionary use”. He has also suggested a three-part taxonomy (Nation 1990: 160) of handling words that are unfamiliar to the learner. These include “(1) guessing words from context, (2) using mnemonic techniques to remember word meanings, and (3) using prefixes, roots, and suffixes.” Furthermore, Nation (2001: 390) and later Nation & Gu (2007: 33-34) have compiled a four-part approach to strategies. The four parts include 1) *meaning-focused input* 2) *meaning-focused output* 3) *language-focused learning* and 4) *fluency development*. The first one means that the learner puts the focus on the text, which can be reading, listening or communication exercises. There might be items the learner does not understand but the amount of those should be fairly minimal. The goal is to learn the unfamiliar from the context without recognising it, and this is called incidental learning (see e.g. Nation & Gu 2007 and Schmitt: 2008:346-348). This might take multiple occasions of exposure of the text in question, which might not be very effective at first but the learning of words will happen eventually. Meaning-focused output means roughly the same as meaning-focused input but the vocabulary is learnt through writing and speaking i.e. producing the text. With the meaning-focused output the learner is repeating the text that he or she has heard and learns from that. Activities matching the learning process may include for example writing reports or talking about specific topics or texts. The third phase, language-focused learning, means that the learner’s focus is on specific items of language. The exercises can include “...pronunciation practice, studying new vocabulary and collocations, learning grammatical features, and deliberately giving attention to discourse features.” (Ellis 2005, as quoted by Nation & Gu 2007:34). The last part, fluency development, means exactly that. The learner encounters very little or no unfamiliar language at all and is expected to survive from the exercise quicker than before (Nation 2001:390). In the fluency development phase all the four language skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening are present. Activities at this level should develop the learner’s fluency in the use of language and should be compiled of easy material without unfamiliar words or grammar nor any aspects of discourse the learner is not acquainted with. In addition, the exercises themselves should be those that the learner has done previously. (Nation 2001, Nation & Gu 2007)

Schmitt (1993, 1997) has also developed a well-used taxonomy of language learning strategies for which he has used taxonomies and classifications of learning strategies created in previous research, for example that of Oxford's (1990), which is also presented later in this chapter. In the taxonomy Schmitt (1997:208-217) has divided the strategies under two major headings of *discovery strategies* and *consolidation strategies* (Schmitt 1997:208-217). The first is further divided into two strategies of determination strategies and social strategies. Simply put, when a learner uses a determination strategy, it means that the learner finds out the meaning of a word by looking at the word itself and its surroundings, and by using various reference materials (Schmitt 1997:208-209). Moreover, when using a social strategy, the learner primarily asks someone for help (Schmitt 1997:210). The consolidation strategies then have been divided into ten different categories (Schmitt 1997:211-217):

- 1) Social strategies: interacting in a group or with several speakers e.g. natives
- 2) Memory strategies: linking the word to prior information, trying to create an image to link the word with or put it into a group from where it can be recognised
- 3) Pictures/imagery: words are learnt by linking them to pictures telling the meaning or by coming up with an own perception of the word's appearance
- 4) Related words: looking up words that are familiar to the learner and matching the word with them
- 5) Unrelated words: connect the new word to something totally different and create an unusual link from which the word can be remembered
- 6) Grouping: link the new word to words that are close in meaning or putting them in a certain category
- 7) Orthographical or phonological form: by trying to learn what the word looks like, the way it is spelled and pronounced or by memorising its appearance and sound
- 8) Other memory strategies: for example memorising the word by trying to say its meaning differently, learning the lexical information about the word (e.g. word class or affixes)
- 9) Cognitive strategies: resemble the memory strategies; for example using helpful devices and saying or writing the word multiple times
- 10) Metacognitive strategies: are for assessing and dominating the learning process by looking at the learning process as a whole, mostly used when the learning is active and the learner needs to constantly be subjected to the language, for example being in contact with the language as much as possible (Schmitt 1997:211-217)

From this classification it is seen that grouping the strategies is not necessarily easy and as Schmitt (1997:205) says, at times a strategy can fall into more than one category or

can be difficult to categorise. Learners should, however, be aware of the various strategies available in order to find the ones that match their learning at a particular time. Moreover, it should also be taken into consideration that because learning a language is a long process and usually takes place over many years time, the use of strategies also varies depending on the learners' age and the level of proficiency (Schmitt 1997:223 and 225-226). Furthermore, the learners' opinion should always be considered when choosing and using a vocabulary learning strategy (Schmitt 1997:217). The table of Schmitt's taxonomy (1997:207) is included for clarification and easier reference

As stated before, Schmitt (1997) used a previous taxonomy created by Oxford (1990) as one of the strategy classifications upon which he then created a broader and more vocabulary oriented one on. Oxford, whose taxonomy was self-created, based it on *communicative competence* (i.e. a person's ability to communicate), which, according to her, should be the basis of every acceptable language learning strategy (Oxford 1990:8). She stated twelve specific features of language learning strategies (1990:9), which are as follows:

- 1) Contribute to the main goal, communicative competence.
- 2) Allow learners to become more self-directed.
- 3) Expand the role of teachers.
- 4) Are problem oriented.
- 5) Are specific actions taken by the learner.
- 6) Involve many aspects of the learner, not just the cognitive.
- 7) Support learning both directly and indirectly.
- 8) Are not always observable.
- 9) Are often conscious.
- 10) Can be taught.
- 11) Are flexible.
- 12) Are influenced by a variety of factors. (Oxford 1990:9)

According to Oxford (1990:8), the learning strategies work in a more general but also in a more specific ways to help the growth of the learner's communicative competence. Oxford (1990:8-9) divides the strategies into four larger groups, which include: *Metacognitive strategies* (e.g. planning and evaluating the learning), *affective strategies* (i.e. to trust that one can learn and determination to keep learning – keep active), *social*

strategies (interacting), *cognitive strategies* (e.g. analysing and memory strategies) and *compensation strategies* (to be able to continue despite possible adversities). When a learner progresses and his/her knowledge of the language grows, the strategy adapts accordingly to suit a specific purpose in the learning process (Oxford 1990:9). Furthermore, Oxford (1990:11-13) presents various factors influencing the choice in strategy use and also calls for *self-direction* (1990:10) from the learner, saying that he/she needs to take responsibility for the learning in trying to find the best strategy to use. I will not go into more detail of the aspect of the learner's responsibility, the role of the teacher in the learning process or the choice of a learning strategy as they are further discussed later on.

In her strategy system, Oxford (1990:14-22) presents two main categories which are further divided into six smaller groups. The two main ones are *direct strategies* and *indirect strategies*. The first is then divided into *memory*, *cognitive* and *compensation strategies* and the second into *metacognitive*, *affective* and *social strategies*. Oxford (1990:14) explains that the direct and indirect strategies back up one another, and that each strategy group is capable of connecting with and assisting the other groups.

The direct class is composed of memory strategies for remembering and retrieving new information, cognitive strategies for understanding and producing the language, and compensation strategies for using the language despite knowledge gaps...indirect strategies for general management of learning...is made up of metacognitive strategies for coordinating the learning process, affective strategies for regulating emotions, and social strategies for learning with others. (Oxford 1990:14-15)

Naturally, a system is not necessarily a definite or an exhaustive one and there is room for development via further study. Moreover, some variability in the classification and dispute over them cannot be avoided. Oxford (1990:16-17) admits to this and mentions the taxonomy to be a proposal that can and needs to be applied in practice.

Macaro (2009) first approaches the issue of strategy selection from the point of view of knowing oneself as a learner and knowing about different strategies and their existence even if one is not using those strategies. In other words this means "the relationship between knowledge and action" (Macaro 2009: 13). He then continues with some valid questions about the relationship between "knowledge-behaviour" stating that this has become a topic of discussion because of the "proceduralization" theory (Macaro 2009:

13-14). He asks the reader to think about the following: “If we do something so often that it becomes automatic, do we still ‘know’ about the behaviour? Does it still form a part of our ‘declarative knowledge’? In other words, can a strategy be subconscious behaviour?” (Macaro 2009:13). Furthermore he argues (2009:14) that “...strategies are conscious behaviours, they must be operationalized in working memory, although through extensive repetition they may become subconscious. This means that the learner is no longer aware that they are using them.” and says (Macaro 2009:14) that at a specific time if needed a strategy can be elicited to the learner’s working memory and it could then be adjusted to the specific learning situation. This notion certainly has much to do with the teaching of strategies in the school setting. Learners need to be introduced to learning strategies and be advised in using and choosing them even if they would then use them unknowingly.

Macaro (2009:15-16) also discusses the size of strategies or in other words the categorising of strategies according to their importance, which has been surrounded by much discussion. Roughly put, we can ask what actually constitutes as a strategy and what is merely a part of a larger entity called a learning strategy? Moreover, Macaro’s (2009:15) approach proposes that “...with these small strategy units we can build larger but flexible ‘clusters of strategies’ which *in combination* can be seen to be achieving (or trying to achieve) a particular learning goal in a specific task or learning situation.” Macaro then continues by saying that the learner can contribute to the cluster by bringing in more familiar and often used strategy parts as well as images that were created by the learning process i.e. what came to mind when acquiring the new lexical item (Macaro 2009:16). According to Macaro’s (2009:16) approach to analysing strategic behaviour, it is beneficial to look at it as having many good points. Macaro does not perceive the action of choosing a strategy only to be a type of a list of different strategies that might exist in doing an exercise. Instead his approach sees the strategy selection process as “a complex dynamic process” where the learner “deploys his/her linguistic resources in an orchestrated attempt to resolve comprehension problems.” Furthermore, Macaro’s (2009:16) idea suggests that strategic behaviour is not something one can use in any task resembling another without doing adjustments to it. The approach also refuses to put top-down strategies over bottom-down ones but rather sees them as equal in a way that they can be used together (see Macaro 2009: 16-).

Lastly, he suggest that “language learning strategies” and “language use strategies” should not be separated as concepts as they are too closely linked (Macaro 2009:16). As a conclusion to the approach, Macaro (2009:16) states it to be an attempt to demonstrate that in learning a language the using of strategies has much to do with the learning “having resulted from previous tasks (with ‘task’ being used in its broader sense) and *learning* takes place through modified use in new tasks.” Macaro also agrees with Dörnyei, who according to Macaro (2009:17) asks how can something be defined as a strategic action and then conclude another not to be a strategic action. From there, Macaro (2009:17) draws the definition of a good language learner; or what is it that makes one a good, or a bad, learner? And furthermore, what can then be said to be a good, or a bad, strategy? Moreover, Macaro (2009:17) puts the complex notion of a good learner and a good strategy into questions:

...strategies are good because they are used by good language learners; good language learners use good strategies. If we are saying that what you do with linguistic knowledge is not always a strategy, then what do you call all the other things that you do? Non-strategic behaviour? But what would non-strategic behaviour look like? (Macaro 2009:17)

According to Macaro (2009:18) the problem of defining strategies has been attempted to be solved by putting the different strategies together and forming units, as researchers have done. What this means is, that in order for a learner to be good at learning a language and in using strategies he/she has to be able to have a variety of strategies from which they can use one or more at a given time. Macaro’s (2009:18) solution to the problem has three main points: 1) the strategies must be small and be actions of the mind 2) everything that a learner does knowingly should be seen as a strategy if the learner has a specific learning goal 3) no good or bad strategies exist but instead a strategy can be seen as a working one if the small strategies are put together to form a larger entity of strategies and at the same time keeping the particular task in mind. With this notion Macaro (2009:19-20) also gives feedback on the previously discussed taxonomy by Oxford (1990) looking at it from various angles. One of the precise problems with previous categorisations of strategies Macaro (2009:19) mentions adults as being the focus group of the many questionnaires directed to finding out strategy selection. According to Macaro (2009:20), this has been one of the problems in the usage of questionnaires as younger learners are not equipped to answer very complex

questions, they cannot necessarily be able to put their own behaviour under the scope of inspection similarly to adult learners nor do they have enough patience to answer many questions. Furthermore, Macaro (2009:20) calls for more task-related questionnaires instead of those that are mostly skill-related ones. This, Macaro explains, is because if the questionnaire is dealing with a more specific task and the questions focus on that, then the answers are more likely to better correspond to the questions whereas if the questions were too far off from the current task it would be more difficult for the respondents to be accurate in their estimate of frequency of strategy use. As a conclusion Macaro (2009:21) states that the use of individual strategies, which are usually present while doing skill-based tasks, varies a great deal depending on the difficulty of the task as well as on the learner's linguistic capabilities. In addition, Macaro (2009:21) suggests that research is becoming more focused, moving towards a more specific way of questioning where the respondents' age and culture are being considered along with the task under inspection.

This section has looked at strategies and strategy selection from different points of view. It needs to be established that there are many factors that influence the choosing of a learning strategy when language learning, and especially vocabulary learning, is concerned. The specific task might need the learner to master new strategies or it might take time from the learner to find the right strategy to use when doing a particular exercise. The teacher can be a great help for the students and present them with different types of strategies to learn vocabulary. Furthermore, as presented earlier in this section, strategies can be created to match a longer period of vocabulary learning and that way, the results may be very positive in learning specific vocabulary on even more than one area of the four language skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing) though not all strategies necessarily match all the four skills and there are specific stages in acquiring vocabulary (Nation & Gu 2007: 85-93).

4.3 Factors that influence vocabulary learning

In this study the focus is on learning vocabulary in a foreign language and the special focus is on tasks. Which tasks are the most useful and effective ones according to teachers' and students' opinions. Teaching is extremely closely linked to learning of vocabulary and in a school setting one does not exist without the other. Furthermore,

one should not be overlooked while examining the other. Thus, we also have to take into account what the issues that prohibit vocabulary learning are. This should be from both the perspective of teaching and from the aspect of the students.

4.3.1 Unsuccessful learning

According to Wallace (1982: 9-13), there are some key issues of unsuccessful vocabulary learning that apply to teaching as well. He states eight of them to be exact:

- 1) inability to retrieve vocabulary that has been taught
- 2) use of vocabulary inappropriate to the given situation
- 3) use of vocabulary at the wrong level of formality
- 4) possessing the wrong kind of vocabulary for one's needs
- 5) using vocabulary in an unidiomatic way
- 6) using vocabulary in a meaningless way
- 7) incorrect use of dictionary
- 8) use of incorrect grammatical form, spelling, pronunciation or stress (Wallace 1982: 9-13)

I will not address the issues separately here but all eight of them should be considered when examining difficulties in the learning process. The inability to acquire vocabulary successfully can be a combination of many factors, rather than just one. Some difficulties can be more severe and harmful to the learning process than others but still need to be addressed. In a classroom of many, sometimes over thirty pupils, many of these difficulties can easily be left undetected and students may be left alone with their problems, which can accumulate into more challenging difficulties later on. At times the teacher needs to do very little to prevent the problems from arising and that is to give clear instructions and provide elaborating examples to each issue. In addition, when a teacher notices a possible problem or sees students struggling with a task, a pause could be in order to go through the issue again and make sure that the students understand. When necessary, those with most problems or the ones who still do not seem to comprehend, could be given further instruction and/or exercises to practice more. Furthermore, students should be brave and interested enough to admit if they do not understand something in order for them to get more advice at the exact point when the learning process becomes too arduous and before possible further conundrums start to accumulate. Needless to say, it is easier to fix something when it is not fully broken.

However, the learning process is teamwork and so it needs both the teacher's and the students' full attention to be successful.

4.3.2 Role of different factors in the learning process

As stated, learning is not a simple thing, and the teacher is not the only one responsible for the learning. The learner also has to commit to the learning process and take responsibility into his/her actions. Because of the previously fashioned rule in teaching, teachers have been seen as the ones in charge of the teaching and learning processes. They have been the ones students have listened to, the ones who have created the rules, and the ones who tell when to do something, why to do it, how to do it and even where to do it. Nowadays, however, the role of the teacher has changed and it is still changing. Oxford (1990:10) presents the teacher in a new light and uses the following words: "...new functions as facilitator, helper, guide, consultant, adviser, coordinator, idea person, diagnostician, and co-communicator." This is not to say that teachers have lost all power but that they are not merely the authority anymore and that more is expected of the students. Some have adjusted to this change better than others and in some ways the changes are still happening. This requires a lot from both the teacher and the learner. One aspect this influence weighs immensely on is the use of learning strategies. The strategy issue is also discussed earlier for example in Chapter 4.2 but needs to be touched upon here as well because the choice of a learning strategy, the teacher's ability to teach them and the student's capability and understanding of using them is what affect the learning of vocabulary also. If we are able to find the right strategy to match the learner, the task and the specific situation and needs, the learning process will become easier.

According to Oxford (1990: 10-13) there are several features of language strategies. Here I will only present a few that I consider to be the most important in relation to the influence of the actual learning process, which are *problem orientation*, *teachability* and *flexibility*. *Orientation*, in general means, that a strategy is used because of a certain reason (Oxford 1990:11). *Teachability*, then, means that a strategy can be learnt and one can practise using a particular strategy (Oxford 1990:12). And *flexibility* means that a strategy can change according to the user's needs (Oxford 1990:13). Furthermore, Oxford (1990:13) lists factors that influence the choice in strategy for example such as:

the stage of learning, task and teacher requirements, age, sex and general learning style. Simply put those who have been learning longer and are conscious about their learning use strategies more wisely (Oxford 1990:13). If we consider the influence of the strategies a learner uses on the learning outcome, we might see the clear link between them – if a learner constantly uses an unsuitable strategy; it will have an impact on the learning. In the worst case scenario the learning will stop all together but will at least come to a halt when facing difficulties due to an incorrect and unsuccessful use of learning strategy.

After looking at the choosing of learning strategies, it is natural to next take a look at task related issues, such as the *task planning* process, *task performance* and the influence of *task difficulty* itself in the learning of vocabulary as they are very closely related to the whole learning process and to the strategies learners use.

