

The connection between language learning anxiety and language
learning difficulties among Finnish upper secondary school
students

Bachelor's thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Jännittäminen on osa kielenoppimista. Useimmat kielenoppijat jännittävät erilaisissa tilanteissa, niin luokkahuoneessa kuin sen ulkopuolellakin. Jännitystä aiheuttaa yleensä pelko epäonnistumisesta, sekä toisten mielipiteet. Siksi on tärkeää tiedostaa, millaisissa tilanteissa oppilaat erityisesti jännittävät ja miten jännitys ilmenee.</p> <p>Oppimisvaikeuksia voi esiintyä erilaisissa kielenoppimisen osa-alueissa, kuten kirjoittamisessa, lukemisessa, kieliopin, sanastossa tai kuullun ymmärtämisessä. Tässä tutkimuksessa opiskelijan omat ajatukset ja kokemukset kielen oppimisvaikeuksista ovat tarkastelun kohteena, eivät niinkään diagnosoidut oppimisvaikeudet. Tutkielmassani mainitut oppimisvaikeudet voivat johtua esimerkiksi sosiaalisista tekijöistä, kuten motivaatiosta tai asenteista kieltä kohtaan.</p> <p>Tämä kandidaatin tutkielma käsittelee jännitystä englannin kielen tunneilla, sekä vaikeuksia englannin kielen oppimisessa. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää kokevatko oppilaat jännitystä erilaisissa tilanteissa englannin kielen tunneilla ja miksi. Tarkoituksena on myös selvittää, millaisia vaikeuksia oppilaille on englannin kielen oppimisessa ja miten vaikeudet ilmenevät. Lopuksi pohdin, onko näiden kahden kokonaisuuden välillä yhteys.</p> <p>Tutkimus toteutettiin kyselylomakkeella, johon vastasi 50 täysi-ikäistä lukiolaista. Tutkimuksessa kävi ilmi, että suurin osa opiskelijoista kokee jännitystä englannin kielen tunneilla edes joskus. Suurin osa jännittää erityisesti esiintyessä toisille tai vastatessa opettajan kysymykseen englanniksi. Lisäksi opiskelijoilla on eniten vaikeuksia kieliopin ja sanaston kanssa. Erityisesti epävarmuus omista taidoista ja pelko virheiden tekemisestä nousi tässä yhteydessä esiin. Jännityksen ja oppimisvaikeuksien välinen yhteys näkyy esimerkiksi siinä, kun opiskelijoilla on vaikeuksia tietyssä kielen osa-alueessa, heistä tulee epävarmoja omista taidoistaan, jolloin heitä usein jännittää erityisesti toisten edessä esiintyminen.</p>	
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1.INTRODUCTION

Anxiety has been studied as a part of foreign language learning since the 1970s (Liu and Huang, 2010:1). Language learners often experience anxiety or nervousness when learning a new language. Language anxiety can be considered as specific anxiety, because it is experienced in certain situations (Kráľová, 2016). Especially social situations where language learners have to use the language causes anxiety. In these situations, students are usually afraid of making mistakes, negative evaluation, and criticism. Language anxiety is common in language learning, which is why it is important to study, what kind of factors causes anxiety among students and in which situations.

Also, language learning difficulties may occur in various situations (Westwood, 2001). In my study, I will focus on language learning difficulties that are related to the basic areas of language learning, such as reading, learning grammar and vocabulary, listening, and speaking. It is important to acknowledge what type of difficulties students may have and how these difficulties may appear. There are not many studies done about language learning difficulties among upper secondary school students. In addition, if students experience difficulties in learning a language, it gets easily considered as some sort of language learning disability, such as dyslexia. In the theoretical part of my thesis I will point out the difference between language learning difficulties and language learning disabilities.

There is not much information about Finnish students' anxiety during English lessons. There are studies made about language anxiety in other countries and in different age levels, but not that many about upper secondary school students. This present study aims to find out if Finnish upper secondary school students experience language learning difficulties when learning English, and if yes, what kind of difficulties. Also, I want to find out if they experience anxiety during English lessons, and if yes, what kind of anxiousness. I want to find out in which situations students feel most anxious. I will focus on social situations, such as speaking in pairs or in front of others and interacting with the teacher. For instance, performing in front of other people is one of the most common situations where people experience anxiousness (Ellis, 1992). In addition, this study aims to find out if there a connection between the experienced difficulties and anxiety.

First, I will introduce theoretical background of language learning anxiety and language learning difficulties. I will also present previous studies about these two themes. Secondly, the present study

is described. Thirdly, the results are presented and discussed. Finally, the conclusion will summarize the results.

2.BACKGROUND

In this section, I will introduce the theoretical background of language learning anxiety and language learning difficulties. The definition of language learning anxiety is important to clarify, since anxiety as a term is such a big concept. In addition, the distinction between language learning difficulties and language learning disabilities is discussed in order to avoid misunderstandings. Then I will present some previous studies about these two topics.

