

**Linguistic compensation strategies Finnish EFL learners use in a
communicative learning situation.**

Markus Koivula
Bachelor's Thesis
English
The Department of Language and
Communication Studies
University of Jyväskylä
Spring 2022

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

Faculty Humanities and Social Sciences	Department The Department of Language and Communication Studies
Author Markus Koivula	
Title Linguistic compensation strategies Finnish ESL learners use in a communicative learning situation.	
Subject English	Level Bachelor's thesis
Month and year 04/2022	Number of pages
Abstract <p>Tämä tutkimus tutkii kielellisiä kompensatiostrategioita kielenoppimistilanteessa. Jokainen kielenkäyttäjä hyödyntää kielenoppimisstrategioita sekä äidinkieltä käytettäessä, että vierasta kieltä opittaessa. Aiemmassa tutkimuksessa on kuitenkin keskitytty enemmän kielenoppimisstrategioihin ja suhteellisen vähän kompensatiostrategioihin, joita oppijat käyttävät, kun kohtaavat kohdekielessä sanan tai ilmaisun, jota eivät joko ymmärrä tai eivät osaa itse tuottaa. Tässä tutkimuksessa observoidaan ja raportoidaan, mitä kompensatiostrategioita suomalaiset seitsenluokkalaiset käyttävät autenttisessa vieraan kielen oppimistilanteessa, tarkemmin kommunikatiivisessa paritehtävässä.</p> <p>Data kerättiin jakamalla oppilaat pareihin, joita ohjeistettiin käymään vaatteisiin liittyvä keskustelu englanniksi suomenkielisten vihjeiden avulla. Jokaiselle parille jaettiin tabletti, jolla kuvata tehtävän suoritus. Audiovisuaalinen videointi tallennustavaksi valikoitui, jotta oppijoiden ilmeet, eleet, sekä muu ei-kielellinen viestintä olisi havaittavissa, jonka lisäksi videotiedostot ovat helposti tallennettavissa ja niihin on helppo päästä käsiksi.</p> <p>Tutkimuksessa ilmi tulleet havainnot ovat linjassa aiemman tutkimuksen kanssa, esimerkiksi sen suhteen, miten tytöt ovat valmiimpia käyttämään enemmän kompensatiostrategioita kuin pojat, ja hyödyntävät niitä huomattavasti enemmän oppimistilanteissa. Tutkimus pyrkii avaamaan keskustelua siitä, voisiko kompensatiostrategioiden opettamisesta olla hyötyä kielenopetuksessa/oppimisessa, ja toteaa, että lisätutkimusta aiheesta tarvitaan.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen aikomuksena on olla astinlautana jatkotutkimukselle, jonka johdosta dataa kerättiin tarpeeksi, jotta aihetta voisi jatkaa tulevaisuudessa pro gradu - tutkimuksen muodossa.</p>	
Keywords: linguistic compensation strategies, compensatory strategies, language learning strategies	
Depository University of Jyväskylä	
Additional information	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
2	LITERATURE REVIEW.....	3
	2.1 Language learning strategies and compensatory strategies.....	3
	2.2 Previous research.....	5
3	THE PRESENT STUDY.....	8
	3.1 Aim and research questions.....	8
	3.2 Participants and data.....	8
	3.3 Method of analysis.....	9
	3.4 Procedure.....	10
4	ANALYSIS.....	12
	4.1 Asking for help.....	14
	4.2 Code switching.....	16
	4.3 Using mime or gesture.....	17
	4.4 Literal translation.....	18
5	CONCLUSION.....	19
	REFERENCES.....	21
	APPENDICES.....	22
	Appendix 1: Page 1 of the oral exercise.....	22
	Appendix 2: Page 2 of the oral exercise.....	23
	Appendix 3: Page 3 of the oral exercise.....	24

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on linguistic compensation strategies and how they are used by Finnish EFL learners and secondary school students within the context of a communicative language learning task.

Language learning strategies are a set of cognitive tools that every language learner uses. They are conscious processes and efforts to learn, control and construct the target language one is learning, or as Cohen (2011:7) puts it, they are: "Thoughts and actions, consciously chosen and operationalized by language learners, to assist them in carrying out a multiplicity of tasks from the very onset of learning to the most advanced levels of target-language performance". It is, however, important to make a distinction between language learning strategies and linguistic compensation (sometimes: compensatory) strategies.

Language learners tend to use linguistic compensation strategies whenever there is an information gap between what the learner knows and the target language. In other words, learners become aware of their limitations in the target language when they encounter a form or an utterance they cannot either understand or produce. The learners then utilize these strategies to overcome their limitations. According to Oxford (1990:46) "Compensation strategies enable learners to use the new language for either comprehension or production despite limitations in knowledge". These strategies include for example guessing intelligently, asking for help, using mime or gesture among other ones.