4.3.3 Task planning

When beginning to study and practise something language-related, in this case vocabulary, it is always good to do some planning beforehand (*pre-task planning*) to assess what is it that is required from the task, i.e. set some goals and find out the objectives for learning. Furthermore, as we go along in actually doing the task we might continue planning or adjust the plan according to the task's requirements (*within-task planning*). According to Ellis (2005:3) *task planning* is first and foremost problem solving as one needs to decide how to manage a situation. Moreover, Ellis (2005:1) says that many studies have shown that if and when learners are given instructions on how to perform a task they are given and when they have time to plan what they will be doing with the task their performance will be better language wise. As said, *task planning* consists of two parts; *pre- and within-task planning* the first happening before the execution of the task and the second during the execution of the task. In addition, *pre-task planning* is then divided into two parts; *rehearsal and strategic planning* (Ellis 2005:3). *Rehearsal planning* means just that, the learner is given the opportunity to see the task and have a kind of a “dress-rehearsal” before the actual “grand opening night” giving the learner a chance to practice the task while *strategic planning* then means that the learners are able to get acquainted with the task and the actual materials in advance to plan their strategy for the implementation of the task (Ellis 2005:3). Furthermore,

within-task planning can be assessed in relation to the pressure it creates to the learner, which can be fairly easily adjusted (Ellis 2005:4). These two sub-categories can be even further divided; for example into *guided and unguided planning*, where the learner's either do the planning with or without guidance. Moreover, *strategic planning* can also be looked at from the perspective of amount of participants, i.e. is the planning done individually or with other learners, or even with the teacher (Ellis 2005:5). Planning is something I will not explain further here, but must be established as it is what ultimately sets the starting point for doing any task, as well as from the part of the teacher, designing a good, suitable and functional task. Furthermore, planning definitely is something that has major effect on learning vocabulary – if the planning is done poorly; it affects the learning process from the beginning.

4.3.4 Task performance

Ellis (2005) and Skehan (1998) also discuss *task performance*, which I will discuss here briefly. Performance naturally has an effect on the learner's conception of his/her abilities in learning a language, and vocabulary. How a learner copes in doing a task also affects the outcome and learning results. As performance is the key issue on base of which our capabilities are being graded on, it is natural for students and teachers to pay much attention to it. According to Ellis (2005:17) *task planning* forms the basis for *task performance*, which depends on how much planning has been done and at which point (pre- or within task planning). In addition (Ellis 2005:17) it has an effect on what the learners do during the task (i.e. performance) as well as on the language they choose to use. Ellis (2005) explains the two competing models of Skehan (1998) and Robinson (2001a) on task-based performance as an example of differences in the field of study. Skehan's approach presents three productive aspects: 1) fluency 2) accuracy and 3) complexity and according to Skehan learners use those three aspects to different extent as to which aspect is put the most weight upon. In addition, fluency acquires the learner to use the memory-based system whereas accuracy and complexity need the rule-based system "as an assistant". Furthermore, complexity involves the learner taking risks; accuracy aspect means the learner is trying to accomplish an error-free result while being in control. Robinson's (2001a) model is an opposite view to that of Skehan's and says that learners are able to use various aspects of language simultaneously. Moreover, the ability to plan a task performance strategy and the amount of reasoning the task

requires sets the bar for the complexity of the task, and ultimately measures the performance (Ellis 2005:15-17). According to Ellis (2005:17) performance has much to do with second language acquisition, and he states five generalised assumptions which would need to be agreed upon. Furthermore, *task performance* and the influence planning has on it is yet lacking definite proof and needs more researching (Ellis 2005:17). For more see e.g. Ellis 2005, Robinson 2001a, 2001b and Skehan 1998.

4.3.5 Task difficulty

From *task performance* it is easy to move on to *task difficulty*, which is many times the reason for poor success in completing tasks, and in my opinion, especially those concerning vocabulary. If a task is not suitable for its purpose, it is for example too time-consuming and has complex instructions (or is lacking them all together), or is unfamiliar to the learner, it might be even impossible to master. Tavakoli and Skehan (2005) explain that the features of a task have a great impact on how the learner succeeds in completing it but that they do not all contribute straight to the difficulty level, at least not in the field of research. They also continue that there are multiple dimensions to difficulty as it is not a simple issue when dealing with performance in a language related task, and that if a certain attribute is being put too much focus on, others may gain less attention even when they should be equally important. This, they say should be further considered when researching task difficulty (Tavakoli and Skehan 2005:241). Furthermore, in her study of investigating task difficulty Tavakoli (2009) states that the difference in teachers' and students' perceptions of the issue needs more attention and says:

Although learner performance can indicate how difficult a task has been to a learner, it is also necessary to know how learners perceive and define TD and what factors actually contribute to their perceptions of TD, because such an insider perspective will broaden the current understandings of TD will assist language educators in designing and employing more effective language teaching materials. (Tavakoli 2009:2)

In addition, Skehan (1998) presents a three-part model for analysing tasks, also their difficulty. The parts are 1) *code complexity* 2) *cognitive complexity* and 3) *communicative stress*. The first, code complexity, relates to the linguistic intricacy, and the amount and properties of vocabulary. The second, cognitive complexity is further divided into *cognitive familiarity* and *cognitive processing*. Of these familiarity has to

do with the learner's knowledge of the topic, the type of the discourse and the task itself. Processing then affiliates with the organizing of information, the type of information and the amount of guessing one has to do in completing the task regarding the presented instructions. The third, communicative stress, in general means the time-related issues such as time given to complete the task, participants in the task, how much time the learner needs for the task, the length of the task and what is required in the answer (Skehan 1998: 99). According to Skehan (1998:100) this model presumes that the task "...will make meaning primary and have a relationship with the real world by giving learners something worthwhile to do under conditions which relate to real life." and that "...there will be cognitive component to the assessment of task difficulty, since this generates the meaning and gives the task substance." Both Skehan and Tavakoli critically discuss and compare the model of Skehan to the one of Robinson's (2001), which is also worth looking into but not discussed here as it would needlessly lengthen this section. The issue of task difficulty is however further discussed in Chapter 6, where teacher's and student's perspectives on the tasks reviewed in this study are compared.

We must, however, bear in mind that many of the studies that have dealt with *task planning*, *task performance* and *task difficulty* have focused on *communicative tasks* such as oral exercises (see e.g. Ellis 2005, Skehan 1998). Nevertheless, these aspects apply to any types of exercises even though they might thus far have been less focused on in the field of vocabulary studies. Therefore, these aspects have been presented here as well.

One of the things that must be considered when giving students a specific task is to ponder upon the difficulty and the suitability of the task in reflection to the students' capabilities. According to Skehan (1998: 97) the three issues affecting *task difficulty* are "...the language required, the thinking required and the performance conditions for a task." Skehan (1998:97) points out that many researchers think that some tasks are at times done using less difficult language. Furthermore, Skehan (1998:97-99) has compiled a three-part model to analyse tasks from the degree of difficulty: 1) *code complexity* 2) *cognitive complexity* 3) *communicative stress*. The first one means the difficulty of the language itself in the task; for example how difficult the vocabulary is

to the learner, how much vocabulary there is, how much variability there is in the vocabulary. In addition, it refers to the actual amount of language i.e. are there many, even unnecessary, words and is there a lot to comprehend at one time. The second is further divided into *cognitive familiarity* and *cognitive processing*; which mean the familiarity of the topic to the learner as well as the way in which he/she is capable of getting background information on the topic of the task, and the amount of processing the learner is faced with when doing the task. The third refers to the learning situation and the conditions in which the task is being done. This includes the amount of time available for completing the task, the student's own possible pressure towards the task, the number of participants in the task, the length of the task (i.e. how much time it takes), what type of answers are required and lastly the possibilities regarding the learner's own control of the task. In conclusion, it can be noted that the difficulty of the task is an essential factor when assessing tasks. The teacher must find tasks, to suit the needs of the students and meet the requirements of the topic that is to be learnt.

4.3.6 Intralexical factors influencing vocabulary learning

Lastly, some *intralexical factors* that might cause difficulties in vocabulary learning should be mentioned as well. According to Laufer (1997:141) these are “intrinsic properties of the word which may affect its learnability, properties which are related to the word's form and meaning”. As already established earlier by Wallace's eight points, Laufer (1997: 142) agrees in saying that the fact that a learner has to master many aspects before a word is learnt fully (see p.6 and Laufer 1997: 141 for more) adds the chance of words being difficult and thus learnt only in part. This is also because more than one of the areas can cause problems. Furthermore, Laufer (1997:142) also states that learners may know a word in a certain context but not in another and thus cannot necessarily use them. In addition, some words can be different in their level of difficulty when it comes using them i.e. some words need less effort to be remembered than others, some are at times lost and irretrievable from memory, whereas some words come instantly to mind. These are phenomena that many of us are familiar with when writing or speaking, at time even when using our mother tongue. Here are the intrinsic factors presented by Laufer (1997: 142-152):

- 1) pronounceability; some words are more difficult to pronounce than others – for example most people will find *strategy* a difficult word to say whereas *help* or *ill* are fairly easy to most
- 2) orthography; the way a word is written can cause problems in understanding when the sound-script correspondence varies – for example *bough* (oksa) or *itinerary* (matka-/reittisuunnitelma), which are not pronounced as they are written
- 3) length; a word's length can make it difficult to comprehend but it may at times be easier to figure out the meaning from clues in the word, for example morphemes – for example *establishment* (järjestelmä/perustaminen) or *incomprehensible* (käsittämätön)
- 4) morphology; features of inflection (e.g. irregular plural) and derivation (to divide the word into segments) can be problematic – for example *thesis/theses* (tutkielma), *child/children* (lapsi) or the words in the previous point
- 5) synformy i.e. similar lexical forms; similar looking words can be confusing and difficult to distinguish (ten categories) – for example *bear/bare/beer* (karhu/paljas/kalja)
- 6) specificity and register restriction; the wrong use of words in different contexts and mixing up more general words with more specific ones – for example if one was to give a presentation and used spoken and written language together thus making the presentation incoherent, or one would address another person with too much familiarity
- 7) idiomaticity; often many words to learn and what is written cannot be translated to the letter, words do not make sense when put together – for example *kick the bucket* (“potkaista tyhjää” eli kuolla), which does not mean to actually kick a bucket but to die put in a less nice way
- 8) multiple meaning; one word or form can have many meanings depending on the situation and context – for example *light* (kevyt/valo) or *miss* (neiti/kaivata) (Laufer 1997:142-152)

All of the above need to be acknowledged when vocabulary learning is concerned. Teachers need be aware of how a word can be learnt and what the possible hindering factors are. This also needs to be thought of when vocabulary is introduced and rehearsed. On the other hand, students need to be told that it is not always necessary to know everything in order to be understood and understand as natives themselves undoubtedly do not know every word and all its meanings and functions.

In addition to the already mentioned factors influencing the acquisition of vocabulary some issues outside the actual learning situation have to be mentioned here but will not

be discussed to a larger extent. These are; age, gender, the mother tongue of the learner, the size of the learner group and the actual surroundings where the learning process takes place. The first three cannot be changed whereas the latter two can be influenced on at least in some level if needed. All of these aspects are very briefly touched upon later when presenting previous studies done on vocabulary acquisition as well as while discussing the results of the present study, and therefore they are not discussed here.

4.4 The role of motivation in vocabulary learning

Motivation plays a major role in any learning situation and learning a language and vocabulary is no exception in the matter. Because motivation is a tremendously large issue and was not the main focus of this study, I will only fairly briefly discuss its influence on vocabulary learning in this section.

Muhonen (2004) along with many others have found out that motivation is of major influence in learning vocabulary, and language in general, but that there are many factors that cause motivational problems. In her study Muhonen (2004: 44-56) has divided her findings causing demotivation in students learning of English into five categories. They are in order from the most demotivating to the least demotivating as follows: “the teacher, learning material, learner characteristics, school environment and learner’s attitude towards the English language”. In the study Muhonen (2004: 37) had given an open writing task to 91 ninth graders who were asked to describe in detail what demotivates them from learning English. She found out that all the five main factors had many different aspects that played a role in language learning, and thus they are influencing the learning of vocabulary. The most prevalent to this study is the category concerning learning material, which according to Muhonen (2004: 58) was the second most demotivating factor by 22 %. According to her:

Both the textbook and the exercise book had qualities that did not please everybody. However, it was reported that the exercise book had contained slightly more demotivating aspects than the textbook. It was complained that the book had struck as being uninteresting and the exercises in it had been boring. Furthermore, some said that the exercises had been too difficult, whereas some wished they had been more challenging... The exercise book was also considered demotivating for containing tasks which had been pointless and meaningless... Once again, the lack of variation was stated

as a demotivating factor. It was complained that the same exercises had been repeated over and over... (Muhonen 2004: 51-52)

From this, it can be clearly seen that the learning material, including vocabulary tasks – though not separately mentioned, is a fundamental part of language learning and motivation.

Dörnyei (2003) has created a particular model for task motivation, called *the task processing system*, which incorporates three associated components: *task execution*, *appraisal* and *action control* (see Dörnyei 2003: 15). He explains it as follows:

Task execution refers to the learner's engagement in task supportive learning behaviors, following the action plan that was either provided by the teacher (via the task instructions) or by the student or task team. *Appraisal* refers to the learner's continuous processing of the multitude of stimuli coming from the environment and of the progress made toward the action outcome, comparing actual performances with predicted ones or with ones that alternative action sequences would offer...Finally, *action control* processes denote self-regulatory mechanisms that are called into force in order to enhance, scaffold or protect learning-specific action. Thus task processing can be seen as the interplay of the three mechanisms... (Dörnyei 2003: 15-16)

What he means is that when a learner is concentrated in doing an exercise, he or she constantly evaluates the process and if something that interrupts the process needing attention, the learner activates the action control system. This is thus, a continuous evaluation process in which the task is in a way put to a test weighing its suitability to learning and its value to the learner. That said, the task either motivates the student or not, and learning either does or does not take place. I find that especially in vocabulary learning tasks play a major part in motivating the students. Therefore, if a student is demotivated in any way, it is bound to be a factor in vocabulary learning.

4.5 Previous studies on vocabulary learning

In this part, studies done in the field of vocabulary research, and particularly those concerned with vocabulary learning, are introduced. As it has been brought about, learning a language is a long process. And learning vocabulary can take a long time and need much effort even from a native speaker of a particular language. It is impossible to learn or even know and recognise all the words there are in a language but to understand

how to learn best we need to study the learning process. Numerous studies have been done in the field of vocabulary research and so only a handful is presented here with regard to the present study. It needs to be mentioned, though, that the term used in studies to refer to a task can also be *activity* or *exercise*, and those terms are also used in the present study as synonyms for the term task.

Thus far fairly few studies have focused on the issue of vocabulary task selection and even fewer to the perceptions of the teachers and learners on tasks in relation to their difficulty level whereas quite many have been done concerning various vocabulary learning strategies. Let us first review some of those dealing with strategy, rather than task, selection.

Barcroft (2009) conducted a study on which strategies L2 learners use, and select, when intentionally learning vocabulary along with looking into how the selected strategies affect the learning performance. The results of Barcroft's (2009:1) study showed that students got better results from using *mnemonic technique* and *L2-picture association* than when they used *L2-L1 translation* and *repetition*. Furthermore, Barcroft (2009:1) found out that it was beneficial to use multiple strategies when recalling vocabulary was concerned. This suggests that many students may benefit more from memorising and visual aids than merely from repeating words and reading them. Moreover, it also indicates that we should use multiple strategies when learning vocabulary. Similarly, in Finland for example Marttinen (2008) looked into student's learning strategies in the upper secondary school and her results also suggest that using at least some strategies is good but using many and varying the strategies is a method which the so called good language learners use when learning another language. Yet another study, conducted nearly a decade earlier by Lawson and Hogben (1996) presented similar results and says "The learner must undertake some analysis of the to-be-acquired word-meaning complex and must then establish a representation of this complex in memory.... in learning vocabulary, the active, constructive elaboration of the word-meaning complex during acquisition influences its subsequent recall..." (Lawson and Hogben 1996:104). According to Carter (1987 in Lawson and Hogben 1996:104), words are learnt better when combined with some visual aspects, and that this way they can more easily be kept in the memory system for further use. This is easily understood as combining

techniques and aids is many times useful in a learning process of any skill. Ghazal's (2007) survey looked into vocabulary learning strategies in an EFL context and concluded that training in strategy use and selection ought to be given to students in order for them to learn more efficiently. Furthermore, strategies in vocabulary learning (and learning in general) should always be implemented by taking the "...student's needs, learning styles, proficiency level as well as the task's requirements." into consideration (Ghazal 2007:89). In addition, Mohseni-Far (2008) also surveyed the best technique for vocabulary acquisition and points out that many researchers have mostly been interested in finding out and upholding what they find to be the best strategy to obtain vocabulary in ones memory. In reality, learners tend to utilize a variety of strategies in combination." (2008:134) Furthermore, Mohseni-Far (2008:134) brings out the issue of there being more studies on incidental learning as it has been considered somewhat more interesting whereas intentional learning has gained less interest though it has many good aspects and should thus not be neglected when conducting research on vocabulary learning.

Even though there have been but a few studies done from the perspective of the present study, we shall take a glimpse to the vocabulary issue from that point of view also i.e. on how teachers and students perceive the suitability and difficulty of various vocabulary tasks. Hawkey (2006) came to the conclusion that the perceptions of teachers and students on language learning and task difficulty are not necessarily the same and thus they definitely need more looking into because it is to the benefit of all to find out what may help or hinder learning. Hawkey (2006:246) further concludes that the study especially revealed differences between teachers and students opinions when assessing the usefulness of grammar exercises and pair work. In addition, Hawkey (2006: 242-249) presents the similar findings of Nunan (1987 and 2004) and Peacock (1998). Like Hawkey, Tavakoli (2009a) looked into the perceptions of teachers and learners on task difficulty. According to Tavakoli (2009a:15) "...studies have indicated that the same classroom event is often interpreted differently by the teachers and learners, and suggest that there are perceptual mismatches between the instruction which makes sense to the teachers and the instruction which makes sense to the learners." In her study Tavakoli (2009a:15) also reveals that the teachers and students did not always find the same tasks similarly interesting to complete. Furthermore, it

could be seen that the teachers considered learners' age, gender, cultural background as well as their proficiency level to have an effect on how difficult they found a certain task to be (Tavakoli 2009a:14). Of these factors gender is also discussed in the study of Jimenez-Catalan (2003), and in the Masters theses' of Marttinen (2008) and Muhonen (2004), which are briefly included in Chapter 7, where the findings are presented.

4.6 Research questions

The goal of this study was to find out what the best ways of learning English vocabulary for Finnish L2 learners in middle-school are, and more precisely what the best task types to be used in acquiring English vocabulary from the perspective of both the teachers and the learners are. Furthermore, I aimed at finding out how these opinions possibly differ from each other. This would help English teachers to more easily plan tasks for lessons and choose those that are most likely to work best for their students. It would also help students to be more able to assess the vocabulary tasks they do in class and as homework, and to make it easier for them to assess their own study habits in their free-time thus enabling them to find the best way to acquire vocabulary. Furthermore, I want teachers to be able to find out how to best learn English vocabulary according to their opinion and how do they feel about the tasks in their study books, what they find useful and what less useful. As an additional note, I wanted to see what different task types are like and which of them are most commonly used and which perhaps overlooked, and what the reasons for using or passing them are. Furthermore, as there has been quite little research in the area of acquisition of L2 English vocabulary particularly concerning Finnish students, I find this to contribute to the topic. Moreover, there has been much research on for example teaching of grammar and the order- and strategies of vocabulary learning/teaching in general as well as comparison of task types. However, too little focus has been put on evaluating tasks that best suit the learning of English vocabulary for Finnish L2 students.