2.1 Language learning anxiety

According to MacIntyre (as cited in Dörnyei, 2005: 200) *language anxiety* is a negative emotional experience when one is learning or using foreign language. Stress, nervousness, and uncertainty are common feelings that are associated with language learning anxiety. Language anxiety is defined as “the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning” (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994: 284). For instance, one of the most common situations where people feel anxious is when they need to perform in front of others (Ellis, 1992). Language anxiety is considered to be social anxiety, since it occurs mostly in social and communicative situations (MacIntyre, 1995). Anxiety in general is related to cognition and it affects working memory (Kormos, 2017).

Dörnyei (2005) states that anxiety is a common experience in language learning and that most people experience anxiety in various learning situations. In these situations, individuals may be afraid of making mistakes that they would not normally make, or they can also be afraid of failure and negative evaluation. In addition, they may have had negative experiences when learning foreign languages, which can provoke their anxiety (Trang, Moni and Baldauf Jr. 2013). Sparks and Ganschow (as cited in Trang, Moni and Baldauf Jr. 2013) also emphasizes that difficulties in the native language can make students more anxious about learning other languages. Also, Kormos (2017) points out that anxiety may occur in different situations, but it can also be a part of individual’s personality. There are different types of anxiety and usually language anxiety is separated from the other types (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991). Anxiety in general may cause negative effects on students’ language learning success, which makes it an important factor to investigate.

2.2 Language learning difficulties

To avoid misunderstandings, I need to make it clear, what I mean by *language learning difficulties*, since it may easily be confused with the term *language learning disabilities*. Kormos (2017: 2) points out that the term *disability* is related to individual's physical aspects that usually have long-term impacts. From language learners' point of view, these are mainly related to neurological problems or diagnosed difficulties. These language learning disabilities can be, for instance, dyslexia and ADHD. On the contrary, language learning difficulties may be caused by social factors (Kormos 2017). These social factors may be, for instance, the lack of motivation or attitude towards the language. Ganschow, Sparks and Javorsky (1998:248) state that "students with and without language learning problems do not exhibit significant differences in intelligence".

Difficulties in language learning can be related to, for instance, reading, writing, listening, and speaking. One may have problems with vocabulary, difficulties in finding words and processing texts, and also difficulties in listening comprehension (Westwood, 2001). Also, one may have poor memorization skills or have anxiety in the classroom that affects their academic performance (Otanjac, 2016). Difficulties in these areas of language learning can easily be mixed with language learning disabilities, such as dyslexia. There is a fine line between difficulties and disabilities that makes it difficult to define them.

2.3 Previous studies on language learning anxiety and language learning difficulties

There are rather few studies done about language learning anxiety in Finland. Kyyrönen (1997) wrote her master's thesis about the anxiety during English lessons among ninth graders in a Finnish comprehensive school. She points out how there is not that much information about Finnish students' anxiety during English lessons. By doing her research, she wanted to find out if the ninth graders felt anxious during the classroom activities or during the teacher-student interaction. The results revealed that the students' anxiety level was rather low when interacting with the teacher. Only 15% felt very or slightly anxious. However, many students were unwilling to answer some of the questions. During the classroom activities, 14% of the students felt slightly anxious and 6% very anxious. This again reveals that the students had experienced some level of anxiety during the classroom activities. Kyyrönen points out that the cause of anxiety in these situations, were the activities themselves.

One part of Renko's study about Finnish EFL learners' perceptions on errors, corrective feedback and foreign language anxiety (2012), aimed to find out what kind of oral errors Finnish ninth graders make, and if they feel anxious when they make these errors. Also, Renko wanted to find out if receiving feedback about the errors made the learners feel anxious. Her research points out that most learners felt anxious when they made an error in a classroom situation. Especially girls experienced more anxiety than boys. In addition, if the students, who took part in this research, had good English skills, they did not feel anxious during the English lessons. Renko's research about error-related anxiety focused on speaking in front of others. Over 82% of the students who answered to the questions related to errors stated that they felt anxious when making an error. However, for most students the feeling of anxiety is rare and does not happen often. The reason why students felt anxious was because they were afraid that others will laugh at them or think negatively about them.

These previous studies reveal that students of different ages do feel anxious sometimes during language learning. They may not experience it often, but they still do. Kyyrönen and Renko focused also on social situations, such as interaction with the teachers and other students. These two studies did not point out other reasons for anxiety than social reasons. For instance, as Renko found out that the reason why students felt anxious when making an error, was because they were afraid of other students' opinions.

As I mentioned earlier, there are studies done about language learning anxiety in other countries as well. Marwan's research about the Indonesian English students' foreign language anxiety (2007) illustrated that experiencing language learning anxiety is common when learning English. The participants were students in polytechnic. The factors that caused anxiety among the participants, were the lack of preparation, the fear of failing, and lack of confidence. The findings of Marwan's study show that both female and male students despite of their skill level experienced language learning anxiety when studying English. However, the participants did not mention any problems in understanding the teacher, or the fear of making mistakes.

There are studies done on language learning disabilities in Finland, but not that many about language learning difficulties. Learning disabilities may be easier to study than learning difficulties, since language learning difficulties are more complex to define. There are also not that many studies done about language learning difficulties among upper secondary school students in other countries.