The present study aims to identify which compensation strategies are used most among the students that were observed when performing the task, and to report any other points of interest there may arise. The students were audiovisually recorded conducting the task so that both linguistic and non-linguistic compensation strategies would be observable.

Another factor in selecting this topic was that my aim in future research is to analyze if compensation strategy instruction (CSI) could be taken into account and

used in advantage among language teachers or language learners. Not very much research on this topic exists, especially in the context of the Finnish school system.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This study focuses on language learning strategies and especially on linguistic compensation strategies. In this chapter I shall discuss language learning strategies first and then focus more on the compensatory strategies.

2.1 Language learning strategies and compensatory strategies

Language learning strategies are usually divided into two main categories; for example Oxford (1990) talks about **direct strategies** which have to do more with linguistic tools and all the mental factors that are needed for using them, such as cognitive strategies and using one's memory, whereas **indirect strategies** have more to do with social, affective and metacognitive aspects not directly tied to the learners' target language. Oxford (1990) described the direct strategies as tools "needed to overcome any gaps in knowledge of the language". These gaps in knowledge are of special interest in this study, since they were deliberately produced within the students' interaction in order to provoke them to use any compensatory strategies they chose.

Further study is needed in determining whether or not knowledge and instructions concerning language learning strategies and compensation strategies could be something that teachers and learners could take advantage of in their second language teaching and learning, and if so, which methods would be most advantageous for teachers and/or learners. The present study only touches on which compensatory strategies the students used the most, however, the idea is to expand this topic in my future research, and study if and how students feel their use of compensation strategies has helped them in learning a second or foreign language, if at all.

Not a lot of research on this topic has been made, but Gül Peker. & Erdemir (2021) have studied and discussed compensation strategy instruction (CSI) and according to them the results suggest that "learners can be taught how to use compensation

strategies and that CSI may be useful for improving learners' communicative competence in a speaking class." (Gül Peker. & Erdemir 2021).

Returning to the subject of examining language learning strategies, Oxford (1990) has developed a taxonomy of language learning strategies to further illustrate differences between them and separating them, including mnemonic strategies, cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, compensatory strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. These strategies are often overlapping and one or more of them can be used at the same time.

However, it should be noted that Dörnyei (2005) argues that compensatory strategies have more to do with the way people communicate with language rather than with language learning and thus should not be necessarily included in language learning strategies:

"This division raises further questions inasmuch as (i) "compensation" (i.e., communication) strategies are primarily related to language use rather than language learning (and were included on the basis that language use leads to language acquisition)." (Dörnyei 2005)

However, this argument does not seem to take into account the possibility that, as discussed above, compensation strategy instruction (CSI) can be beneficial to second or foreign language learners if instructed properly.

Whenever second language learners process the target language and come across with an information gap, where they either do not understand an utterance they read or hear, or when they do not know how to produce one in the target language, the learners take advantage of linguistic compensation strategies (or compensatory strategies), thus trying to overcome their limitations in using the target language. In other words, compensation strategies refer to the strategies and means learners use when encountering an information gap, finding help and linguistic clues from the context of a learning situation as well as relying on social interaction and non-verbal communication such as mime or gesture to communicate and negotiate meaning when learners are unable to understand or produce the exact meaning of a form or an utterance .

There exists quite a few of these compensation strategies, and similarly to language learning strategies, they can also be divided into different categories. In contrast to language learning strategies, Oxford (1990) has divided compensation strategies into two subsections, namely, (A) guessing intelligently in listening and reading and (B) overcoming limitations in speaking or writing. The former consists of two subsections; 1) using linguistic clues and 2) using other clues, and the latter consists of the following eight subsections, more specifically, 1) switching to mother tongue 2) getting help 3) using mime or gesture 4) avoiding communication partially or totally 5) selecting the topic 6) adjusting or approximating the message 7) coining words 8) Using a circumlocution or synonym.

2.2 Previous research

According to Peker & Erdemir (2021), language learning strategies have been studied quite a lot since at least the 1980's, after which there has been a growing interest in these strategies and the possibility of improving language learners' linguistic competence, their comprehension and learning with the help of language learning strategies and compensation strategies. However, as Kesen, Solhi & Gokhan (2019) say, where language learning strategies have been studied extensively, compensation strategies have "not been thoroughly touched upon". This seems to be a common theme, and there really has not been very much research done on compensation strategies. Generally, it seems those studies that have focused on linguistic compensation strategies have been mostly focused on reporting and identifying which strategies students and very little on anything else. According to Kesen et al. (2019): "studies investigating CSs have dealt generally with defining, identifying and classifying the CSs, while the rest has concerned with the effect of different variables on CSs use and teachability issues."