This study seeks to find answers to the following questions:

1. What types of tasks students and teachers see to suit L2 English vocabulary learning in middle school?
2. What types of tasks are used and which tasks are seen unsuitable in learning L2 English vocabulary and why according to teachers and students?

3. Are there differences of opinion between the teachers' and students' perception of vocabulary learning and vocabulary learning tasks?

In addition to the three main issues I will also briefly discuss time management; how teachers see vocabulary teaching and how they manage their time in planning vocabulary tasks and how much time do students use to studying vocabulary. These are issues that were also asked of the participants in order to find out how much effort and stress is generally put to the learning of vocabulary in the Finnish middle school English lessons and outside the school setting.

5 DATA AND METHOD

In this section I will introduce the data of the present study. The choosing of participants' and their background is explained in detail, and the construction of the questionnaires is further expounded upon. In addition, I will also explain the method of the study and how the data was then analysed.

The present study is mostly qualitative in nature, and in a way it is a survey in which the opinions of teachers and students were gathered via a questionnaire in order to find out their opinions on chosen vocabulary exercises and different ways on acquiring English vocabulary. However, some tables and figures are presented in order to better demonstrate and clarify the findings. In general, qualitative and quantitative theories intertwine and are not necessarily seen as separated thoroughly from each other (Hirsjärvi et al 2005:135-136) and that is the case in this study as well. Furthermore, the present study aims at finding out opinions about vocabulary exercises and in order to get as much information as possible in using a questionnaire, most questions are presented in a more structured manner (e.g. multiple choice) whereas a few are open questions that leave more room for elaboration. Thus, not all of the answers can be handled in the same manner when interpreting the results. According to Hirsjärvi et al, there are four characters that a study is depicted in but that more than one of these can be included in one study. These four characters are *mapping*, *explanatory*, *descriptive* and *predictive* (2005:138-139). This study is mostly mapping but also explanatory, as its purpose is to find out opinions and methods of vocabulary learning while trying to explain the reasons behind the opinions.

5.1 Method of data gathering

In order to have insight on how the pupils of Finnish middle schools view their learning of English vocabulary and how their teachers view their learning of English vocabulary, I included Finnish teachers of English in three middle schools. Additionally, I handed in a questionnaire to one group of pupils from each grade (7th, 8th and 9th) which were taught by the three teachers. The schools were located in the city of Tampere, in Finland. All the teachers were qualified teachers of English, which was also the main teaching language of the three teacher participants. Furthermore, each of the teachers

had a second teaching language; two had German, one Swedish. The participants had graduated from university as teachers between the years of 1999-2006, thus having teaching experience from about four to ten years. Moreover, the teachers were nearly the same age, in their forties, and had a fairly similar background in teaching as each of them had taught at least three years in middle school. In addition, two had some experience from upper secondary school and two from elementary school, and one also had experience in adult education. One of the participants was male and two females. The teachers were to choose a class for the study among the groups they were currently teaching. They were to choose a class based on who would have the most time so that it would not affect their schedule, and on whom they thought to generally be the most suitable considering the size of the group as I hoped to get about sixty participants all together. Basically the teachers were not given any instructions as to what type of group it should be in order for it not to have an effect on the results. Moreover, the teachers all had only a few groups to choose from so there were no specific qualifications needed for the group. In addition, when one teacher first had already chosen a certain grade, there were only the others left to choose from as the idea was to have one group of each grade. The intention in this study was to have one class of each year to represent that particular grade. As the resources were somewhat limited in confining to only one researcher, there was no time to conduct a larger scale study at this point.

Middle school was chosen as the setting of this study because I find it to be the most challenging environment for learning and for a teacher. Furthermore, I find teenagers to be in the crucial point where they can still be influenced quite extensively when language learning is concerned. Teenagers are, however, old enough to understand somewhat more complex concepts and tasks than elementary students and are also more equipped to learn new ways of acquiring language. In addition, they are already able to explore and understand their own ability to learn and assess their abilities more widely. Thus, teachers are able to use variable methods and tasks when working in the middle school setting. Also, as mentioned at the beginning of this research paper, little research has been conducted in this particular area in Finland and specifically in the middle school setting, which was why I saw it to be a suitable setting for this study. Lastly, middle school will probably be the place I will hopefully be teaching because my own interest lies mostly in that age group. With regard to this study, I hoped to gain versatile

information on tasks which are used in the middle school to offer a perspective to an area that is missing from the field of vocabulary study. Furthermore, I wished to find out the learning habits of middle school students outside school environment and their preferences when it comes to learning words. I particularly wanted to find out how well the thoughts of the teachers go with the thoughts of their students in what way the vocabulary should be taught and acquired.

The pupils participating in the study were all Finnish students of English who had English as their first foreign language (L2) beginning from the third grade. The first language of all the pupils was Finnish and no native English speakers took part in the study. None of the participants needed to be excluded because of poor skills in Finnish or not understanding the questions partly also because the questions were undergone by the teacher in giving instructions for filling out the questionnaires. As mentioned, one class per grade took part in the study. All the classes were from different schools located in different parts of Tampere. The students were aged between 13-16 years and had had approximately the same amount of English lessons during a study year. As a whole, there were 52 student participants of whom 21 were girls and 31 were boys. There were sixteen 7th graders, nineteen 8th graders and seventeen 9th graders. Two of the schools and classes used the same book series – *Key English* and one used *Smart Moves*. The same book series made it easier to find vocabulary tasks for the students to evaluate in their books but the fact that one class had a different book made no difference because as a whole the tasks were very similar in the books.

All three teacher participants were promised anonymity so thus no specific details of them are provided. In this study they are referred to as T7, T8 and T9 where the number presents the grade. They have also provided information on their age and education as well as on their previous work and study experience only for the background and validity purposes of this research. Therefore, no unnecessary information on those details will be provided. The three teachers vouch for their students' identities and have done all in their power to keep all the information given to be used in this study as secretive as needed to guarantee the anonymity of the student participants. Therefore no permission from the guardians of the students has been gathered and all participants had

the option to decline from participating. In each school a permission of the principal to conduct this study was asked.

In trying to have people participate in the study was not that easy as many teachers are very busy especially during spring time and may consider their contribution be lacking valuable information. Furthermore, some declined also because they felt that the classes they were teaching would not be suitable objects for study for various reasons. These schools and participants were chosen because the schools were easily approachable, accessible and the participants were eager in contributing to a study that would enhance learning and give them some insight on how an important part of learning a language can best be obtained. In addition, after having explained the situation and the goals of the study to those interested, I was certain I would encounter positive attitude towards the subject of vocabulary learning thus obtaining valuable and meaningful content to explore in this study. Moreover, there was no need in this particular study to have schools from totally different areas as the schools chosen represent the average school- and learning environment of the Finnish middle schools to a requisite extent.

I first contacted teachers via email during the spring of 2010 to ask their willingness to participate in the study. I received a total of seven answers from the schools to which I had sent the invites. Many declined but I was, however, able to find enough participants. I arranged appointments with the three teachers. The questionnaire to be handed out to the students was sent to the teachers to look through in advance via e-mail. This was in order for them to get a more thorough idea of the study and to better prepare for the meeting in the event that they would have to present clarifying questions but also to be more able to explain the study questions when giving instructions to their students.

The actual study was conducted during the months of March, April and May of 2010. I arranged a meeting with each of the teachers individually in which both questionnaires, that of the students and the one for the teachers were gone through. In addition, I explained the teachers what type of instructions they were to give to the pupils and how they should then handle the questionnaires. Furthermore, a timetable for conducting the survey and for me to have the answers was set. Moreover, with each teacher we looked

through the exercise book currently in use and decided on the vocabulary tasks for the pupils to evaluate. With the teachers the implications of the study and its significance along with the students' capacity for participating were discussed. Each meeting lasted approximately 45 minutes. The teachers then set a convenient time that matched the participant classes' timetable for the survey to be done and afterwards delivered the questionnaires. One teacher brought them to me in person, one sent them in the mail and from one teacher I personally collected the papers.

5.2 Method of data construction

The questionnaires of this study, those given to the teachers' and the students', are similar in base but the questions have been altered to better suit the participants' understanding of the subject that is vocabulary acquisition. In addition, the teachers' questionnaire is a little longer as it contains an extra section covering teacher-work related questions as well as room for justification arguments at the end of each question in part one. The students' questionnaire is five pages in length and the teachers' questionnaire six pages in length.

Both of the questionnaires were designed simultaneously and both reviewed and piloted on several occasions after which they were polished according to suggested improvements. The teachers' questionnaire was looked through by two lecturers at the Department of Languages at the University of Jyväskylä as well as by some of my teacher colleagues in the seminar group I participated in. They all read the questionnaires several times and made suggestions as to what could be made clearer, easier to comprehend and interpret, and gave good advice. The student questionnaire was examined mainly by the same people but it was also tested with two middle school students belonging to the target group of the study, one male (13 years) and one female (15 years), who then gave their insight on how comprehensible the questions and alternatives in them were considering the age of the actual participants.

As a basis for the questionnaire I also used my previous candidate's thesis (Keski-Kastari, 2009) along with a small scale study carried out with a study partner during teacher training in the spring of 2009 because both included questions related to the

same topic. The interview questions of the candidate's thesis and the questionnaire of the study are enclosed as Appendices 1 and 2.

5.2.1 The teacher questionnaire

The three teacher participants answered questions related to vocabulary learning of Finnish L2 learners of English. They were instructed to think of the questions from both their own as well as from the student's perspective. The questionnaire (Appendix 3) was similar to that of the students but the questions were formed little differently. The teachers were supposed to think of the questions as to how they see students acting in vocabulary learning according to their expertise and knowledge of the learning process while also taking into account the age of the students. The questions mostly dealt with the same issues as the students' questionnaire. However, in the teacher's version of the questionnaire, each question in the first part was followed by a follow-up open question where the teacher's were to explain their answer. Moreover, the teachers also had one more section of seven questions that were meant to determine the teachers' opinions on teaching English language and vocabulary in middle school as well as to an extent evaluate their own teaching.

5.2.2 The student questionnaire

The pupils of each class answered questions related to their learning of vocabulary. They received a five-page questionnaire including three sections accompanied by some background questions for. The first section of the questionnaire covered the basic issues of language learning and was constructed in a multiple choice format. The pupils were to choose from alternatives, what they consider the most important part of language study to be, which of the areas they feel to be the most difficult to learn and which the easiest to learn, and which of the areas they practise the most.

The second section aimed at finding out how the pupils see and evaluate vocabulary exercises in their own study books. They were presented five examples of vocabulary tasks, four of which were from the study books currently in use and chosen by me and their teacher. The tasks were 1) fill-in-the-blanks 2) a sentence translation task 3) a conversation rehearsal 4) word combination task/word maze and 5) vocabulary test. All

of the tasks had also been completed by the students and they were not too multilayered (i.e. did not include many simultaneous aspects of vocabulary or grammar). This was in order to rule out any misconceptions of unfamiliarity and confusion as might have occurred if the tasks had been new to the pupils. As said, the fifth task was an example of a possible basic vocabulary test that the students might have done during class for example when testing if they had learnt the vocabulary of a study chapter or of a certain group of words related to a specific topic. In the case of the questionnaire the area of words was names of animals that were to be translated from Finnish to English or vice versa. The test included ten words overall, five in each language. In each of the five tasks, the ones in the study books and the vocabulary test, the pupils were asked to evaluate each task on five different aspects. The aspects were put on a scale and on one end of the scale there was a positive word and on the other end a negative opposite word. The pupils were asked to place a cross on a line between the words to a place that represented their opinion of the task. They were given an example to clarify the filling in of their answers. See Figure 1 below.

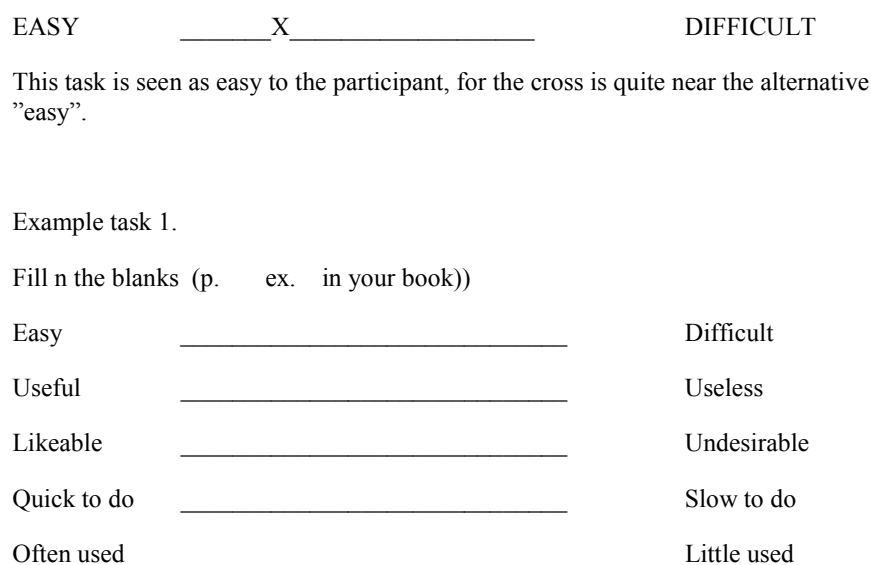


Figure 1

The third section related to the learning of English vocabulary in the pupils' free-time as well as in covering their use of time. First they were presented a table in which were sixteen different ways of learning vocabulary. The students were asked to choose from four options on each account, how often they use the way in question. They then ticked

the appropriate box. The alternatives were: *often, sometimes, rarely and never*. The presented ways varied from e.g. watching movies/television without subtitles to doing extra exercises from their books. After filling out the table the students were asked a couple of questions related to the table. They were to choose their favourite and their least favourite way and explain their choices. As a conclusion the pupils were also asked to evaluate their use of time during a week on vocabulary tasks that were assigned to them by the teacher. They had six choices to choose from. Lastly the students were asked to choose from five alternatives as how important they see vocabulary learning to be and to briefly justify their choice. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix 4.

5.2.3 Looking into the study books and choosing examples

In two of the three schools the same book, *Key English (7and 9)*, was in use. In the 8th grade school, the book was *Smart Moves*. This was helpful in choosing the tasks to be evaluated. Moreover, I had also taught classes in which the same books were in use, which meant that the book series was familiar to me as well. This was also helpful as the tasks used in the books were familiar to me and it thus saved time while going over the books while choosing the tasks. All the teachers told what they had done with the students from the books during the study year; which exercises had been done and which texts had been gone through. This was to choose the tasks to be evaluated partly on the basis of familiarity but also according to their suitability for the definition of a certain “task heading”. The exercises adopted to be evaluated were chosen in cooperation by each teacher and the researcher. First the eighth graders participated, second came the seventh graders and third the ninth graders. Both, the researcher as well as the teachers suggested a task and its suitability was weighed. The length of the exercise and its general difficulty were pondered. Finally an exercise that the students had done was chosen – this made the evaluation process easier as the task was familiar and it was easier for the students to remember. All the exercises were basic tasks which did not include too many “moving parts”, this meaning that they did not have too many aspects for the student to consider and concentrate on simultaneously. It was agreed that if necessary, the teacher was to explain to the students what was the purpose and goal of a particular task, i.e. what was meant to be done in the exercise. This was if for example a student had forgotten about the particular exercise, had been absent from the class

were the task in question had been done, or had neglected to do homework for some reason.

The questionnaires were written in the participants' native language which was Finnish. The use of Finnish was justified because of the validity of the students' answers, therefore leaving less room for misunderstandings. In addition, using Finnish in the questionnaires created less pressure for the teacher to explain the questions to the students and was thus also less time-consuming. The researcher was also a native Finnish speaker and the use of Finnish was a natural choice of language to ensure the fluency and easiness of all communication. Moreover, Finnish was to make the language of the questionnaires more familiar and approachable to increase student's understanding of the perhaps not so familiar concepts. Furthermore, Finnish was used to make arising difficult points more easily explained in the evaluation and research process leaving less room for possible misinterpretation.

Instead of using an unstructured questionnaire in which all the questions would have had a place for open answers, and the questions would have needed more explaining and thought on the students' part, a more structured format was chosen. The participants were given alternatives/suggested answers in the questionnaires. This enabled the answers to more easily be given in the fairly short amount of time the students had to complete the questionnaires during one lesson of approximately forty-five minutes (including time of instruction by the teacher). In addition, in using the structured format, it was possible to find more detailed answers to the research questions while simultaneously exploring the ground as to what could also be taken into account or researched further and more widely in the future. Furthermore, allowing the participants choose from ready-made options was something that I saw crucial in saving the time of the teacher-participants. Their questionnaire was structured similarly to those of the students mostly for the purpose of comparability. In addition, the already short amount of time that can be spent on work outside the curriculum set some limits to the extent of the study that was possible to be conducted during a somewhat short time-span. The multiple choice questionnaire with only a couple of open questions was also seen as easier for the students to fill in as well as for the researcher to interpret to avoid possible misunderstandings.

5.3 Method of data analysis

The data of the present study, as mentioned, was received from the teachers after all the participants had filled in the questionnaires. Each of the three class level questionnaires were kept separate so that they would not accidentally get lost or get mixed up and placed for safe keeping. They were also divided according to gender and the number of participants was verified to ensure that there was enough data to match the original plan. The teacher questionnaires were looked through first because of time issues as there were only three and the answers were also more easily interpreted and categorized compared to the student questionnaires. Furthermore, this was because the teacher questionnaire contained additional questions, which were dealt with separately and because the teachers' perceptions were to be presented first. The student questionnaires were then looked through in class order from 7th to 9th. They were first examined as a whole to get the first impressions and "the bigger picture" and then more closely one section and question at a time. That is also the way the results are presented in Chapter 6, one question and section at a time, the teacher view being presented first.