One research was done by Vilhonen in 2009 about using the Fast ForWord program with students who have difficulties in learning English. The Fast ForWord program is a computer program that offers different exercises depending on the individual's language proficiency. The program includes,

for instance, games that help the learners to connect what they hear to what they read. These students were upper secondary school students who had difficulties especially with reading and understanding English. Vilhonen points out that the difficulties that students may experience, are common in all parts of language learning: in pronouncing, learning vocabulary, listening and understanding, reading, and producing text. These difficulties are, for instance, difficulties in reading, writing, and processing what they hear. The results showed that Fast ForWord program would benefit students with learning difficulties, since it would help them visually understand what they read.

Sawir's (2005) study is focused on international university students from Asia who were studying in Australia. These Asian students faced learning difficulties in speaking English and taking part in communicative tasks. It was difficult for them to come up with words and spontaneous sentences. The students did not have much conversation experiences in English outside the classroom, which made them insecure when they came to Australia. The interviews revealed that the main reason for the students' learning difficulties was their prior language learning experience. Sawir points out that the Asian students had learned mainly English grammar rather than oral communication skills in their home countries. The students were afraid of making mistakes while speaking English, either in pronunciation or in grammatical structure. This study showed how students' prior English learning experience has a major impact on language learning difficulties.

3. THE PRESENT STUDY

3.1. Participants

The data was collected anonymously through a questionnaire during the autumn term in 2019. At the time, the students who answered the questionnaire were over 18-year-old upper secondary school students who were studying English. This means that most of them were seniors in the upper secondary school. The research consisted of 50 students. The students were volunteers and their proficiency levels or gender were not taken into consideration. In the beginning of the survey, the participants were informed about the study and where the data will be used. The study was conducted in one upper secondary school in Southern Finland.

3.2. Data collection

I chose a questionnaire for this survey, because it was easy to arrange, and I was also able to get answers from multiple participants anonymously in a short period of time. I created the questionnaire by using the online survey tool Webropol. The questionnaire was sent to the school's English teachers via email, where they shared the link to their students in their English lessons. The questionnaire was filled during lessons, which could have had a positive impact on the number of the responses. The students could choose if they want to answer the questionnaire or not.

With my questionnaire I wanted to find out answers to the following research questions:

- 1) Do students experience language learning difficulties when learning English? If yes, what kind of difficulties?
- 2) Do students experience anxiety during English lessons? If yes, what kind of anxiousness?
- 3) Is there a connection between experienced difficulties and anxiety?

The questionnaire contained both open-and closed-ended questions so that the questions could be easily analyzed, but also so that the participants could explain their thoughts in their own words. The open-ended questions allowed the participants to express their thoughts and answer with longer sentences. In the closed-ended questions the participants had to choose an option from a 5- point scale that they feel described their thoughts the most.

3.3. Methods of analysis

I used both quantitative and qualitative analysis method when analyzing the data. The quantitative analysis method was used with the closed-ended questions. The closed-ended questions included questions where the students had to choose an option from a 5-point scale (5= almost always, 4= often, 3= sometimes, 2= rarely, 1= never). The scale shows if the participants do feel anxious in certain situations and to what extent. In addition, the scale points out if the participants experience difficulties in learning English and what kind of difficulties. The results are presented as relative frequencies, in other words, how many per cent of the participants responded what. Then I could see how many participants had answered the same way and interpret how they felt about the topic in question.

With the open-ended questions I used qualitative analysis method, since the open-ended questions included the participants own written answers. This helped to specify the findings more closely. Then I could interpret how many of the participants had answered similar way or if there were great differences in their answers. It also revealed the most common situations where the students experienced anxiousness or difficulties in English language learning. The open-ended questions mainly gave the participants the opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences in more depth.

4. RESULTS

In this chapter, I will present the results of my survey. First, I will examine the results regarding students' language anxiety during class. Secondly, I will present the results of students' experiences of language learning difficulties. Finally, I will examine whether there is a connection between these two themes.

4.1 Language learning anxiety

In the first part of the questionnaire the students were asked if they feel anxious during different situations in class. These situations are social situations, which includes interaction with other peers and with the teacher. The results show that most students do experience anxiousness at times during English lessons. As Dörnyei (2005) and Kormos (2017) state, language anxiety can occur in various situations. The most common situation where majority of students feel anxious is speaking English in front of the class, as demonstrated in Figure 1.