In section 6.3.2 students' opinions on the tasks are discussed. Because of many variables no clear table of the results could be presented and thus the results are explained fully only in writing. The findings have been reviewed on a percentage scale 100%-0% where 100% is the most positive opinion on each criteria of evaluation and 0% is the most negative opinion. To further clarify the method of interpretation, below in Figure 2 is an example of the reviewing of task one (fill-in-the-blanks) evaluated by three 9th grade students.

EASY _____ X _____ DIFFICULT

This task is seen as easy to the participant, for the cross is quite near the alternative "easy".

Example task 1.

Fill in the blanks (p. ex. in your book))

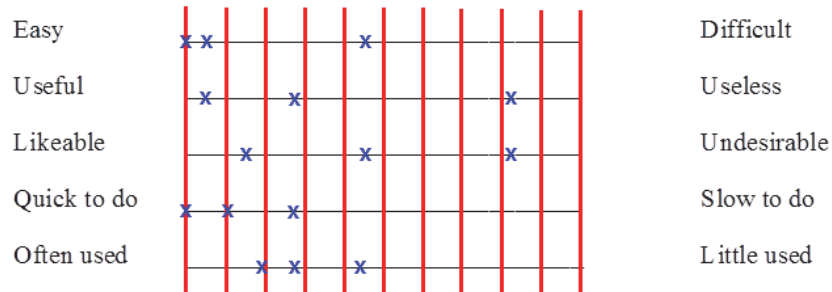


Figure 2.

The students have evaluated the task on five different criteria and drawn an x on the line to represent their opinion. Each student opinion was looked at on each criterion of each of the five tasks. The line on each criterion was divided in ten 10% sections (total 100%) of 6mm in length. An overhead film was placed on top of each student questionnaire to check to which of the 10% part of the line the student had placed the cross. From that it could be concluded how many students had evaluated a certain task to be for example 70% on the scale, which would mean fairly easy. The teacher questionnaires were interpreted and handled in a similar manner.

The student questionnaires were also first looked through with a focus on issues outside the actual topic of this study. The answer sheets were examined in order to rule out any difficulties and inconveniences caused by for example incoherent handwriting, blank answers - which might give cause for discarding a specific study subject or answer - or possible problems in understanding a question, i.e. in the case that a participant had not answered the question properly.

In the next chapter the findings of the present study are introduced in more detail. The first part will look at the teachers' and students' opinions in general. The second and third part will then focus on the evaluation of the tasks. Furthermore, the fourth part will introduce the vocabulary learning outside the school setting and the fifth part focuses on

time management. Lastly, the sixth section will cover the teachers' views on the importance of vocabulary.

6 FINDINGS

In this section I will introduce what was found out in the questionnaires and present the teachers' and students' thoughts on learning vocabulary and their views on vocabulary task selection and use. The topics that came about in the course of the study are divided into seven sections according to their main idea and focus of the questions to create a cohesive entity which is then easier to review. The first section examines the teachers' opinions to more detail. The second section concentrates on the students' views while the third section then presents the teachers' and students' evaluation of the tasks in the study books. The fourth section covers the ideas of learning vocabulary outside the school and the fifth section presents issues related to time management in vocabulary learning. The sixth and final section presents the teacher's views on important aspects in teaching and learning L2 vocabulary in English.

6.1 Teachers' opinions in general

In this chapter the teachers' views on the students' learning of English vocabulary are discussed. Here the general ideas expressed by the three teachers are presented in the light of their professional perspective from the point of view of an observer of their students' that relies mostly on their vocational expertise.

The teachers were to review the same tasks as the students from their point of view. In the first part of the questionnaire (see Appendix 3) there were four questions and on each question the teachers were to choose one from six alternatives in learning a language that they found to match their opinion. The alternatives were: a) grammar b) speaking c) vocabulary or words d) correct pronunciation e) reading comprehension f) understanding speech. The questions were as follows: 1) What is the most important aspect in learning a language? 2) Which of the mentioned aspects do you find the most difficult to teach? 3) Which of the mentioned aspects do you find easiest to teach? 4) To teaching of which aspect do you use the most time in your lessons?

To the first question two of the teachers, T8 and T9, answered similarly finding speaking to be the most important aspect in learning a language whereas T7 found understanding speech the most important:

Example 1.

...kaikki osa-alueet ovat tärkeitä, eikä niitä voi laittaa tärkeysjärjestykseen. Ja kaikki vaikuttaa kaikkeen. Jos kuitenkin joku pitää valita, niin kai sitten arkisten tilanteiden ymmärtäminen suullisessa kommunikoinnissa on olennaisinta. (T7)

...all the aspects are important, and they cannot be arranged according to importance. And everything affects everything. If one has to choose one, then I suppose understanding everyday situations in oral communication is the most essential. (T7)

However, all the teachers concluded in their explanations that coping in everyday situations and being able to communicate is vital. The most difficult to teach according to T8 and T9 is the right way to pronounce, which was mainly because they found their own speaking skills to be lacking in a way because they are not native speakers of English and thus not the best example. T7, then, said that reading comprehension is the most difficult to teach because comprehension plays the main part and especially when the poorer students are in question, they have to “get a grip” of the material, which can prove to be time consuming at least. When asked, what would be the easiest to teach, T7 and T8 had the same opinion. According to them, grammar is the easiest part. This was because they had had a teacher focusing on grammar in school and they were of the opinion that they were well equipped and their own interest in grammar provided a good foundation. T9 felt vocabulary was her strongest suit mainly because vocabulary provides the most means:

Example 2.

Sanojen kanssa on kiva “leikkiä” vaikka mitä ja tykkään erityisesti korostaa esim. teksteistä tiettyjä sanoja ja kertoa niille rinnakkaissanoja tai johdannaisia jne. (T9)

It is nice to “play” all kinds of things with words and I especially like to emphasize for example certain words in texts and give synonyms or derivations for them etc. (T9)

So to develop an exercise or task further is something to consider. In the fourth and final question as to what takes up most time during lessons, T7 and T9 said it to be grammar because certain things are needed to be taught in a certain grade (in terms of the National Core Curriculum) and because in teaching grammar the teacher has more responsibility for the subject area is more complex and cannot be left to the students comprehension.

6.2 Students' opinions in general

This section will look at the students' opinions on the learning of English vocabulary which was the issue of the first part of the questionnaire. The students' view on their general opinion as to how they value vocabulary learning compared to other aspects of language learning is discussed. The students and teachers were asked the same questions in different forms but the alternatives were the same.

Similarly to the teachers, there were four questions and on each question the students were asked to choose one from six alternatives in learning a language that they found to match their opinion. Again, the alternatives were: a) grammar b) speaking c) vocabulary or words d) correct pronunciation e) reading comprehension f) understanding speech. The questions, then, were as follows: 1) What in your opinion is the most important aspect in learning a language? 2) Which of the mentioned aspects do you find the most difficult for you to learn? 3) Which of the mentioned aspects do you find the easiest for you to learn? 4) Which of the mentioned aspects do you practise the most? There were all together 52 student participants in the study; seventeen 9th graders, nineteen 8th graders and sixteen 7th graders. The results of the whole group of 52 participants are presented together and the answers processed here as an entity, although on occasion class level answers are brought about as well.

To the question of the most important aspect in language learning, the students mostly answered it to be speaking. It got a total of 24 supporters, whereas for example correct pronunciation only got one supporter. The students were in agreement in the second question as well. Twenty-six of the students were of the opinion that grammar is the hardest part to learn. Speaking was chosen by six students, correct pronunciation was chosen by eight students and understanding spoken language was also chosen by six students. The other aspects received no votes or only one to three had chosen one of them as being the most difficult to learn. When asked about the easiest aspect to learn, the students' answers were less cohesive. Thirteen students chose vocabulary and words as the easiest to learn, fourteen students chose understanding speaking and eleven students chose speaking as being the easiest aspect in learning English. In comparison, only one student found grammar to be the easiest. The other aspects also had a few

supporters; correct pronunciation five answers and reading comprehension also five answers. When it comes to practising, speaking received the most votes with fifteen supporters. The second most practised aspect was vocabulary and words with fourteen votes. The least practised aspect was right pronunciation with only three answers. The other aspects were placed in between; grammar with nine supporters, reading comprehension with six supporters and understanding speaking with four supporters.

6.3 Task types – evaluating vocabulary tasks in the study books

This section examines answers to the evaluation of the vocabulary tasks in the student's books asking how the teachers and students feel about the tasks that are in the books they use.

6.3.1 Teachers' views

In the second part of the questionnaire the teachers were to evaluate five different vocabulary exercises. Four of the exercises were taken directly from the study books currently in use (*Key English Workbooks 7 and 9, and Smart Moves Exercises 2 – for 8th grade*). These exercises were 1) a fill-in-the-blanks exercise 2) sentence translation exercise 3) discussion exercise 4) word combination/word maze exercise. The fifth task to be evaluated was a vocabulary test of ten animal words, which was to represent one type of vocabulary test. Each exercise was to be evaluated on five different aspects by placing a cross on a line between a positive and a negative to match the opinion of the participant. The aspects of evaluation were: easy – difficult, useful – useless, liked – disliked, fast to do – slow to do, often used – seldom used (see Chapter 5.3). The answers were looked at on a percentage scale where the positive end was 100% and the negative end 0% and the place of the answer cross was estimated on 5% accuracy using the previously mentioned method (see p.53-54). In the teachers' opinion the fill-in-the-blanks exercise (or cloze exercise) was fairly difficult as T8 gave it 55%, T7 30% and T9 40% (100% being easy). They, however, found it to be very useful because T7 gave the task a 90% score, T8 an 85% and T9 a 95% score. On likeability the exercise got 90% from T9, 75% from T8, when T7 thought it to be less likeable with a 50% score. The teachers mostly agreed on the time used on such task, T7 gave it 60%, T8 70% and T9 75%. There was also quite a small difference of opinions also on the last variable.

T8 said the cloze task is used about 50%, T7 and T9 saw it to be used more often, 70% and 75% worth. The second exercise was a sentence translation. The teacher's opinions on its difficulty varied. T8 gave it 45% thinking thus it to be fairly difficult, T7 thought it to be even more difficult with 20% whereas T9 gave it a 75% score considering it to be fairly easy to do. All teachers agreed on the task's usefulness giving it a 75-90% score. T8 and T9 thought that students would consider the translation exercise to be less likable with 40% and T7 thought it to be even less so with only 15% score. The same happened with the time evaluation with nearly the same percentages. Lastly, T8 and T9 agreed on the fact that translation tasks are commonly used giving it 90% and 95%. T7, however, said it to be less common with 40%. Thirdly the teachers were to evaluate the discussion exercise of which they had fairly similar opinions on all accounts. Only on the first criteria T7 had a difference of opinion giving the task a 45% score while T8 and T9 thought discussion to be much easier with 75%. In addition, T8 thought doing the exercise would last a bit longer and gave it a 50% score. All other points received a score between 100-70,% from all the teachers, which means the participants thought the task to be useful, likable, quick to do and often used. The fourth task then was the word combination/word maze exercise. T7 and T8 gave it 75% on its easiness while T9 considered it to be more difficult with a 30% score. T8 thought the exercise to be very useful (85%), T7 and T9 less so (40% and 50%). Furthermore, T7 and T8 agreed that the students like doing these types of tasks with 85% and 90% but T9 gave it only 50%. All three teachers agreed that the exercise would be quick to do giving it 100-75%. T8 said the task was used often (80%), T7 said it to be used very rarely (10%) and T9 evened the situation saying it used quite often (60%). The last task was the vocabulary test about animal words. The teachers agreed that the task is easy with a score of 100-70%. On usefulness T7 gave it 40%, T8 60% and T9 85%. Teachers 8 and 9 thought that the students like doing vocabulary tests of this type (95% and 90%), whereas T7 thought it to be less to the students' liking (65%). The exact same opinions, and percentages, were given to the task on the attribute of time consumption. T8 and T9 have noticed vocabulary tests being used often (95% from both) while T7 said it is not that common (20%).

There were also six follow-up questions on the exercises: 1) Which of the exercises do you think the students like to do the most? 2) Which of the exercises do you think the

students find the most unpleasant to do? 3) Which of the exercises do you think is the most difficult for the students to do? 4) Which of the exercises do you think is the easiest for the students to do? 5) Which of the exercises in your opinion is the most suitable for vocabulary teaching? 6) Which of the exercises in your opinion least suits vocabulary teaching? When answering these questions the teachers were instructed to think of them from a general point of view but also from the perspective of the students they teach. Each teacher answered differently on the first question. T8 thought that the word combination/word maze was the likable one; T7 thought the students find the discussion exercise the best, and T9 assumed the students prefer the vocabulary test. When the least favourite exercise was to be named, T8 thought the students would not like the discussion exercise whereas T7 and T9 were of the opinion that the translation would be disliked the most among the students. According to T7 and T8 the students would most likely hold the translation exercise to be the hardest one, when T9 assumed it would be the fill-in-the-blanks task. The easiest to complete according to the students would be the word combination/word maze task, thought T7 and T8. T9, however, answered that it might be the vocabulary test. Lastly, T7 and T8 also agreed that the best way to teach vocabulary is via the translation exercise but T9 leaned towards the word combination/word maze exercise.

6.3.2 Students' views

Likewise the teachers, the students were to evaluate the tasks (Appendix 5) in their study books. Because there are many more student participants compared to the teacher participant, the student answers are looked at in a more general level regarding each of the five evaluating aspects. The exercises to be evaluated were 1) a fill-in-the-blanks exercise 2) sentence translation exercise 3) discussion exercise 4) word combination/word maze 5) vocabulary test of ten animal words (not in the study books). The aspects of evaluation were: easy – difficult, useful – useless, liked – disliked, fast to do – slow to do, often used – seldom used. This part of the students' answers is looked at from the perspective of each class level individually because of the underlying assumption from the part of the researcher that there are differences of opinions between the class levels especially on the easy – difficult aspect. This is because the age of the students most likely has an effect on the perception of the level of exercise difficulty (see e.g. Tavakoli 2009a:14) which may be dependent on for example the

grammar parts of the particular exercise/chapter to which the exercise is related to. In addition, the general language requirement level of the particular grade differs thus making the requirements of the tasks vary to an extent on each grade. Furthermore, to make the section clearer, the task and the student evaluations to them are presented in the order from one to five.

The first task was the fill-in-the-blanks. Most of the 7th graders found the task fairly easy with 70-80% score, only three students giving it a lower score (around 50%). The 8th graders had a more varying opinion on difficulty; eleven out of the nineteen students thought the task to be quite easy (100-80% score) while there were also seven who gave the task a score of 30-60%. The task was easy according to the 9th graders as only one student gave it a 50% score and the other fifteen over 80% score. All the grades found the task also rather useful with mostly over 70% scores and none of the students gave the task less than 50%. On the likability of the task, the students were less in agreement. The 7th graders gave the task mostly 80-60% (11/16 students). Six of the 8th graders gave the task a 50% score, two gave less than that while the rest (eleven) gave it over 70% score thinking the task to be quite nice. The 9th graders generally liked the task with only 7/17 students giving the task 50% score or under. Most students on all grades thought that the fill-in-the-blanks was a quick exercise to do, especially the 9th graders (all over 70% score). Overall only three students gave the task a less than a 50% score. This type of task, according to the answers, is most used in the 9th grade as fourteen students out of the seventeen gave the exercise a score of over 70%. The 8th graders were less familiar with this type of task with mostly less than 60% score. Lastly, the 7th graders were also familiar with the cloze task; most giving it an over 70% score.

The second task was the sentence translation exercise. The 9th graders opinion on easiness was mostly between 100% and 70% (10/17 students), only three giving it less than a 50% score. According to the 8th graders the task was also quite easy; ten of the eighteen students gave it over 80%, four gave it 50% and only two less than 50%. The 7th grade opinions were rather similar with four students considering the task easy (over 70%) and four as more difficult (less than 40%); the other half giving the task a score of something in between (70-40%). On usefulness the task received mostly a score of over 80% from all the grade levels with only a few disagreeing votes on each grade. When it

comes to likeability, the 7th graders were less enthusiastic about translating as most gave the task a 50% score or less. Among the 8th graders the opinions varied more; nine of the eighteen students gave the task an 80-50% score, five thought the task to be nice with over 80% score and only one student gave the task less than 50% with two giving it exactly 50%. The 9th graders liked the task less. Eleven of the students gave the task less than 50% and most even under 30%. Only six of the seventeen students gave the task over 70% score on likeability. Students on all class levels thought translating to be fairly slow to do with only a few disagreeing opinions on each grade; most given percentage was between 60-40%. It appeared that sentence translation tasks are very common as on all the grades most students gave a score of over 70%, which was actually one of the most predictable points of the evaluation because translation exercises are usually considered to suit many types of situations in language learning and not just to vocabulary learning as they can easily contain many aspects, for example rehearsing grammar, vocabulary and reading simultaneously.

The third task to be evaluated was the discussion exercise. Only a few of the 7th graders considered the task to be easy, most thought it to be somewhat difficult giving the task 70-60% score. The 8th graders were of the same opinion with many giving the task a score under 50%. Merely two students gave the task a 50% score and eight of the eighteen students an above 50% but under 70% score. However, the 9th graders thought the exercise to be quite an easy one giving it a score between 100-70% with only one exception (circa 40%). As for the score on usefulness, most of the 7th graders considered the task to be a good one giving a score of 100-80% with only three differing opinions (two of 70% and one of 50%). The 8th graders, however, varied more in their evaluation; three gave a score of 50%, four under that and the remaining eleven a score between 90-60%. Lastly, ten of the 9th graders gave the exercise a score between 100-70%, four gave a score of 60% and three a score of 50%. Generally the 7th graders liked the conversation exercise; most gave it a score of 70% and only two less than 50%. Of the 8th graders ten found the task quite likeable with a score of 80-60% but seven of the eighteen students gave it a score under 50%. The 9th graders favoured the task the least as only four participants gave the task a score over 50%; five students gave 50% and the rest of the seventeen less than 50% (circa 40-30%). Most of the 7th (11/17) and 9th (10/16) graders thought that the exercise was quick to do, whereas the 8th graders were

more divided. Half of the 8th graders gave the exercise a score between 100-70%, four gave it a score of 50% and the rest a score of less than 50%. Most of the 7th graders had encountered conversation exercises quite often as only four students gave a score under 50% and the rest of the sixteen a score of 90-60%. Furthermore, of the 8th grade students seven scored the task between 100-70%, three gave a score of 50% and the rest of the eighteen a score less than 50%. A similar situation was in the answers of the 9th graders; seven scored the task between 100-70%, five a score of 50% and the rest a score less than 50%.

The fourth task was either the word maze or a word combination exercise depending on which was available in the study books (i.e. the students had completed the exercise and were familiar with the vocabulary in it). The 9th grade students all found the task easy giving it a score between 100-70%. Of the eighteen 8th graders fifteen had a similar opinion and only one evaluated the task to be difficult with a less than a 50% score, and two gave a 60% score. Furthermore, most of the 7th graders considered the task fairly easy as well with a score of 80-60%. One gave the task a score under 50% and a few a score of 50%. As for the usefulness of the exercise, most of the seventeen 9th graders thought the task to be quite useful with an over 70% score. Only one student gave a score of 20% and six students a score of 60%. The 8th and 7th grade students then were more divided in their opinions. Of the eighteen 8th grade students six gave a score of about 60%, two a score of 40%, one a score of 50% and the rest a score above 70%. Moreover, most of the sixteen 7th graders scored the task above 70% but one thought it to be fairly useless with a 30% score. On all grades most students seemed to like the exercise and on each class there were only a few divergent answers. Twelve of the 9th grade students gave the task an over 70% score, two a score of 60% and two a score of 50%, one a score of 40%. Of the 8th grade students four scored the task between 60-50% and the rest gave a score above 70%. Lastly, nine of the sixteen 7th grade students gave the exercise a 100-70% score; five gave a score of 50% and only two a score less than 50%. Furthermore, all the student participants were in agreement on the time spent on this task; it is quick to do. In all grades most gave the task a score above 80% or 70%. All together there were only six students (of 52 participants) who scored the task at 50%, three who scored it under 50% and four who scored it at 60%. The last criterion was again to evaluate how often this type of task is being used. Most (12/17) of the 9th

graders had encountered the task type often and scored it to at least 70%. Of the eighteen 8th graders half had also encountered this type of task many times and scored it between 90-70%. Two 8th graders gave a score of 50% and the remaining seven a score lower than 50%. The 7th grade students were less familiar with this type of task and only four of the sixteen students gave a score above 60% with the rest giving it a score between 40-10%.

The fifth and final task to be evaluated was the vocabulary test of ten animal words. Five of the words were in English and five in Finnish. The students were advised to keep in mind that there are different kinds of vocabulary tests and that the present test was to be looked at as representing a vocabulary test containing individual words related to a certain topic. The 9th grade students considered the task easy with only two students giving the task a score of 40% while the rest of the seventeen students gave a score between 100-70%. Agreement was most prominent with the 8th grade students as all eighteen participants gave the task a score above 80%. In addition, the 7th graders also found the task easy. Only one of the sixteen students scored the task at 50% and all the others gave the task at least an 80% score, most gave a score near 100%. As for usefulness, the opinions were more divided on all grades. Of the 9th grade students eight gave a score between 70-50%, five a score of 50% and the remaining four a score above 70%. Most of the 8th grade students thought the vocabulary test to be useful with a score over 80% and only two students gave a score of 50%. The 7th grade answers of sixteen students were similar, mostly a score over 80% but a few scores of 30%, one of 60% and one of 40%. The students on all grades seemed to like the task as a majority of students gave the task a score above 70%. Furthermore, on all grades only three students gave a score under 50%. In addition, all participants mostly agreed on the fact that the task was also very quick to do. The majority of answers was above 80% with a total of six lower scores and none below 50%. The 9th graders were fairly familiar with this type of vocabulary test as twelve of the seventeen students gave a score over 70% and only two gave a score under 50%. On the 8th grade the students were more divided in their answers; six gave a score less than 50%, three gave a score of 50% and the remaining ten gave a score above 70%. Lastly, on the 7th grade nine students of the sixteen gave a score of around 50% and the rest a score over 70%.

Just like for the teachers, there were also six follow-up questions on the exercises to the students: 1) Which of the exercises did you like to do the most? 2) Which of the exercises did you find the most unpleasant to do? 3) Which of the exercises did you think was the most difficult to do? 4) Which of the exercises did you think was the easiest for to do? 5) Which of the exercises in your opinion is the most suitable for vocabulary learning? 6) Which of the exercises in your opinion is the least suitable for vocabulary learning?

The most liked tasks according to all the students were the word combination/word maze exercise and the vocabulary test, both of which received five votes from the sixteen 7th grade students. The nineteen 8th grade students gave the word combination/word maze exercise seven votes and six votes to the vocabulary test, and the seventeen 9th graders gave the word combination/word maze exercise also seven votes and four votes to the vocabulary test. For the 7th graders the least favourite of the five tasks was the translation exercise, which received seven out of sixteen votes. The 8th graders, however, disliked the conversation exercise with eleven votes out of nineteen. Lastly, alike the 7th grade students, the 9th graders also regarded the translation exercise the least likeable with eleven out of seventeen votes.

When asked, which the most difficult exercise to complete was, the 7th grade students leaned towards the translation exercise (7/16), the 8th grade students towards the discussion rehearsal (11/17) and the 9th grade students also towards the translation exercise (11/16). At the other end of the scale, the easiest of the tasks was the vocabulary test for the 7th graders (9/16) as well as for the 8th graders (9/17), whereas the 9th graders thought the fill-in-the-blanks exercise to be the easiest (6/16).

The 7th grade students felt that the most suitable task for vocabulary learning was the vocabulary test, which received six votes from the sixteen students. On the other hand, the 7th graders thought that the fill-in-the-blanks exercise is the least suitable for vocabulary learning (6/16). A similar result was given by the 8th grade students as they also thought the vocabulary test to most suit vocabulary learning (7/17) and the fill-in-the-blanks as the least suitable (9/17). Even the 9th graders thought the same way by

voting the vocabulary test as the best way to learn vocabulary (7/16) and the fill-in-the-blanks exercise was voted to be least suitable (10/16).

6.4 Ways of learning vocabulary outside school

Which ways of learning and using English vocabulary teachers think students use the most in their learning of vocabulary during their free time if and when they have the choice? What type of ways students prefer to use in learning English vocabulary outside the school setting and why have they chosen the particular ways? - The teachers' and student's reasoning for the choices in vocabulary learning are covered in this section.

6.4.1. Teachers' views

The teachers were also to consider the students' vocabulary acquisition on their free time, meaning outside the school setting and homework assignments, according to their own perceptions and experiences. On the questionnaire there was a table presenting sixteen different ways of acquiring and rehearsing vocabulary. There were four options to choose from on each account, which were: commonly, sometimes, seldom, never. The first and the second way were about watching movies and television without/with subtitles. One of the teachers thought the students would do this sometimes without subtitles; the other two thought the answer would be seldom. With subtitles, however, all three agreed it to be happening commonly. Ways three and four were about music. Two of the teachers were of the opinion that students commonly pay attention to lyrics when listening to music; one thought this happens sometimes. All the teachers thought that students sometimes listen to music so that they find the lyrics and then follow words and find out what the unfamiliar ones mean. The next three ways were about reading material. Two teachers thought students seldom read English magazines/newspapers and one thought it might happen sometimes. Furthermore, two teachers thought students seldom read books written in English, whereas one thought it might be common. The teachers then agreed that students commonly read and browse the internet on pages where English is the main language. In addition, a few ways on social interaction were included. One teacher thought that students seldom speak English when talking to their friends but two teachers thought this happens sometimes. All teachers had a different opinion on students' usage of English when talking with

their parents; one thought it never happens, one thought it occurs seldom and one thought it is sometimes so. One teacher was of the opinion that students commonly talk on the internet in English using various social networks (i.e. Facebook, Messenger, Skype) but two teachers answered sometimes. One of the points was about listening to English radio stations. One teacher thought this happens sometimes and two thought it to be a rare. Moreover, all of the teachers thought students only sometimes do extra exercises from their study books. Two teachers thought that students seldom read study chapters unless they are given as homework but one thought this happens sometimes. In addition, two teachers answered sometimes when asked how often students use dictionaries to find out a new or an unfamiliar word; one teacher thought this seldom happens. Exactly the same answers were in the second last point where it was to be evaluated do students write their own texts in English. Lastly, all of the teachers thought that students commonly play games in English on computers, on the internet and on game consoles.

After completing the table, the teachers were to give an overall evaluation on which task they think would be the most and the least suitable for vocabulary acquisition of the sixteen. T8 was of the opinion that reading books in English is the best way to acquire vocabulary:

Example 3.

Kirjoissa sanasto tulee esille monipuolisesti; hyvissä lauseissa ja niistä muodostuu kokonaisuus; kirja. (T8)

In books vocabulary is presented in a versatile way; in good sentences and they form an entity; a book. (T8)

T7 thought listening to English radio stations is the best way to learn vocabulary explaining that it is practical and the student does not notice the learning. T9 mentioned playing interactive games as the best activity and said:

Example 4.

Joutuu jatkuvasti käyttämään aktiivisesti kieltä, kun reagoi peliin ja pelaa itse eli joutuu koko ajan sekä tulkitsemaan, ymmärtämään että itse käyttämään kieltä. (T9)

Have to actively use the language when reacting to the game and playing oneself i.e. has to all the time both interpret, understand and use the language. (T9)

Playing is active and allows the student to engage in multiple aspects of language simultaneously (for example interpreting images and linking them to words, using the language in writing and perhaps speaking). The least suitable for vocabulary learning, according to T8, would be watching television and movies with subtitles. This, she explained, was because the watcher rarely concentrates on the language and speech while reading the subtitles. T7 thought using the dictionary to find out new and unfamiliar words is the least effective way of learning vocabulary because it is so far away from the students' everyday lives. Moreover, T9 ruled out doing extra exercises from school books as the least beneficial because mostly the exercises do not point the student actively to learning vocabulary.

6.4.2 Students' views

The students were also asked about vocabulary acquisition in their free time, meaning outside the school setting and homework assignments, according to their own perceptions and tendencies. On their questionnaire there was a similar table presenting sixteen different ways of acquiring and rehearsing vocabulary as the teachers had in their questionnaires. There were four options to choose from on each account, which were: often, sometimes, seldom, never.

The five most common ways of rehearsing vocabulary outside the school setting and homework according to the 7th grade students were; watching television programmes and movies with subtitles (12/16 had put often and 4/16 sometimes), playing games in English (8/16 had put often and 7/16 sometimes), listening to music so that I pay attention to the lyrics (7/16 had put often and 6/16 sometimes), reading/browsing English internet pages (7/16 had put sometimes and 5/16 often) and talking in the internet in English in for example Skype, Messenger and Facebook (8/16 had put sometimes and 2/16 often). On the other side, the least used ways for the 7th graders were: listening to English radio stations (11/16 had put never and 4/16 seldom), reading chapters from study book when not given as homework (8/16 had put never and 5/16 seldom), writing my own texts in English (7/16 had put never and 6/16 seldom), doing extra exercises from study books (5/16 had put never and 7/16 seldom) and reading books in English (4/16 had put never and 10/16 seldom).

As for the 8th grade students the five most used ways of learning vocabulary outside school were quite similar to the 7th graders. The most popular ways were: watching movies and television shows with subtitles, listening to music so that I pay attention to the lyrics and playing games in English (all three received 14/19 answers of often). Close behind them followed reading and browsing English internet pages (8/19 had put often and 6/19 sometimes) and talking in the internet in English in for example Skype, Messenger and Facebook (10/19 had put sometimes and 5/10 often). The least popular ways were: reading English magazines (9/19 had put seldom and 7/19 never) and reading books in English (same votes) with listening to English radio stations (11/19 had put never and 4/19 seldom) and using English when talking to my parents (6/19 had put never and 9/19 seldom) following not too far behind. In addition, doing extra exercises (6/19 seldom and 8/19 sometimes) and reading chapters from study books when not given as homework (7/19 seldom and 7/19 sometimes) were also at the lesser popular end.

Lastly, the 9th grade students were also very much in agreement with the 7th and 8th graders. For them, the same two ways were at the top, i.e. watching television programmes and movies with subtitles (15/17 had put often) and listening to music and paying attention to the lyrics (13/17 had put often). Furthermore, reading/browsing internet pages in English (12/17 answered often), playing games in English (9/17 answered often) and talking in the internet in English using for example Skype, Messenger, Facebook (7/17 often and 8/17 sometimes) were also popular. Among the least popular ways of acquiring vocabulary outside the school for the 9th graders, similarly to the other grades, were: listening to English radio stations (11/17 answered never and 4/17 seldom), doing extra exercises from study books (6/17 had put never and 7/17 seldom), reading chapters from study books when not given as homework (9/17 answered never and 5/17 seldom), writing my own texts in English (6/17 answered never and 9/17 seldom) and using English when talking to with my parents (9/17 had put never and 5/17 seldom).

The students were asked, after completing the table, which of the mentioned ways of acquiring vocabulary they thought to be the best and which the worst way for them to learn vocabulary. The students' opinions on all grades were very diverse and it would

take too much unnecessary room to present them in writing, thus the answers are presented in the two tables below. They show both the best and worst ways according to each grade. Table 3 covers the favourites and table 4 the least favoured tasks. The tasks are numbered similarly to the table in the questionnaire, 1-16.

Table 3. The most favoured tasks

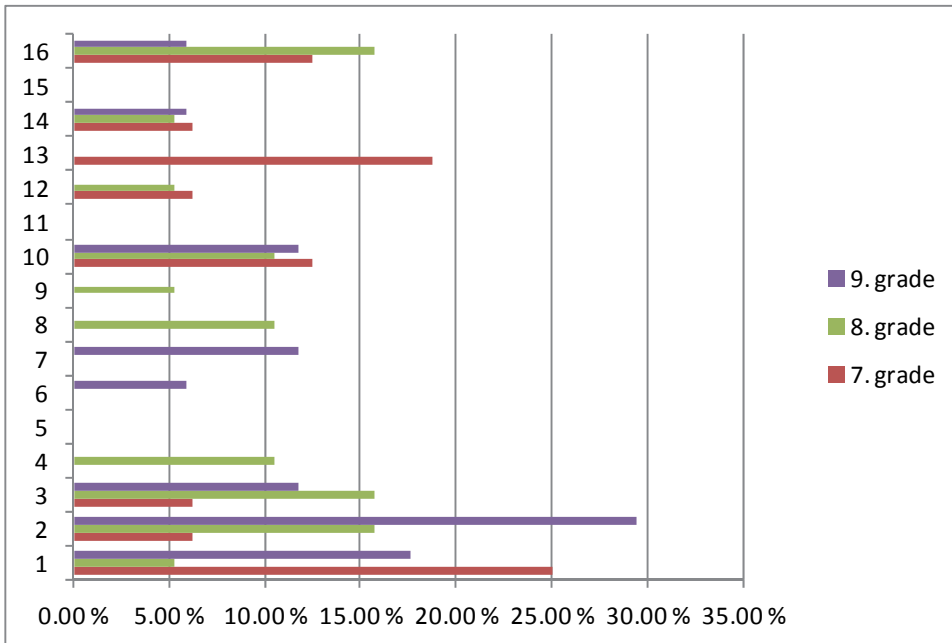
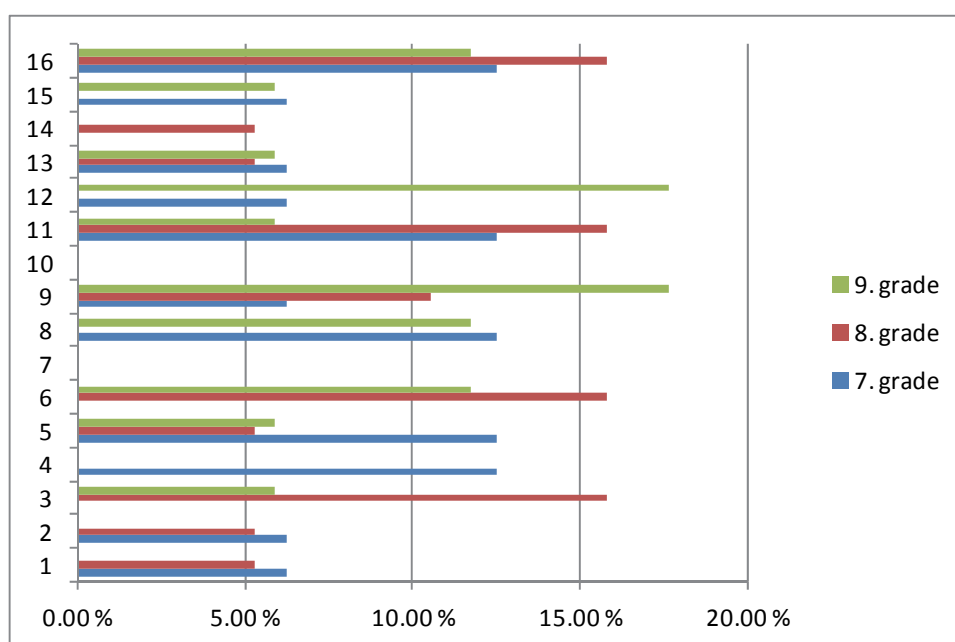


Table 4. The least favoured tasks



6.5 Time spent on vocabulary

This section will explain answers that covered the topic of time management both from the teachers' as well as the students' perspective. The focus is on the estimates of the teachers' and students' on how much time the students use weekly on studying vocabulary tasks (homework). Additionally the teachers' estimates on and reasons for how much time is spent on vocabulary in the classroom and outside it when planning lessons and tasks is briefly touched upon.

6.5.1 Teachers' views

All the teacher participants were of the opinion that it is extremely difficult to estimate the time spent on tasks that specifically focus on vocabulary alone during one lesson or even in general. This was mostly because vocabulary is so closely linked to everything that is done in a language class. It was also found difficult to estimate the time perspective because oral tasks that are mostly done during classes and writing tasks are assigned as homework and therefore should be taken into account as well.

The teachers mentioned that at the time of the study there are three hours of English weekly per study group and the 9th grade teacher mentioned that in the school where she teaches the 7th graders only have two hours of English per week. This means the time to study the language is fairly limited and thus T8 estimated that of the three hours they would approximately use precisely on vocabulary would be around 1.5 hours. T7 estimated the time to be around 30 minutes but he mentioned that basically in a way it is present all the time. Furthermore, T9 estimated that depending on the vocabulary items time spent specifically on vocabulary issues was between 30 minutes to an hour per week for her groups.

The teachers were also asked how much time they use on preparing and designing vocabulary tasks on a weekly basis. T8 answered she mostly uses about a half an hour. T7 said this would take approximately 15 minutes per group and T9 estimated that she uses 1.5 hours per week. When thinking about this, it is partly explained by the fact that teachers usually have many groups and around 20-30 hours of teaching to do weekly and thus there is only a limited amount of time per lesson and group. Furthermore, needless to say that not all times teachers design or prepare totally new tasks but rather adjust and modify existing ones or find materials made by others from example online data bases and sites designed for teachers. This is a good way to relieve the workload and it gives more variability to the lessons as well.