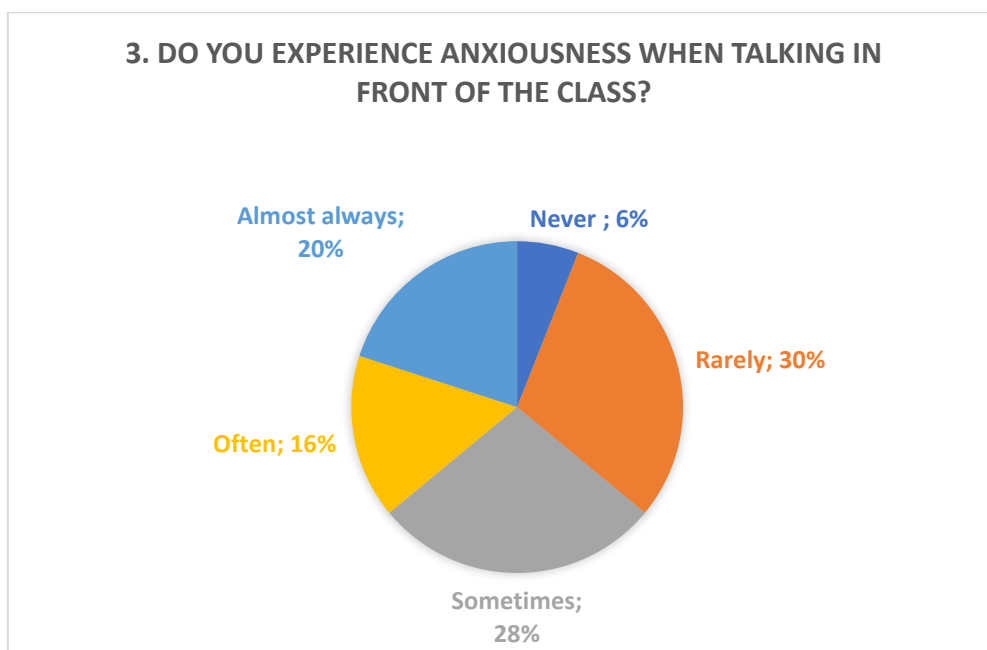


Figure 1: Students' (n=50) perceptions of experiencing anxiousness when speaking English in front of others. Only 6% of the respondents answered that they never get anxious when speaking in front of others. The results show that situations where everyone else is listening, causes most anxiousness among students. However, this depends on how many people are listening and who is listening. A similar finding was made by Renko (2012). Renko's study (2012) points out that most students feel anxious in social situations and when they make mistakes while speaking in English. Speaking English in

front of others causes anxiety, because they are afraid of other students' negative opinions. My study also shows that the fear of making mistakes and thinking about what others think causes anxiety among upper secondary school students.

When it comes to speaking English in groups, almost half of the respondents (42%) answered that they never get anxious when speaking English in groups with other classmates. In addition, more than half of the respondents (54%) answered that they never get anxious when speaking English with a partner. This shows that students do not get as anxious in smaller groups or in pairs compared to bigger groups.

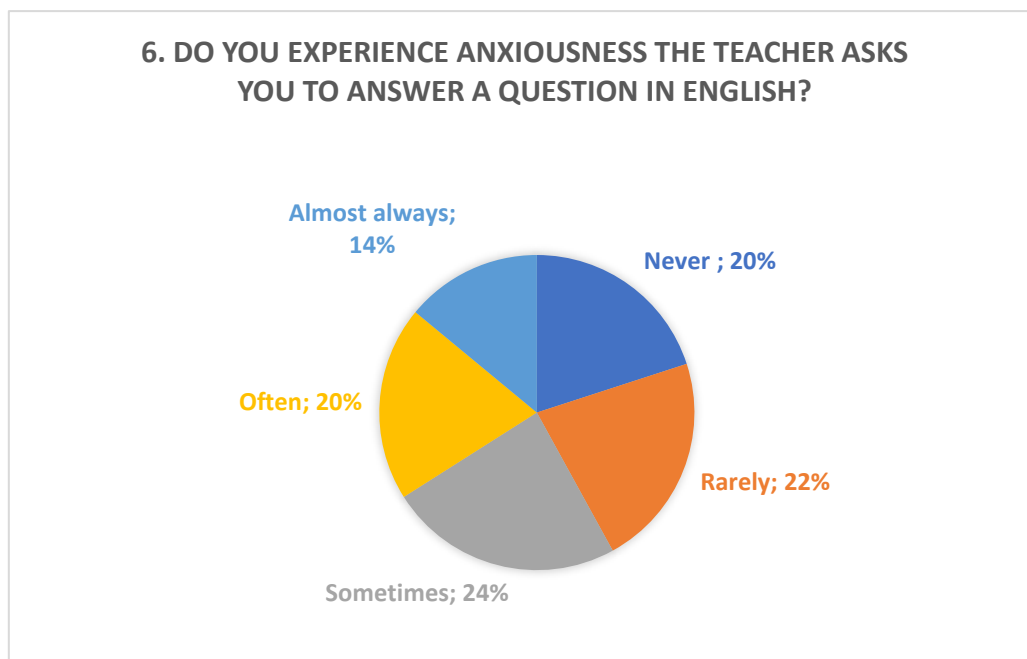


Figure 2: Experiencing anxiousness when answering the teacher's question in English.

Questions about the situations that include the teacher generated a variety of responses. 20% of the respondents answered that they never experience anxiousness when the teacher asks them to answer a question in English (Figure 2). The rest experience anxiety in these situations, some students more than others. In these situations, the teacher asks the question out loud and other students are listening when one answers to this question in English. As mentioned before, speaking in front of the whole group causes anxiousness among most students, since more people are then listening.