6.5.2 Students' views

The students were asked how much time they estimate they spend in a week precisely on studying vocabulary. They were given six options to choose from: a) less than 5 minutes b) 5-15 minutes c) 15-30 minutes, d) 30-45 minutes e) 45-60 minutes f) over an hour, how long.

The 7th grade students' opinions were fairly evenly divided. Four of the students chose option 'less than 5 minutes', four also chose option '15-30 minutes' and five chose option '5-15 minutes'. Furthermore, one student chose option '30-45 minutes' and one option '45-60 minutes'. Among the 7th graders was also one who stated studying vocabulary three hours per week. 5-15 minutes was the answer of most of the 8th grade students (7/19). However, four students admitted to studying vocabulary 15-30 minutes

per week and four answered 30-45 minutes per week. Furthermore, one answered 45-60 minutes and three said they study vocabulary less than 5 minutes during a week. The 9th graders were the laziest when it came to using time specifically on studying vocabulary. Seven of the seventeen students chose option 'less than 5 minutes' and seven also chose option '5-15 minutes'. Only three students said they study vocabulary 15-30 minutes in a week.

6.6 Teacher's view on important aspects in teaching and learning vocabulary

In this section I will explain which aspects the teacher participants considered to be important to acknowledge in the teaching and learning of vocabulary both generally and in the middle school level. In addition, it is presented here, how important is vocabulary learning seen compared to learning of grammar for example. In reference, in this chapter I will also return to the previous study (Keski-Kastari, 2008) when it comes to the teacher's opinions, as more examples from there contribute to the teachers views as well.

When the teachers were asked to reveal what types of tasks they like to use in their teaching in addition to those reviewed in the study, two of them mentioned word games such as Alias, Pictionary and Scrabble. All three mentioned different types of crossword puzzles because students seem to favour them but also because they are easy and fast to construct. One of the teachers also told that he sometimes uses extra tasks from the internet and another said that she at times finds extra texts for the advanced groups to expand vocabulary upon a certain topic. Furthermore, the answers to questions 2, 4 and 5 in my previous study (Keski-Kastari, 2008:15-17) clearly showed the types of tasks that the teachers prefer in their teaching of vocabulary to middle school students and therefore back up the results of the present study. There were certain tasks that all the participants mentioned such as crossword puzzles and the game Alias in all their variations. It was also concluded that those types are easily modified to suit different types of learners as well as to time limitations. However, some teachers favoured the tasks in the teacher's materials more than others. Furthermore, it has to be noted that some teachers are quite versatile and creative in their task selection while some do not know how to leave their comfort and thus favour the readymade school provided materials. At times some find it difficult to an extent to determine which tasks are the

most suitable as tasks can often be altered to suit nearly any purpose and to all types of learners.

In the previous study by Keski-Kastari (2008) lack of time was also seen as an important reason in task selection. The same aspect was present in the current study as well, as the teachers mentioned that there are only three hours of English per week during which much needs to be gone through in order to stay within the demands of the syllabus. The tasks need at many times to be kept quite short and simple in order to get everything done within the class period, or if homework was in question, that it would not be too exhaustive so that students would be more likely to actually do their assignments. Furthermore, it is fair to point out that this aspect could be drawn from the students' answers on the question of time spent on the vocabulary of homework exercises, where most students on all grades had chosen the alternative 5-15 minutes per week, and many had even chosen the less than 5 minutes alternative as well. The same note was also thought to apply to tasks done in class which need to be chosen so that they keep the students interested by means of variation and versatility.

The teachers were also asked what they think is the most important thing to consider when teaching vocabulary in the middle school (and in general). The teachers answered as follows:

Example 5.

Oppilaiden kokemusmaailma ja sen hyväksikäyttäminen. Sanan sitominen johonkin. (T7)
The experiences of the students and taking advantage of it. Linking a word to something. (T7)

Example 6.

Mielenkiintoisuus; sanojen opettelu erilaisten pelien muodossa on tuloksellisinta. (T8)
Keeping it interesting; learning words in the form of games provides the best results. (T8)

Example 7.

Pitää opettaa riittävän haastavaa ainesta, koska oppilaat osaavat jo niin paljon. Sanasto pitää liittää oppilaiden omaan kokemusmaailmaan, jotta kiinnostus pysyisi yllä. Yhteys tosielämään pitää perustella. (T9)

Material has to be challenging enough because students already know so much. Vocabulary has to be linked to the students own experiences in order to maintain interest. The link to real life has to be justified. (T9)

It can be seen from the answers that the teachers all agreed on the fact that the teaching has to be interesting and close to the students real life experiences in order for things to be learnt the best. This is easily understood as learning for a reason and via existing knowledge makes more sense to the learner than not having anything to base the new on and not having any reason for learning it.

In this chapter the data of the present study has been introduced into detail as well as the methods of how the data was analysed. I have looked at the results of this study and presented some examples of the answers from the teachers and students to each part of the questionnaire as well as made some comparisons between the teachers and students answers. I have aimed at giving the best possible overview on the topics. In the next chapter I will examine the results of the study to more detail in the light of the research questions and background material and explain my findings.

7 DISCUSSION

In this chapter the results of this study presented in the previous section are discussed and examined to more detail. In addition, the study's implications to the field of vocabulary studies are touched upon.

The present study aimed at determining what types of tasks teachers and students see to suit the learning of L2 vocabulary, what tasks are used to learn (and teach) vocabulary and why, and what types of tasks are not used and why as well as how the participants evaluate vocabulary tasks in study books. In addition, general perceptions of language learning were also determined as a basis for the study perspective to get an idea of where vocabulary is placed with regard to other aspects in language learning. Furthermore, the issue of time management in learning vocabulary was under investigation.

7.1 General views

Both the students and the teachers saw speaking to be the most important aspect in language learning. 24 students out of the 52 thought this way and two of the three teachers. According to the teachers correct pronunciation (T8 and T9) and reading comprehension (T7) are the hardest to teach whereas grammar (T7 and T8) and vocabulary (T9) were the easiest on to teach. In comparison, 26/52 students thought grammar to be the hardest to learn. However, the easiest part was less cohesive to name with for example 13/52 students naming vocabulary and words, 14/52 naming understanding speaking and 11/52 naming speaking. Only one student answered grammar to be the easiest to learn. When asked about the most time taking aspect, two teachers said it to be grammar and one vocabulary or words. Students mostly answered practising speaking with vocabulary or words being the second. Right pronunciation was the least practised one. From this it can be seen that in part the teachers' and students' opinions are not necessarily in cohesion. The aspects that teachers may find easy can prove to be the ones difficult to the students, which might present a problem especially if the teacher does not recognise the issue and think why the task might present itself as difficult (see e.g. Hawkey 2006:242-243, Tavakoli 2009a:2 and Tavakoli 2009b). What came about in the students' answers was that as speaking was

the aspect mostly mentioned as the most important; it was also practised the most along with vocabulary. This is something that is discussed in Chapter 4, where it is brought about that many researchers have put more weight on the teaching of vocabulary and words and that it is more beneficial to have a large vocabulary instead of vast knowledge of grammar when one is to learn communicational skills (see e.g. Nunan 1991, Meara 2002, Read 2000, Nation 2008 and Thornbury 2002). However, it was in a way expected but also a bit alarming that as grammar was the most difficult for most to learn, it still was not the one practised the most. In addition, according to two teachers it took the most time from the classes. We would have to consider why that is the case: Is it because communication and vocabulary are perhaps at present more important and emphasized more in schools and books? Or is it because the teachers are not paying attention to learning the grammar (even though much time is spent on it in class)? Perhaps it is because the students feel they can manage without deeper grammar knowledge and do not thus think practising it worthwhile? It could be any number of reasons, unfortunately not a question that can be answered with regard to this study. However, there definitely is some type of correlation that presents an interesting question.

7.2 Tasks in the study books

All the participants in the study reviewed predetermined tasks in the study books (*Key English 7 and 9 workbooks, and Smart Moves exercises 2*) of the specific grade along with a designed example of a vocabulary test containing animal words. The tasks were 1) fill-in-the-blanks (or cloze) exercise 2) sentence translation exercise 3) discussion exercise 4) word maze or word combination exercise 5) vocabulary test. Each task was to be evaluated on five different criteria, each of which possessed a positive and a negative alternative between which a cross was placed on a line to represent the opinion of the participant on each criterion of each task (see p.47 for reference). After this, the participants were asked their general perceptions of the tasks by six questions. The students' questions were: 1) Which of the exercises did you like to do the most? 2) Which of the exercises did you find the most unpleasant to do? 3) Which of the exercises did you think was the most difficult to do? 4) Which of the exercises did you think was the easiest for to do? 5) Which of the exercises in your opinion is the most suitable for vocabulary learning? 6) Which of the exercises in your opinion is the least

suitable for vocabulary learning? The teachers' questions were: 1) Which of the exercises do you think the students like to do the most? 2) Which of the exercises do you think the students find the most unpleasant to do? 3) Which of the exercises do you think is the most difficult for the students to do? 4) Which of the exercises do you think is the easiest for the students to do? 5) Which of the exercises in your opinion is the most suitable for vocabulary teaching? 6) Which of the exercises in your opinion least suits vocabulary teaching? Let us take a look at each task and the questions more closely.

7.2.1 Task evaluations

The first task was the fill-in-the-blanks exercise. The teachers thought it to be fairly difficult (40%, 55% and 30%) whereas most of the students thought it to be easy, especially the 7th and 9th grade students. Both the students and the teachers thought the task to be useful. Furthermore the teachers thought the task to be liked among the students and the students verified this assumption. The students said the exercise to be quick to complete and the teachers also thought it does not take too long for the students to complete such a task. All three teachers said this type of task to be used quite often (70%, 50% and 75%), though a little less in the 8th grade. The students in the 7th and 9th grade were most familiar with the task however, the 8th graders a little less so.

The second task was the translation exercise. The teachers' opinion on difficulty varied (20%, 45% and 75%) but on average it would be around 50%. The students thought the task to be easy and they also thought it to be useful, and on this the teachers had a similar opinion. The 7th and 9th grade students did not like the exercise, the 8th graders' opinions varied more, and the teachers thought that the students would not like the type of task very much. Most students thought translating to be slow and the teachers agreed. Two of the teachers said translation to be a common exercise and the students were very familiar with translating as well with mostly over 70% scores.

The third task was the conversation exercise. The teachers were fairly conclusive on the fact that the exercise was somewhat easy, only T7 gave a slightly lower score (45%, 75% and 75%). The students on the 7th and 8th grade thought the task to be quite difficult whereas the 9th graders were of opposite opinion with 100-70% scores. Both

the teachers and the students mainly said the task to be useful, only the 8th graders were a little divided in their answers. When it came to likeability the teachers thought the students would not particularly like the exercise and most students verified the opinion, particularly the 9th graders. The 7th graders liked the exercise the most. They also thought the conversation exercise was quick to complete and the 9th graders as well as the teachers (70%, 50% and 80%) mainly agreed but the 8th grade students were more divided in their opinions.

The fourth task was the word maze/word combining exercise. All students thought the exercise to be easy as did two of the teachers. The 7th and 9th grade students and T8 were of the opinion that the task was useful, the 8th graders and T7 and T9 were not as convinced of the usefulness. Two of the teachers and basically all the students gave the task a high score on likeability, only T9 disagreed. Again, opinions were similar on quickness, mostly high scores and only 6/52 student participants gave less the task than 50% score. The teachers' scores covered the whole spectrum when asked about commonness (10%, 80% and 60%). The case was similar with the students; common according to the 9th graders, 50/50 according to the 8th graders and not very common according to the 7th graders.

The fifth and last task was the vocabulary test (of ten animal words). Mainly all the students said the test to be easy, there were only a few low scores. The teachers agreed on this (70%, 90% and 100%). On usefulness the 9th grade students were quite disagreeing alike the teachers (40%, 60% and 85%). But the 7th and 8th grade students most thought the test to be useful. T8 and T9 and nearly all the students liked the exercise. The opinions were similar on quickness. And lastly, again T8 and T9 said the task to be common as it was for the 9th graders and for most of the 7th graders, the 8th grade opinions were a bit more divided.

7.2.2 Comparing opinions

According to the results of the present study task evaluation part, it could be concluded that very similar tasks and task types are favoured on both the teachers' and the students' part in learning vocabulary. Overall, the teachers and students mostly agreed on the attributes on the cloze task. On task difficulty, however, the opinions were the

furthest of each other. In addition, the likeability was agreed on both parts. On the second task, the translation exercise, the general opinions of the teachers and students were in cohesion. However, teachers found it to be more difficult for the students to complete than what the students themselves thought. On likeability the opinions were on most part similar; the task was not that appreciated. To all of the participants the task was very common and familiar. Again, on the conversation exercise as well the opinions of the participants were fairly similar. On difficulty, though, the opinions were more divided when teachers considered the task easier for the students than what the students then thought. Furthermore, both parties agreed that the task is less likeable for the students. The maze task was the one all participants were on agreement the most; all besides T9 thought the task to be easy and liked. The vocabulary test was overall considered easy among the participants and most participants also thought the task to be likeable.

As Tavakoli (2009a:4) says, citing Robinson, that the learners tend to evaluate the tasks' level of difficulty based on their understanding of the whole task i.e. *cognitive demand*. Thus, this could be the answer as to why the perceptions may differ on the difficulty level; teachers have an easier job in comprehending the task as a whole whereas the students may think of it as more challenging not necessarily grasping all the aspects of the task. Furthermore, the likeability factor may also be dependent on the same aspect, what one does not understand, one may like less but also on the fact that a student may not be used to such tasks i.e. the task is less familiar (Tavakoli 2009a:13). In addition, the tasks' *linguistic demand* may cause it to be perceived more difficult (Tavakoli 2009a:10). This means that the task has words and vocabulary components unfamiliar or incomprehensible to the learner. According to Tavakoli (2009a:11-12), *the amount of information* in the task and its guidelines can prove to have the learner perceive a task as more difficult. This would, according to Tavakoli's study (2009a:11), be the same in the case of too little and too much information. In addition, the *task structure*, i.e. the way the task was set and constructed, also was an influencing factor (Tavakoli 2009a:12). Naturally, there are factors outside the task itself that may add to its difficulty. In her study Tavakoli (2009a:14) found out from the teachers that they consider "...age, gender, cultural background and level of language proficiency as other factors influencing TD." Age is of course something we can easily understand, the same tasks

are not suitable for all age groups because children have limited knowledge of the world and also of themselves compared to older students or adults. Gender is also an interesting factor, though not dealt with in the present study. It has been studied for example by Jimenez-Catalan (2003) and Muhonen (2004). They both found only minor differences between sexes in strategy use (Jimenez-Catalan) and demotivating factors (Muhonen). With regard to cultural background, it needs to be noted that each culture has its own customs and ways of doing and these are usually passed on to children at home and can be seen in classes. With that said in the case where there are many nationalities in a classroom it would be necessary to be taken more into account, this however was not needed in the present study. Language grades were asked of the student participants of this study and reflect the proficiency level of the students. However, due to lack of time they were not examined further and thus are not discussed more.

In Tavakoli's study teachers also considered their own professional competence and role to be an important factor but was not further researched (2009a:14). It could be however said, that teacher his-/herself be a factor in the perception of task difficulty if he/she fails to give clear information on the completion of task. This is something that for example Muhonen (2004) found to be the most demotivating factor in language learning as 48.7% of the students who took part in her study said the teacher to be the most important demotivating factor in studying English. However, in the study, it does not become evident was this because the students generally disliked the teacher or if this was a result of poor teaching skills. For more see e.g. Oxford 1990 and section 4.3.2 of the present study.

Usefulness was one aspect under evaluation. All participants were in agreement on tasks one (fill-in-the-blanks), two (sentence translation) and three (conversation exercise); they were useful in learning vocabulary. On the fourth task (word maze/word combining) the opinions divided with 7th and 9th graders along with T8 thinking it to be useful whereas T7 and T9 with the 8th grade students did not think it as useful. The most controversial task was the vocabulary test, which was useful according to the 7th and 8th grade students. Among the 9th graders and the teachers the opinions varied. To sum up, teachers and students think similarly on most accounts. However, a question that comes

to mind is; if certain tasks are not considered that useful (e.g. the maze), especially among the teachers, why are they then used? Is it to please the students or because of lack of time to use more complex and time-consuming tasks? And why are those types of tasks in the study books? These questions could be further examined as well.

After evaluating the task on the five aspects, the participants were to choose the most likeable task, the least favourite, the most difficult, the easiest and the ones they felt suits the best and the least to learning vocabulary. The students favoured the word combination/word maze and the vocabulary test. The teachers all had a different opinion on what the students would like; T8 said maze, T7 discussion and T9 vocabulary test. The least likeable according to all were the translation and the conversation exercises. They were also considered to be the most difficult according to most students and only T9 thought the cloze task was the hardest. The vocabulary test received the most votes on easiness from the 7th and 8th graders and T9 while the 9th graders thought the cloze task to be the easiest and according to T7 and T8 it was the maze/word combination exercise. According to all class levels the vocabulary test suits vocabulary learning the best but none of the teachers agreed. T7 and T8 said the translation exercise to be the best and T9 voted for the word combination/maze. All students then held the cloze as the least suitable for vocabulary acquisition while T9 agreed. T8 thought the word combination/maze to be the most suitable and T7 considered the vocabulary test as the best one. As presented in section 4.5 there are various attributes that influence task and strategy selection. It has to be said, like for example Mohseni-Far (2008) concludes, that learners do not always notice the strategies they use or the aspects that have an impact on the learning i.e. incidental learning takes place. This can have a linkage to the fact that like Hawkey (2006) presents student and teacher perceptions of the learning process differ. Furthermore, the tasks teachers value and hold as important and/or suitable are not necessarily that to the students and therefore the learning process may even slow down (Hawkey 2006:242). According to Tavakoli (2009a):

...the teachers placed more stress on the linguistic demands that a task may impose on the learners, while learners expressed less concern about such demands. This might be due to the fact that teachers are generally more concerned with their learners' language needs and more aware of their learning process. (Tavakoli 2009a:16)

Thus, the tasks that are considered the hardest from the student's perspective are not always the same ones from the teacher's point of view. However, that was not totally the case in the present study as presented above.

Teachers seem to especially favour tasks that develop the students' everyday vocabulary and are presented in context (as quotations from Read and Thornbury show in Chapter 1). Moreover, this means that words are to be presented as part of an entity and in that case the translation and discussion exercises are often appreciated. Tasks should also be easy and fairly effortless to execute and most of all motivate the students. In addition, the tasks used need to fit the discussed topics in order to best keep the vocabulary easily retained (see e.g. Thornbury 2002 and Nation & Gu 2007). Furthermore, the tasks have to be implemented as effortlessly as possible to the time frame given for them not to be rushed and thus perhaps losing their purpose of fulfilling vocabulary learning.

7.3 Time and the importance of vocabulary learning

As presented in Chapter 6.5, a great deal depends on the time spent on vocabulary both at school and outside it. Time is thus an essential factor in completing vocabulary tasks as well. If provided too little time to do a task, it can easily be interpreted as difficult. Furthermore, time wise it is essential to do tasks that are considered to be the most beneficial and efficient. When asked about the time used specifically to vocabulary learning and teaching both in and outside school, the participants confessed it to be very limited. Teachers said this to be because the time for language studies is limited to a few hours weekly, however, they also added that vocabulary is always present in language learning and therefore it cannot easily be separated from everything else. The students revealed that the study of vocabulary is fairly miniscule outside school as well because only one student confessed to studying three hours weekly and five answered 30-45 minutes weekly and two answered 45-60 minutes per week. 11/52 student participants chose the option 15-30 minutes in a week and the number of study minutes decreased as the students got older i.e. the 9th graders used the least time. Teachers could possibly emphasize the fact that all language learning is also vocabulary learning because from the answers it could be seen that most students did not consider for example the cloze task as a vocabulary task per se. Why that is, we can only speculate. Perhaps it could be because the cloze tasks in the study concentrated on smaller entities such as

prepositions, which may not be comprehended as words by many (as presented in Chapter 2). In her study, Marttinen (2004:52) also found out that “...vocabulary learning is integrated into several other language learning tasks...can also be unconscious and therefore hard to see.” Time spent on studying vocabulary has not been on focus in studies specifically and thus I find it an interesting factor. It is essential to know, what the students are willing to do in addition to learning in school as it may very well be one of the deciding factors in succeeding in the acquisition of a foreign language. When time is of the essence, teachers seem to favour ready-made tasks that have proven to be efficient, easy to check and the ones they have noticed the students to like though they may not necessarily be the best ones. Students on the other hand may only study when absolutely necessary as Marttinen (2004:56) says: “Many of the participants commented that vocabulary is extremely important part of a language and grammatical shortcomings can be compensated with adequate knowledge of words and vocabulary. “. Furthermore, “...many of them study words actively only in order to pass the test in school and they usually study vocabulary as little as possible.” (Marttinen 2004:56) This being said, it could be worthwhile to study are those tasks the ones that get the students learning, i.e. find the underlying correlations between the student and teacher perceptions as for example Hawkey (2006) proposes.

In the beginning of the present study the participants were asked what they considered to be the most important aspect in language learning. Teacher participants favoured the speaking aspects; speaking (T8 and T9) and understanding speech (T7). They said that surviving in everyday situations and communication is what matters. Of this the students were mostly in agreement (24/52). The teachers said that grammar (T7 and T8) and vocabulary (T9) are the easiest to teach and for 13/52 students it was also the easiest to learn after which came speaking skills (understanding speaking 14/52 and speaking 11/52). This would suggest that communication, and vocabulary, is currently put more emphasis on as opposed to grammar, which was what the teachers were probably used to when they were students and shows that each era has its own emphasis. Again, Muhonen (2004:47) found out that many students felt there to be too much focus on grammar as opposed to vocabulary, which the students felt to be more important. This aspect did not seem to be an issue in the present study but has nevertheless been presented many times in vocabulary research.

7.4 Vocabulary learning outside school

Vocabulary learning outside the school environment was the issue in the third part of the questionnaire. All participants, teacher and student, were presented sixteen ways of acquiring vocabulary in a table and they were to choose the option (of four alternatives: commonly, sometimes, seldom, never), which best suited their use of the particular way of vocabulary learning. After this they were to choose the best and the least suitable way to study vocabulary among the sixteen.

The teachers all named different ways as being the best in their opinion. T8 voted for reading books, T7 thought it to be listening to English radio stations and T9 said playing interactive games would be most suitable. When compared to the students' opinions, there are obvious differences. The most popular ways among all grades were watching television programmes and movies with subtitles along with listening to music while paying attention to the lyrics and using the internet; reading/browsing pages in English and talking via internet chats (such as Skype, Messenger and Facebook). If we are to look at the differences in the opinions, from the teachers' answers one can see perhaps that because they have answered differently, they probably put the most weight in their teaching to those types of tasks. This would mean that T8 favours less interactive approach, T7 prefers listening exercises and T9 likes to be interactive with the students and get them active. Students, then, have a clear view as to what they like and that reflects on their answers. They are used to the media and language, especially English, being present there. They are also used to the internet and that is probably why they consider learning through it easy and effective.

As for the least suitable ways, the teachers also all had a different option. T8 answered the least suitable way to be watching television and movies with subtitles, T7 said it to be using the dictionary to find out new and unfamiliar words while T9 considered doing extra exercises from school books to be the least suitable for vocabulary learning. The students' opinions, again, mostly differed from those of the teachers' but were fairly similar on all grade levels. Among the top five were listening to English radio stations, reading books and magazines in English, doing extra exercises from study books or reading chapters in them when not given as homework and writing my own texts. Also

talking English with parents was considered to be unsuitable. In the least suitable ways, the teachers and students had somewhat more similar view. T8 did not consider television and movies with subtitles to be a good way but that was however the most popular among the students. Dictionary work was only less suitable according to T7, when students placed it somewhere in the middle range. T9 was most in coherence with the students as she and many students considered doing extra exercises from the school books to be ineffective in vocabulary learning. In addition, students probably tend to use ways that are most at hand to them but it would be also safe to assume that the way their learning is supported and seen at home, reflects to the ways they use in their learning outside school. One example would be for example listening to the radio or reading books. If a student does not get any example from home to reading books, he/she will probably be less prone to choose that way of studying if given options. Furthermore, radio has somewhat lost status and English language radio is probably even more unfamiliar and not very easily accessible, which might explain its unpopularity.

7.5 Study's implications to the field of research

With regard to the field of vocabulary studies, vocabulary tasks are a fairly narrowly examined aspect, especially from the point of task selection and task difficulty. The types of tasks should be selected and which actually are selected could definitely be in the focus more. This would enable the teachers and students to get a better view of what really works in learning a vocabulary in a foreign language and to have their expectations and needs meet the best way possible (see e.g. Tavakoli 2009a and Hawkey 2006). Though for example motivation and strategies have been widely looked into, researching them solely does not give an extensive enough view on learning vocabulary. Whereas, combining the research of either or even both with the aspects of task selection and task difficulty would probably evoke more studies and thus provide beneficial information to the educators. Moreover, the aspects not on primary focus in this study, which have an effect on the learning process of vocabulary (and naturally language in general), such as gender, cultural influence, background and learning environment could be further looked into.

8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter a brief evaluation of the study is given. In addition some suggestions for further study are introduced along with the limitations that were met while conducting the present study.

In general the results of the study were easily interpreted. Teachers answered all questions thoroughly and thus provided much useful data even for further study. Most students had filled the questionnaires properly making the analysis fairly easy. Some of the terms, however, could have been explained more extensively as for example the definition of task. It might have been useful to hand out to the teachers the definition of task by Ellis (1999) as was done in the previous work by Keski-Kastari (2008). Perhaps the definition could have been discussed in the meeting with the teachers as well. Furthermore, it seemed that maybe the vocabulary test task could have been explained further to the students. This would mean that they would have been advised, either by the teacher or in writing in the questionnaire, that they did not need to complete the test (some students had done so). Moreover, it could also have been added that they were not to evaluate the difficulty of the words in the test but more the general difficulty level of that type of vocabulary test. This is because, especially for those students that had done the test, it appeared to be evaluated on the basis of their performance, i.e. they evaluated it to be easy/difficult depending on did they know the words or not. Perhaps instead of an example of a vocabulary test the type of test could have been explained in writing with only one or two words as examples.

When examining the questions and their instructions, on occasion more elaboration and specific instruction would have been needed. For example, in the first section a few questionnaires had to be excluded because the students had chosen more than one option. This could have been prevented by simply adding ‘choose only one option’ to the question’s instructions. In addition, when choosing the alternative in the table of the third section, a few students had placed the cross in between the alternative boxes. In that case a simple instruction of for example ‘choose only one option and mark your answer clearly in the middle of the box’ probably would have prevented that types of answers.

One problem in interpreting the results was most evident when examining the answers. In the second section where the participants evaluated the tasks, they were asked to place a cross on the line between two options to present their opinion. There was no actual scale on the line, which showed a problem when presenting the results. Furthermore, it also proved to be somewhat difficult to interpret the answers accurately enough. This is why the percentage scale was chosen as it was in this case the easiest way to have the answers in a clear form. Thus, if the study was to be repeated or conducted in a larger scale, it would be beneficial to use a numeric scale. For example, a scale of 10-1 in which ten would be the most positive and one the most negative opinion of the attribute on evaluation (e.g. easy – difficult).

In the future, if a similar study was conducted it would be helpful to have the main points of the teachers' answers in a written form as well or perhaps do an interview in addition to a questionnaire. This would enable additional questions and give more room for clarification, elaboration and possible examples of situations in the classroom and for example of different types of vocabulary exercises the teachers use. Furthermore, even more examples of different tasks could be presented to the teachers and perhaps to the students as well, in order to more clearly see their definitions and conceptions of various task types in vocabulary learning. This would also add more to providing examples in reporting the results. Moreover, some of the student opinions could also have been presented in the form of an open question, where it would have been possible to get a clearer view of what the students actually do. This would have especially suited the evaluation of vocabulary studying outside school and the students could have been asked to write a short story of their vocabulary learning both in school and outside it. An alternate or an additional way of looking at the way vocabulary is studied in classrooms, it could have been beneficial to observe a few lessons. Furthermore, it could have been possible to present the students with particular tasks, have them complete the tasks and evaluate the process both by observing and by conducting a short interview or have the students write a short review of what they thought about the lesson and the tasks they were given.

A point to have been considered, and one to definitely take into consideration if the study were to be repeated or continued, is that the tasks to be evaluated could be designed specifically for the purpose of the study. Thus they would be similar for all the participants and even more easily interpreted. This could also be well implemented to the suggestion of observing the lessons. In addition, it would enable a larger study with more schools, study groups and teachers participating. It would then be possible to compare regional differences and differences between the grades and between the study groups – something which there was not enough room for in the present study. Moreover, if for example a certain study group has very good grades and another group has poorer grades it definitely has an effect on the evaluation of the difficulty level of the exercises and thus it would be beneficial to have more than one study group to get more answers and then perhaps compare them. Furthermore, the opinions of the students of one study group do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the whole grade level. It must also be noted that the skills of the teacher in the way he/she explains the tasks and helps in possible problem situations when the students are completing their questionnaires has an effect and may complicate the reviewing of the results. Thus it may be a good idea to have the researcher present to clarify in case of any ambiguity in the questionnaires.

The students were also asked about their latest English grade. Most had gotten a seven or more, which means that in general the participants were doing fairly well in their study of English. Had there been more resources, it might have been worthwhile to pay attention to the relationship of the grades and the opinions on the exercises because a particular grade may very well reflect a certain opinion. For example, someone who has had less success in learning may consider a task more difficult or dislike it more whereas a student with a higher grade may think of the same task very differently. Therefore, this would be something worth further examination as well.

To sum up, the goals of this study were achieved and the results were as hoped. All the main questions were answered. In short, the opinions of teachers and students on vocabulary learning and vocabulary tasks do not differ to a great extent but that small differences do occur and they may very well become bigger issues if not looked into further. Especially the aspects of difficulty and likeability combined with the time in use

for studying vocabulary in and outside school should be further studied and taken into consideration. Generally students study very little outside school but do use fairly many strategies and are quite well aware of their own preferences. In addition, at school vocabulary is present all the time but the actual time used on vocabulary learning is limited and students are unaware of the fact that vocabulary or any other part does not necessarily need to be separated from the other aspects of vocabulary learning but that they can be simultaneously rehearsed. Much depends on the students' own interests and their home environment, i.e. it has an impact on how vocabulary is studied, and acquired, outside school and what type of resources the students have at hand and use. Furthermore, time is an essential factor when it comes to studying English both at school and outside it; when there is too little time and too much to do, some aspect always suffers and learning methods tend to be simplified and even forsaken if they take too much time and effort.

What came about in the study was that the results were fairly difficult to place to the field of vocabulary research. As mentioned in the theory section of this paper, there was not much previous research done from the perspective of this study. Thus, there clearly is a place for further examination of the teaching of vocabulary to Finnish students and furthermore, a place to look into task difficulty and task selection. For example an empirical study comparing two classes who have been taught a similar vocabulary item(s) would then be tested by using different task types to determine which is more effective and useful. Tasks in course books could also be compared to each other as well as tasks in different book series. I would also look into the possibility of conducting a larger scale study only by interviewing or by using a questionnaire on a particular and more defined question (e.g. what types of tasks teachers use). There is a particular need for this type of study to be conducted in languages that are not widely spoken (e.g. Finnish) rather than comparing the teaching and learning of English vocabulary to languages such as Chinese, French or Spanish for example that have been examined in vocabulary research. Moreover, the teachers have usually not been focused on and thus their perspective needs more looking into. Furthermore, it is vital to find out more about the meeting of perspectives between students and teachers to make the teaching of English even more effective. As presented in this study, vocabulary is a vital part of

language teaching and thus needs even more research, especially in the area of vocabulary learning, task selection and teaching materials.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Questionnaire of the Proseminar paper by Keski-Kastari 2008

Kysymykset opettajille/Questions to the teachers

1. Mikä sinusta on sanaston opettamisessa tärkeää? Mitä tulee ottaa huomioon, kun yläasteikäisille opettaa englannin sanastoa?

What do you consider to be important in teaching English vocabulary to students in senior secondary school?

2. Millaiset tehtävät sopivat mielestäsi sanaston opettamiseen yläasteella ja miksi?

In your opinion, what type of tasks best suit teaching vocabulary in senior secondary school?

3. Miten valitset käyttämäsi tehtävät, millä perusteella? (Esim. riippuen millaista sanastoa opetat tai kenelle opetat)

On what basis do you choose the tasks that you use? (E.g. depending on what type of vocabulary is being taught or to who it is taught to)

4. Millaisia tehtäviä/tehtävätyyppejä käytät sanaston opetuksessasi? (Anna esimerkki, esim. aukko-tehtävät, sanalistat)

What tasks/task types do you use in your teaching of vocabulary? (Provide an example, for example cloze exercises, word lists)

5. Miksi käytät juuri kyseisiä tehtäviä? (Esim. koska ne ovat saatavilla, koska ne ovat mielestäsi sopivia, koska oppilaat niitä pyytävät)

Why do you use those particular tasks? (E.g. because they are available, because you think they are suitable, because students ask for them)

6. Eroavatko käyttämäsi tehtävät riippuen siitä, mitä luokkaa opetat? Jos eroavat, niin miten ja miksi?

Is there a difference in the tasks you use depending on which grade you are teaching? If so, how do they differ and why?

7. Onko joitain tehtäviä, joita et käytä tai halua käyttää? Jos on, niin mitä ne ovat ja mikset niitä käytä? Miten/mistä olet huomannut, etteivät kyseiset tehtävät sovi sanaston opettamiseen tai toimi?(Anna esimerkki tehtävästä)

Are there some tasks that you choose not to use or do not want to use? If so, what are those and why you do not use them? How/from what have you noticed that the particular tasks are not suitable for teaching vocabulary or do not work? (Provide an example)

8. Kuinka paljon itse suunnittelet sanastotehtäviä? Entä vastavuoroisesti, kuinka paljon käytät oppikirjojen tehtäviä? Miksi?

How much do you yourself plan vocabulary tasks? And on the contrary, how much do you use the tasks in textbooks? Why?

9. Kuinka paljon käytät opetuksessasi aikaa sanaston opettamiseen? (Esim. viikossa ryhmää kohti) Pitäisikö tätä aikaa lisätä tai vähentää? Miksi?

In your teaching, how much time would you say is spent on teaching vocabulary? (E.g. in a week per group) Should this time be added or reduced? Why?

10. Kuinka paljot itse ehdit opetella sanastoa tai paneutua opetettavaan sanastoon? Entä mietitkö sanaston opettamiseen liittyviä asioita koulun ulkopuolella ja kuinka paljon? (Esim. suunnittelet tehtäviä ja sanastokokonaisuuksia/-aiheita)

How much time do you use in learning new vocabulary and studying the vocabulary being taught? Do you think about issues related to vocabulary teaching outside the school, and if so, how much? (E.g. planning tasks and vocabulary/vocabulary topics)

11. Kuinka tärkeänä yleisesti pidät sanaston opettamista verrattuna muihin osa-alueisiin kuten kielioppiin?

In general how important do you consider the teaching of vocabulary to be compared to other parts such as grammar?

12. Onko mielestäsi ja kokemuksesi pohjalta tarvetta suunnata enemmän huomiota sanastotehtävien arviointiin ja kehittämiseen? Jos on, niin miksi tai miksi ei?

In your opinion and from your experience, is there a need to give more attention to the evaluation and development of vocabulary tasks? If so, why or why not?

13. Miten sanastotehtäviä voitaisiin mielestäsi kehittää tai muuttaa opetusmateriaaleissa, jotta ne edistäisivät sanaston oppimista ja opettamista yläasteella?

In your opinion, how could vocabulary tasks be developed or changed in the teaching materials in order for them to better further the teaching and learning of vocabulary in senior secondary schools?

Definition of task by Rod Ellis (2003:16)

A task is a workplan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources although the design of the task may predispose them to choose particular forms. A task is intended to result in language use that bears a resemblance, direct or indirect, to the way language is used in the real world. Like other language activities, a task can engage productive or receptive, and oral or written skills, and also various cognitive processes.

Appendix 2. Questionnaire of a miniature study for Basic studies in teacher training by Keski-Kastari & Kaski 2008

KYSELY:

1. Mikä tehtävistä oli sinulle ylipäättään mieluisin? Numeroi parhaimmasta huonoimpaan (1-5).

- sanakoe
- ristikko
- sanasokkelo
- aukkotehtävä
- A/B-harjoitus

Perustele lyhyesti, miksi x oli paras ja x oli huonoin.