However, the question about speaking English with the teacher one on one divided opinions. 22% of the respondents state that they never experience anxiety when talking with the teacher alone. 28% rarely experience anxiousness and 16% experience it sometimes. The rest experience it often or always. In these situations, students may feel anxious when they have to speak English to someone

with a higher proficiency level. Also, they may think that the teacher concentrates on their possible grammatical mistakes. A similar finding was made by Kyyrönen (1997). Her results revealed that the students' anxiety level was rather low when interacting with the teacher. In my study the results show that half of the respondents never experience anxiety or rarely experience anxiety when interacting with the teacher one on one.

The survey included open questions, where the students could explain in their own words why they feel anxious in these different situations. Speaking English in front of the class was mentioned multiple times. In these situations, the fear of making mistakes is the main reason for anxiousness. These mistakes include grammatical mistakes and mistakes in pronunciation. In addition, students are under pressure when they know that others are listening. Then they begin to wonder what their peers will think of them and their language skills. As mentioned before, language anxiety is common when performing in front of other people. In these situations, students are usually most afraid of other students' negative opinions, giving wrong answers, or being laughed at (Ellis 1992: 116). This came across in the open-ended response below (Example 1):

Example 1.

Kun kaikki kuuntelevat. Jos en tiedä jotain sanaa (saattaa olla yksinkertainenkin), mietin mitä muut ajattelevat.

When everybody is listening. If I do not know some word (even a simple one), I think about what others think of me.

Few students pointed out that they are not confident with their language skills, which is why they are afraid of saying or pronouncing something incorrectly. However, some students mentioned that they get anxious in normal social situations, or when they have to speak or perform in front of the class even in Finnish. As we have already discovered, speaking publicly is one of the most common reasons for social anxiety. Few students also mentioned that they are afraid of other students' opinions as well as the teacher's opinion when they say something incorrectly. They begin to compare themselves to others, which puts pressure on them. This came across in the open-ended response below (Example 2):

Example 2.

Se, että teen virheitä enkä osaa puhua sujuvaa englantia. Pelkään, että opettaja pitää minua eriyisen surkeana eikä saa selvää mitä yritän sanoa.

That I make mistakes and cannot speak fluent English. I am afraid that the teacher will think I am particularly poor in English and cannot figure out what I am trying to say.

The students also pointed out some physical aspects of anxiousness. The most common physical effect that the students experience is increasing heart rate and voice shaking. Some students mentioned that sometimes when their voice shake their speech gets unclear. Also, few students pointed out that they begin to sweat when they get anxious. For some students, this causes embarrassment, because they feel that others will notice it. In addition to physical effects, forgetting words and losing focus are also common among students in an anxious situation.

4.2 Language learning difficulties

The second part of the survey included questions about language learning difficulties. I wanted to find out if the students experience language learning difficulties in different areas of learning English. These language learning difficulties are related to writing, reading, speaking and pronunciation, listening comprehension, and grammar and vocabulary.

The results show that learning grammar and vocabulary causes most difficulties among students. Only 16% answered that they never experience difficulties in this area, as presented in Figure 3.

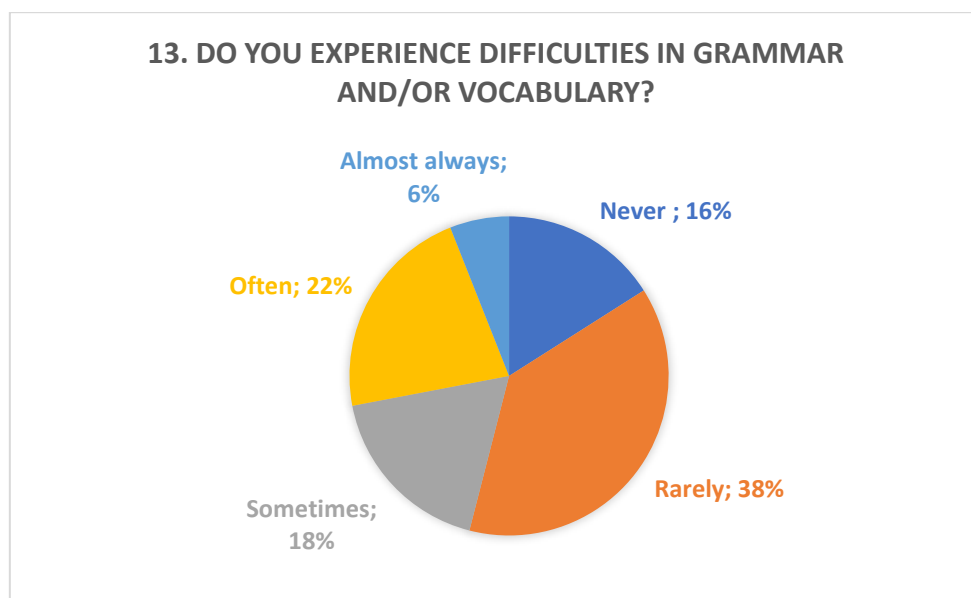


Figure 3: Students experiencing difficulties in grammar and vocabulary.