2. Mikä tehtävistä on sinusta hyvä muoto sanaston opiskeluun? Ajattele oppimisen kannalta. Numeroi parhaimmasta huonompaan (1-5).

- sanakoe
- ristikko
- sanasokkelo
- aukkotehtävä
- A/B-harjoitus

Perustele lyhyesti, miksi ensin valitsemasi sopii hyvin sanaston opiskeluun ja miksi viimeksi valitsemasi ei mielestäsi sovi.

- 3. Kerro mitä muunlaisia tehtäviä olet käyttänyt sanaston opiskelussa? (esim. opetellut sanoja listasta ulkoa, katsonut tv-sarjoja tai elokuvia..)**

- 4. Miten itse opit sanastoa parhaiten tai opiskelet uusia sanoja? Entä miksi käytät juuri näitä tapoja? (Anna esimerkkejä tehtävistä tai tavoista joita käytät – voivat olla samoja kuin edellisessä vastauksessa sekä perustele lyhyesti miksi käytät niitä)**

- 5. Millaisista tehtävistä et pidä tai millainen tehtävä ei mielestäsi sovi sanaston opiskeluun? Kerro esimerkki/esimerkkejä.**

- 6. Kuinka paljon aikaa käytät sanaston opiskeluun viikossa koulun ulkopuolella? (Arvioi 10min tarkkuudella - jos käytät esim. 15min, laita 10-20min)**

7. Kuinka tärkeänä pidät sanaston/sanojen opiskelua? Valitse yksi vaihtoehdoista.

- 1) erittäin tärkeänä
- 2) hyvin tärkeänä
- 3) tärkeänä
- 4) vähemmän tärkeänä
- 5) ei lainkaan tärkeänä

SANAKOE 18.3.2009 Kpl 10

NIMI: _____

Kirjoita kaikki kolme epäsäännöllisen verbin muotoa.

1. ajatella
2. antaa
3. valita
4. löytää
5. istua
6. lukea
7. unohtaa
8. antaa, sallia
9. tietää
10. tehdä

Appendix 3. Teacher questionnaire of the present study

KYSELY: Käsityksiä englannin oppimisesta

Etunimi: _____ **Ikä:** _____ **luokka-aste:** _____

Sukupuoli: tyttö/poika (ympyröi oikea vaihtoehto) **Viimeisin englannin numerosi:** _____

Millä luokalla aloitit englannin opiskelun (ympyröi oikea vaihtoehto): 3 5 7 8 joku muu _____

Yleistä

Ympyröi joka kohdasta (1-4) omaa mielipidettäsi vastaava tai sitä lähin vaihtoehto.

1) Mikä on mielestäsi kaikkein tärkeintä oppia kielenopiskelussa?

- a) kielioppiasiat b) puhuminen c) sanasto tai sanat
d) oikeanlainen ääntäminen e) luetun ymmärtäminen f) puheen ymmärtäminen

2) Minkä asian edellä mainituista koet itsellesi vaikeimmaksi oppia?

- a) kielioppiasiat b) puhuminen c) sanasto tai sanat
d) oikeanlainen ääntäminen e) luetun ymmärtäminen f) puheen ymmärtäminen

3) Minkä asian edellä mainituista koet itsellesi helpoimmaksi oppia?

- a) kielioppiasiat b) puhuminen c) sanasto tai sanat
d) oikeanlainen ääntäminen e) luetun ymmärtäminen f) puheen ymmärtäminen

4) Mitä yllämainituista harjoittelet eniten?

- a) kielioppiasiat b) puhuminen c) sanasto tai sanat
d) oikeanlainen ääntäminen e) luetun ymmärtäminen f) puheen ymmärtäminen

Sanastotehtävät oppikirjassa

Alla on mainittuna sanastotehtäviä (4 kpl) oppikirjastanne sekä yksi esimerkki sanakokeesta sanaston opiskelutehtävänä. Jokaisesta tehtävästä on esitetty viisi väittämää, joissa on kussakin kaksi ääripäätä. Merkitse kunkin väittämän kohdalla janalle ruksi siihen kohtaan, mikä vastaa mielipidettäsi kyseisestä tehtävästä.

Esim.

HELPPO

_____X_____

VAIKEA

Tämä tehtävä on vastaajan mielestä melko helppo, sillä hän on merkinnyt ruksin aika lähelle vaihtoehtoa "helppo".

Esimerkkitehtävä 1.

Aukkotehtävä (kirjanne s. teht.)

Helppo _____

Hyödyllinen _____

Mieluisa _____

Nopea tehdä _____

Usein käytetty _____

Vaikea

Hyödytön

Epämieluisa

Hidas tehdä

Vähän käytetty

Esimerkkitehtävä 2.

Lauseiden käännöstehtävä (kirjanne s. teht.)

Helppo _____

Hyödyllinen _____

Mieluisa _____

Nopea tehdä _____

Usein käytetty _____

Vaikea

Hyödytön

Epämieluisa

Hidas tehdä

Vähän käytetty

Esimerkkitehtävä 3.

Keskusteluharjoitustehtävä (kirjanne s. teht.)

Helppo _____

Hyödyllinen _____

Mieluisa _____

Nopea tehdä _____

Usein käytetty _____

Vaikea

Hyödytön

Epämieluisa

Hidas tehdä

Vähän käytetty

Esimerkkitehtävä 4.

Sanasokkelo tai sanojen yhdistämistehtävä tms.

(kirjanne s. teht.)

Helppo _____

Hyödyllinen _____

Mieluisa _____

Nopea tehdä _____

Usein käytetty _____

Vaikea

Hyödytön

Epämieluisa

Hidas tehdä

Vähän käytetty

Esimerkkitehtävä 5.

Sanakoe

(Tämä on vain esimerkki yhdenlaisesta sanakokeesta, muistakaa että sanakokeita voi olla monia erilaisia. Tässä kohdassa teidän tulisi arvioida tällaista sanakoetta, jossa sanoja käännetään sekä englannista suomeen että suomesta englantiin, ja jossa tehtävä sisältää vain pelkkiä sanoja – tällä kertaa eläimiä)

Käännä sanat suomesta englantiin (1-5) ja englannista suomeen (6-10).

- | | |
|------------|----------------|
| 1. kirahvi | 6. a duck |
| 2. koira | 7. an elephant |
| 3. vuohi | 8. a lion |
| 4. lammas | 9. a cat |
| 5. hevonen | 10. a mouse |

Helppo _____

Vaikea

Hyödyllinen _____

Hyödytön

Mieluisa _____

Epämieluisa

Nopea tehdä _____

Hidas tehdä

Usein käytetty _____

Vähän käytetty

Kysymyksiä esimerkkitehtävistä

Vastaa kirjoittamalla kysymyksen perään viivalle esimerkkitehtävän numero (1-5). Voit vastata saman tehtävän useampaan kohtaan, jos kyseinen tehtävä oli mielestäsi esimerkiksi sekä helppo että mieluisin.

Mikä esimerkkitehtävistä olisi mielestäsi mieluisin tehdä? _____

Mikä esimerkkitehtävistä olisi mielestäsi epämieluisin tehdä? _____

Mikä esimerkkitehtävistä olisi mielestäsi vaikein? _____

Mikä esimerkkitehtävistä olisi mielestäsi helpoin? _____

Mikä esimerkkitehtävistä mielestäsi sopii parhaiten sanojen oppimiseen? _____

Mikä esimerkkitehtävistä mielestäsi sopii vähiten sanojen oppimiseen? _____

Sanaston opiskelu vapaa-aikana

Alla on taulukko, jossa on lueteltu erilaisia tapoja opetella sanastoa. Mitä näistä tavoista käytät vapaa-ajallasi englannin sanaston opiskelussa? Tässä tarkoitetaan siis mahdollisten läksyjen lisäksi. Ruksaa sopivin vaihtoehto kunkin tavan kohdalle.

TAPA	Usein	Joskus	Harvoin	En koskaan
1.Katson elokuvia ja/tai tv-sarjoja ilman tekstejä				
2.Katson elokuvia ja/tai tv-sarjoja tekstityksillä				
3.Kuuntelen musiikkia niin, että kiinnitän huomiota myös sanoihin				
4.Kuuntelen musiikkia ja haen sanat jostain (esim. selvitän oudot sanat tai seuraan sanoja kuunnellessani kirjoitettuna)				
5.Luen englanninkielisiä lehtiä				
6.Luen englanninkielisiä kirjoja				
7.Luen / selaan englanninkielisiä Internet-sivuja				
8.Käytän joskus kaverieni kanssa jutellessa englantia				
9.Käytän joskus vanhempieni kanssa jutellessa englantia				
10.Juttelen joskus Internetissä englanniksi (esim. messenger, Skype tai Facebook ym. chatit)				
11.Kuuntelen englanninkielisiä radiokanavia				
12.Teen ylimääräisiä tehtäviä oppikirjoista				
13.Luen oppikirjan kappaleita (muutoinkin kuin läksynä)				
14.Käytän sanakirjaa selvittääkseni uuden ja/tai oudon sanan				
15.Kirjoitan omia tekstejä englanniksi				
16.Pelaan englanninkielisiä pelejä (Internetissä, tietokoneella, pelikonsolilla tms.)				

Appendix 4. Student questionnaire of the present study

KYSELY: Käsityksiä englannin oppimisesta ja opettamisesta

Etunimi: _____ **Ikä:** _____ **Sukupuoli:** nainen/mies

Luokka-aste jota opetat: _____

Koulutuksesi: _____

Milloin valmistuit: _____ **Kauanko olet ollut nykyisessä työpaikassasi:** _____

Oletko opettanut muilla asteilla? Jos, niin missä ja kuinka kauan:

Opetatko muita kieliä? Jos niin mitä:

Yleistä

Ympyröi joka kohdasta (1-4) mielipidettäsi vastaava tai sitä lähin vaihtoehto ja perustele valintasi.

1. Mikä on mielestäsi kaikkein tärkein asia oppia kielenoppimisessa?

- a) kielioppiasiat b) puhuminen c) sanasto tai sanat
d) oikeanlainen lausuminen e) luetun ymmärtäminen f) puhumisen ymmärtäminen

Miksi:

2. Minkä asian edellä mainituista koet itsellesi vaikeimmaksi opettaa?

- a) kielioppiasiat b) puhuminen c) sanasto tai sanat
d) oikeanlainen lausuminen e) luetun ymmärtäminen f) puhumisen ymmärtäminen

Miksi:

3. Minkä asian edellä mainituista koet itsellesi helpoimmaksi opettaa?

- a) kielioppiasiat b) puhuminen c) sanasto tai sanat
d) oikeanlainen lausuminen e) luetun ymmärtäminen f) puhumisen ymmärtäminen

Miksi:

4. Minkä asian opettamiseen käytät mielestäsi englannin tunneillasi eniten aikaa?

- a) kielioppiasiat b) puhuminen c) sanasto tai sanat
d) oikeanlainen lausuminen e) luetun ymmärtäminen f) puhumisen ymmärtäminen

Miksi: _____

Sanastotehtävät oppikirjassa

Alla on mainittuna sanastotehtäviä (4 kpl) koulussanne käytettävästä oppikirjasta sekä yksi esimerkki sanakokeesta sanaston opiskelutehtävänä. Jokaisesta tehtävästä on esitetty viisi väittämää, joissa on kussakin kaksi ääripäätä. Merkitse kunkin väittämän kohdalla janalle ruksi siihen kohtaan, mikä vastaa mielipidettäsi kyseisestä tehtävästä.

Esim.

HELPPO _____X_____ VAIKEA

Tämä tehtävä on vastaajan mielestä melko helppo, sillä hän on merkinnyt ruksin aika lähelle vaihtoehtoa ”helppo”.

Esimerkkitehtävä 1.

Aukkotehtävä s. teht.

Helppo	_____	Vaikea
Hyödyllinen	_____	Hyödytön
Mieluisa	_____	Epämieluisa
Nopea tehdä	_____	Hidas tehdä
Usein käytetty	_____	Vähän käytetty

Esimerkkitehtävä 2.

Lauseiden käännoestehtävä s. teht.

Helppo	_____	Vaikea
Hyödyllinen	_____	Hyödytön
Mieluisa	_____	Epämieluisa
Nopea tehdä	_____	Hidas tehdä
Usein käytetty	_____	Vähän käytetty

Esimerkkitehtävä 3.

Keskusteluharjoitustehtävä s. _____ teht.

Helppo _____

Vaikea

Hyödyllinen _____

Hyödytön

Mieluisa _____

Epämieluisa

Nopea tehdä _____

Hidas tehdä

Usein käytetty _____

Vähän käytetty

Esimerkkitehtävä 4.

Sanasokkelo tai sanojen yhdistämistehtävä tms. s. _____ teht.

Helppo _____

Vaikea

Hyödyllinen _____

Hyödytön

Mieluisa _____

Epämieluisa

Nopea tehdä _____

Hidas tehdä

Usein käytetty _____

Vähän käytetty

Esimerkkitehtävä 5.

Sanakoe

(Sanakokeitahan on erilaisia. Tässä on tarkoitus arvioida juuri tämäntyyppistä sanakoetta sanaston opettamisen ja oppimisen kannalta.)

Käännä sanat suomesta englantiin (1-5) ja englannista suomeen (6-10).

- | | |
|------------|----------------|
| 1. kirahvi | 6. a duck |
| 2. koira | 7. an elephant |
| 3. vuohi | 8. a lion |
| 4. lammas | 9. a cat |
| 5. hevonen | 10. a mouse |

Helppo _____

Vaikea

Hyödyllinen _____

Hyödytön

Mieluisa _____

Epämieluisa

Nopea tehdä _____

Hidas tehdä

Usein käytetty _____

Vähän käytetty

Kysymyksiä tehtävistä.

Ajattele kysymystä yleisesti ottaen ja opettamiesi oppilaiden kantilta. Merkitse vastaukseksi tehtävää vastaava numero. Voit vastata saman tehtävän useampaan kohtaan, jos kyseinen tehtävä oli mielestäsi oppilaille esimerkiksi sekä helppo että mieluisin.

Mikä esimerkkitehtävistä on mielestäsi oppilaille mieluisin tehdä? ____

Mikä esimerkkitehtävistä on mielestäsi oppilaille epämieluisin tehdä? ____

Mikä esimerkkitehtävistä on mielestäsi oppilaille vaikein? ____

Mikä esimerkkitehtävistä on mielestäsi oppilaille helpoin? ____

Mikä esimerkkitehtävistä sopii mielestäsi parhaiten sanojen opettamiseen? ____

Mikä esimerkkitehtävistä sopii mielestäsi vähiten sanojen opettamiseen? ____

Sanaston opiskelu vapaa-aikana

Mitä seuraavista tavoista luulet tai tiedät kokemuksesi perusteella oppilaiden käyttävän englannin sanaston opiskelussa? Ruksaa sopivin vaihtoehto kunkin tavan kohdalle.

TAPA	Tavallisi mmin	Joskus	Harvoin	En koskaan
1.Katson elokuvia ja/tai tv-sarjoja ilman tekstejä				
2.Katson elokuvia ja/tai tv-sarjoja tekstityksillä				
3.Kuuntelen musiikkia kiinnittäen huomiota sanoihin				
4.Kuuntelen musiikkia ja haen sanat jostain (esim. selvitän oudot sanat tai seuraan sanoja kuunnelllessani kirjoitettuna)				
5.Luen englanninkielisiä lehtiä				
6.Luen englanninkielisiä kirjoja				
7.Luen / selaan englanninkielisiä Internet-sivuja				
8.Käytän joskus kaverieni kanssa jutellessa englantia				
9.Käytän joskus vanhempieni kanssa jutellessa englantia				
10.Juttelen joskus Internetissä englanniksi (esim. messenger, Skype tai Facebook ym. chatit)				
11.Kuuntelen englanninkielisiä radiokanavia				

12. Teen ylimääräisiä tehtäviä oppikirjoista				
13. Luen oppikirjan kappaleita (muutoinkin kuin läksynä)				
14. Käytän sanakirjaa selvittääkseni uuden ja/tai oudon sanan				
15. Kirjoitan omia tekstejä englanniksi				
16. Pelaan englanninkielisiä pelejä (Internetissä, tietokoneella, pelikonsolilla tms.)				

2. Mikä edellisessä taulukossa mainituista tavoista on mielestäsi kaikkein paras tapa opetella sanastoa? Nro _____

Selitä lyhyesti miksi valitsemasi tapa on mielestäsi hyvä sanaston oppimisessa.

3. Mikä edellisessä taulukossa mainituista tavoista on mielestäsi kaikkein huonoin tapa opetella sanastoa? Nro _____

Selitä lyhyesti miksi valitsemasi tapa ei ole mielestäsi (niin) hyvä sanaston oppimisessa.

Yleistä 2.

1. Kuinka paljon aikaa arvioisit käyttäväsi nimenomaan englannin sanastotehtävien valmistelemiseen/suunnitteluun viikossa? Arvioi puolen tunnin tarkkuudella.

2. Kuinka tärkeänä pidät sanaston opiskelua/opettamista kielen oppimisen kannalta ylipäänsä? Ympyröi sopivin vaihtoehto. Perustele myös mielipiteesi.

a) erittäin tärkeänä b) hyvin tärkeänä c) tärkeänä

d) vähemmän tärkeänä e) ei lainkaan tärkeänä

Perustele:

3. Mikä on mielestäsi tärkeintä sanaston opettamisessa yläasteella? Mitä opetuksessa tulee mielestäsi erityisesti ottaa huomioon?

4. Millaisia tehtäviä yleensä käytät sanaston opettamisessa aiemmin esitettyjen oppikirjan tehtävien lisäksi? Mainitse joitakin (anna tarvittaessa selitys/esimerkki).

5. Miksi käytät juuri kyseisiä tehtäviä? (esim. koska ne ovat saatavilla, koska oppilaat pyytävät, koska ne soveltuvat mielestäsi parhaiten sanaston oppimiseen)

6. Eroavatko käyttämäsi sanastotehtävät riippuen siitä, mitä luokkaa tai ryhmää opetat? Jos eroavat, niin miten ja miksi?

7. Kuinka paljon aikaa arvioisit opetuksessasi käyttäväsi nimenomaan sanaston opettamiseen/oppimiseen viikossa ryhmää kohti? Pitäisikö tätä aikaa lisätä/vähentää? Miksi?

Lopuksi tässä on Sinulle tilaa kirjoittaa huomioita, lisäyksiä tai muuta tähän tutkimukseen tai kyselyyn liittyvää, jonka haluaisit tuoda esille:

Appendix 5. Exercises in the study books; Key English 7-9