In this section of my survey I also had open questions where students had the opportunity to tell in their own words how these difficulties appear. Most answers were related to grammar and vocabulary.

Difficulties in remembering words in English and grammar failures are the most common. Grammar failures include, for instance, the incorrect use of articles and prepositions. This again leads to difficulties in writing. 22% of the respondents answered that they never experience difficulties in writing in English. 36% rarely experience difficulties in this area and 26% experience them sometimes.

Speaking and pronouncing English also causes difficulties (Figure 4). Most students rarely or sometimes experience difficulties in speaking. Furthermore, only 14% answered that they never experience difficulties in this area. In the open-ended questions, few students mentioned that they may know how the word is spelled, but not how it is pronounced. This leads to students trying to say the same thing in a different way. Also, some students pointed out that they use rally English if they do not know how to pronounce a word properly. Speaking also causes difficulties for some students, when they feel that their vocabulary is limited.

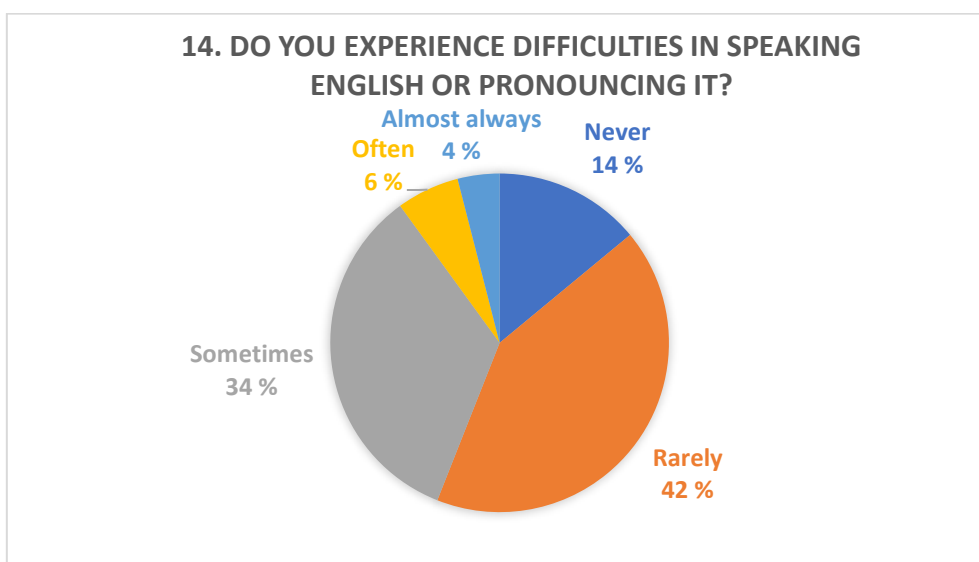


Figure 4: Students experiencing difficulties in speaking and pronouncing English.

When it comes to vocabulary few students mentioned that even if they know the words, they easily forget them in an interactional situation. In addition, for some students learning vocabulary is exhausting and their motivation to learn new vocabulary is not high. This leads to uncertainty about their language skills. One reason for the lack of motivation is, as some students mentioned, that they learn words and grammar by hearing and from media, which is why it is arduous for them to study and read grammar rules and vocabulary. Also, if they study specific words for a vocabulary test, they often forget the words quite quickly, since they only learn them for the test. When students do not

remember a certain word or a phrase, they try to form a sentence in other way. This was revealed in the open-ended response below (Example 3):

Example 3.

En osaa sanoja, joten yritän muodostaa lauseen ilman, että joudun käyttämään sitä sanaa ja joskus teen kielioppivirheitä.

I do not know the words, so I try to form a sentence without using that word, and sometimes I make grammatical mistakes.

When students' vocabulary is limited, they experience difficulties in listening comprehensions. When one does not understand the words that are used in listening comprehensions, it is harder to stay focused. It is not always easy to understand the meaning even from its context, especially if the word can have more than one meaning. In addition to listening comprehensions, sometimes students feel that their limited vocabulary affects their writing and reading. This is shown in the open-ended response (Example 4):

Example 4.

Sanavarastoni on todella pieni, eli en osaa käyttää hienompia sanoja. En ymmärrä kuunteluissa tai luetunymmärtämisessä tekstejä ilman sanaston apua.

My vocabulary is really limited so I do not know how to use fancier words. I do not understand listening comprehensions or reading comprehensions without the help of vocabulary.

However, reading texts in English caused the least difficulties among the respondents. 34% answered that they never experience difficulties in reading and 42% answered that they rarely experience difficulties in reading. If students do not understand a word or a phrase when reading a text, it is easier to infer the meaning from its context.

The results show that students experience difficulties in different parts of language learning. A similar finding was made by Vilhonen (2009). Her study pointed out that the difficulties that students may experience, are common in all parts of language learning, for instance, in pronunciation, writing, listening, reading, and learning vocabulary. These difficulties are, for example, difficulties in understanding what they read or processing what they hear. In my study, the respondents experienced most difficulties with vocabulary and grammar, as well as with speaking and pronouncing English.

4.3 The connection between language learning anxiety and language learning difficulties

Interestingly, the connection between anxiousness during lessons and learning difficulties is not clearly shown in the results. The students were asked that if they experience difficulties in learning English, does it increase their anxiousness in class. 40% of the respondents mentioned that experiencing difficulties never increases anxiousness (Figure 5). Only 8% answered that it often increases anxiety and 12% answered that it almost always increases anxiety.

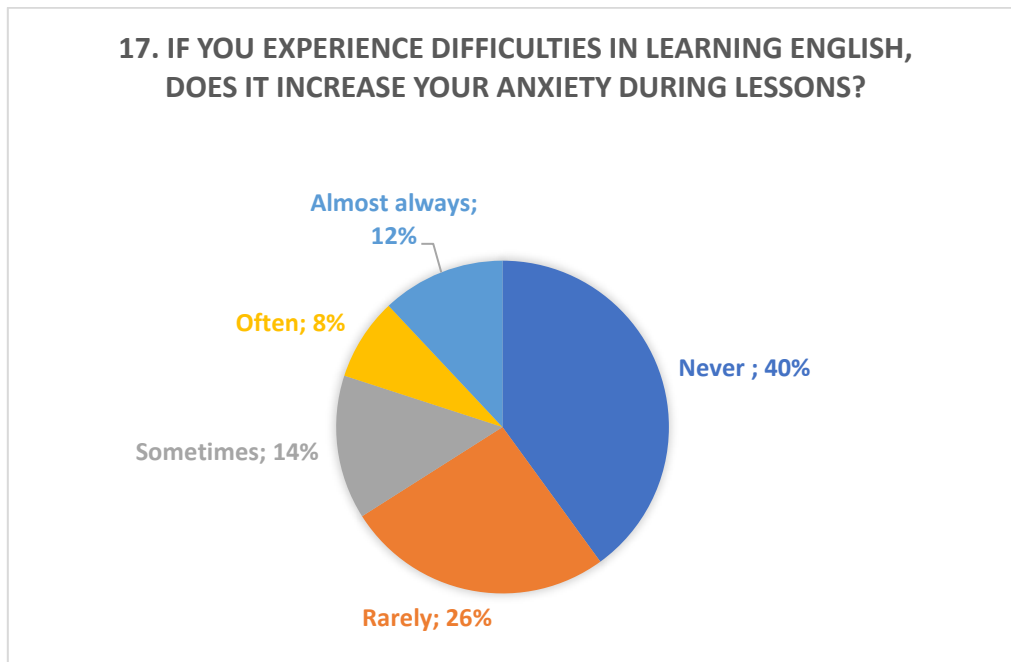


Figure 5: Students' opinions about language learning difficulties causing anxiety during lessons.

This is a surprising result, since many of the respondents state that if they, for instance, have a limited vocabulary, they are not as confident to speak English out loud. If they forget words or do not know some word in English, they get anxious and wonder what other students think of them or their language skills. However, even if students do not have any difficulties with grammar or vocabulary, the social situation can cause students to forget words or to make grammatical errors. Nonetheless, is positive to note that almost half of the respondents (46%) point out that difficulties in language learning does not affect negatively to their motivation to study English.

5. CONCLUSION

In this study I wanted to find out if the students feel anxious during English lessons and in which situations. Also, students' perceptions on how anxiousness appears was important to point out. I also wanted to find out what kind of language learning difficulties the students may experience and in which areas of language learning. The main target for this study was to point out if there is a connection between these two themes.

The results showed that most students experience anxiousness in class when they need to speak in front of their peers or in front of the teacher. The fear of embarrassing oneself by saying something incorrectly or pronouncing words wrong is the most common cause for anxiousness. Many students were concerned about other students' opinions. It is easier to speak English in small groups or in pairs, since not so many are then listening. Thus, the fear of failing is not that high in smaller groups. In addition, these situations are usually more conversational where everyone has to speak. Whereas when one is speaking in front of the class or answering the teacher's question out loud, others are listening and focuses on just one person.

The main areas where the students have difficulties are speaking and pronouncing English, and grammar and vocabulary. Difficulties with grammar appear, for instance, as mistakes in articles and prepositions. Whereas difficulties in vocabulary are more related to social situations, since many of the students mentioned that they easily forget words during an interactional situation. In addition, some students pointed out the lack of motivation to study vocabulary. Nowadays, people unconsciously learn new words from media and from the Internet, which can make it duller to study specific vocabulary at school. However, in some cases students may feel that they have limited vocabulary, which makes them uncertain about their skills. Speaking with others may then be difficult. Also, difficulties with grammar and vocabulary causes difficulties in listening comprehensions.

Surprisingly, this study showed that the connection between language learning anxiety and language learning difficulties is not that clear. Most respondents mentioned that they do experience anxiousness at times. Also, they recognize if they have difficulties in learning English and what kind of difficulties. In fact, there is a minor contradiction in the results. As mentioned in the analysis part, 40% of the students feel that if they experience difficulties in some area of language learning, it does not increase anxiety in class. Only 8% answered that it often increases anxiety and 12% answered that it almost

always increases anxiety. However, the results show that uncertainty about their own language skills causes nervousness among students. Then they get anxious when they have to speak in front of others. In other words, there is a connection between the experienced difficulties and anxiety, but the students do not necessarily notice it themselves.

This study is a good beginning for future research on language anxiety and language learning difficulties experienced by Finnish upper secondary school students. My study already gives some indication of the students' anxiety levels and language learning difficulties. It is important to continue studying these two themes and their connection. As mentioned in the beginning of this thesis, there is not much information or studies about the connection between language learning anxiety and language learning difficulties.

However, there are some limitations to this study. First, the gender of the participants was not taken into consideration. It would have been interesting to see if there are differences between male and female participants. Also, students' language proficiency levels could be taken into consideration as well, in order to see, if the students with higher language proficiency level experience anxiety or learning difficulties as much as students with lower language proficiency level. Second, a long-term study would be interesting, because it contains repeated observation of the students. For instance, this could be a longitudinal study where the same students would answer the same questions each year from the first year of upper secondary school to the third year when they graduate. The results would show how the students' experiences will change as well as how their language skills develop. Finally, there could be more participants from different schools or from different parts of Finland.

When it comes to teaching, it is important for teachers to acknowledge the situations where students feel anxious and what are the reasons for it. Also, knowing what kind of language learning difficulties students may have and how these difficulties appear is beneficial. It is meaningful to hear students' perceptions about this topic, since it can help teachers to take these factors into account when planning lessons and activities.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS

1.Sukupuoli: / Gender:

1. Mies / Male
2. Nainen / Female
3. Muu / Other

2.Ikä: / Age:

Jokaisessa kohdassa on valittavana skaala 1-5 (1= Ei koskaan, 2= Harvoin, 3= Joskus, 4= Usein, 5= Melkein aina) / In each section choose from a scale (1= Never, 2= Rarely, 3= Sometimes, 4= Often, 5= Almost always)

Jännitys / Anxiety

3.Jännittääkö sinua puhua englanniksi luokan edessä? / Do you experience anxiousness when talking English in front of the class?

4. Jännittääkö sinua puhua englantia ryhmässä luokkakavereidesi kanssa? / Do you experience anxiousness when talking English with your peers in groups?

5. Jännittääkö sinua puhua parin kanssa englantia? / Do you experience anxiousness when talking English with a partner?

6. Jännittääkö sinua, kun opettaja pyytää vastaamaan englanniksi? / Do you experience anxiousness when the teacher asks you to answer a question in English?

7. Jännittääkö sinua puhua englantia opettajan kanssa kahden kesken? / Do you experience anxiousness when talking English with the teacher one on one?

”Jos vastasit, että jännität jossain tilanteessa edes hieman, vastaa seuraavaan kahteen kysymykseen” / ”If you answered that you do experience anxiety at least rarely, answer the next two questions”

8. Mikä tietyssä/tietyissä tilanteissa jännittää erityisesti? (vapaa sana) / Why do you experience anxiety in these particular situations? (free word)

9. Miten jännitys ilmenee? (esim. hikoilu, sydämen tykytys, äänen värinä, keskittyminen herpaantuu...) (vapaa sana) / How does your anxiety appear? (for example: sweating, heart racing, voice trembling, difficult to focus...)

Kielen oppimisvaikeudet (Skaala 1-5) / Language learning difficulties (Scale from 1-5)

10. Koetko, että sinulla on vaikeuksia englannin kielisten tekstien lukemisessa? / Do you feel that you have difficulties in reading texts in English?
11. Koetko, että englanniksi kirjoittaminen tuottaa sinulle vaikeuksia? / Do you feel that you have difficulties in writing in English?
12. Koetko, että kuullun ymmärtäminen tuottaa vaikeuksia? / Do you feel that you have difficulties in listening and understanding English (listening comprehension)?
13. Koetko, että kielioppi/sanasto on sinulle vaikeaa? / Do you feel that you have difficulties in grammar or vocabulary?
14. Koetko, että puhuminen/ääntäminen englanniksi tuottaa vaikeuksia? Do you experience difficulties in speaking English or pronouncing it?

”Jos koet vähintään yhdessä osa-alueessa vaikeuksia, vastaa seuraavaan kysymykseen:” /

”If you feel that you have difficulties at least in one area of learning English, answer the following question:”

15. Miten vaikeudet ilmenevät? (vapaa sana) / How do these difficulties appear? (Free word)

Yhteys jännityksen ja vaikeuksien välillä / The connection between anxiety and difficulties

16. Vaikuttaako vaikeus/vaikeudet jossain yllämainitussa osa-alueessa negatiivisesti motivaatioosi opiskella englantia? (skaala1-5) / Does a difficulty or difficulties in some previously mentioned language learning area affect negatively on your motivation to study English? (Scale 1-5)
17. Jos koet vaikeuksia englannin kielen oppimisessa, lisääkö se jännitystä oppitunneilla? (skaala1-5) / If you experience difficulties in English language learning, does it increase anxiety during lessons? (Scale 1-5)
18. Vapaa sana, jos haluaa lisätä jotain. / Free word if you want to add something.