Furthermore, Peker and Erdemir (2021) argue that the research of compensation strategies has "mainly focused on either the relationship between language learners'

frequency of use on their academic achievement or the relationship between frequency of use and level of proficiency". Moreover, according to Gallardo-del-Puerto, Basterrechea & Martínez-Adrián (2020) previous research has focused on factors affecting the frequency and choice of compensation strategies. To summarize, compensations strategies have not been studied as much as language learning strategies, and most research on compensation strategies focus on reporting which strategies learners use and little else.

However, when previous research has been done on compensation strategies that seeks to do more than just report the frequency of the compensatory strategies the learners have used, the research shows that, according to Kesen et al. (2019) there can be seen "a significant relationship between proficiency and compensation category of strategies" and according to Gallardo-del-Puerto et al. (2020): "TL proficiency exerts an influence on the frequency of CSs, a lower proficiency being associated with a higher use of CSs because lower proficiency learners typically exhibit a more limited command of the L2 than higher proficiency".

Gallardo-del-Puerto et al. (2020) continue that more proficient learners tend to use more L2 - based compensation strategies such as paraphrasing, and less proficient learners tend to use more L1 - based compensations strategies, such as mime and gesture. A similar view is also supported by Gallardo-del-Puerto et al. (2020) when they state that there seems to be a "relationship between strategy use and proficiency: more proficient language learners employ more learning strategies and in a greater number of situations than less proficient learners".

Next, I shall briefly focus firstly on which compensatory strategies learners have been reported to use in previous research, and secondly I will be comparing and contrasting how those results correlate with the present study. I chose the survey studies by Kesen et al. (2019) and Gallardo-del-Puerto et al. (2020) mostly for practical reasons; both studies clearly report the use of compensation strategies, after which it is easy to compare results and correlations with the present study. I also chose Dörnyei (2005) to further expand on my findings, however I shall focus on that more in the analysis section.

Kesen et al. (2019) report that the most frequently used compensation strategies in their study were non-verbal signals (such as mime or gesture) and approximating the message, and that the least used strategies were word coinage and avoidance. The participants were Turkish University students using English as a foreign language.

Gallardo-del-Puerto et al. (2020) studied young English learners in a CLIL setting that were divided into three different proficiency groups. They report the learners using a lot of compensation strategies and further explain the following:

“In terms of types of CSs used, they reported using some CSs (paraphrasing) which are typical of more advanced learners. However, more proficient learners were found to draw on some non L2-based strategies (avoidance, foreignising, miming) to a lesser extent than less proficient learners.” (Gallardo-del-Puerto et al. 2020)

Gallardo-del-Puerto et al. (2020) reported “appeal for assistance” being the compensation strategy the students used most frequently, followed by paraphrasing, dictionary and borrowing.

3 THE PRESENT STUDY

3.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of this thesis was to conduct a qualitative content analysis with the intention to observe and report which compensation strategies EFL learners use in a communicative learning situation when encountering an information gap, where the learner does not either comprehend or is unable to produce a certain word or utterance, with the added intention of reporting any noticeable observations such as variation within compensation strategy use between different sexes. Furthermore, the intention is to elaborate on those results in future research. In other words, my aim is to answer the following question: which compensation strategies do native Finnish EFL learners make use of in a communicative, task-based learning situation?

3.2 Participants and data

Because the nature of the thesis is a qualitative content analysis and because the aim is to observe and report specific compensation strategies in an authentic learning situation, it was necessary that the data represents authentic language the learners produce without any help or outside influence. Therefore, the data was decided to be gathered through audiovisual recordings where the learners record themselves conducting the chosen communicative task. More specifically, the subjects were a class of comprehensive school students (7th graders) who spoke Finnish as their mother tongue. The task that was used was an existing oral test taken from the course

materials, which was then modified to specifically fit the purpose of the study (appendix 1).

To further illustrate how the task was conducted, there was a class of 18 students that were divided into pairs. Those pairs were then given iPads, with which they recorded themselves carrying out the task. The students were instructed to be visible and to speak clearly, so that both verbal and non-verbal strategies would be recorded and observable, and to use as much English as possible as well as trying to have a real, genuine conversation instead of just carrying out the task and going through the answers. Permits for participating in the study were acquired from the guardians of the students and the data collected was stored safely and immediately deleted from the iPads as soon as they were collected and stored elsewhere.

Next, I shall illustrate what the task was like and what kinds of vocabulary and phrases it required the students to use.

3.3 Method of analysis

As mentioned, the intention was to collect authentic data and to observe and report the compensation strategies that were used, as well as analyze the results in an *inductive* way. According to Denscombe (2021), inductive analysis of qualitative data means that “analysis tends to work from the particular to the general. From the detailed study of localized data the analysis attempts to arrive at more abstract and generalized statements about the topic” (Denscombe 2021). This was the goal of the present study and its analysis, where the data was first gathered, after which compensation strategies were observed, identified and categorized. The aim of the present study was then to focus on the five most commonly used compensation strategies found in the data and attempt to find observations that could be then compared and contrasted with previous research. Examples of the five most commonly used strategies - as well as the results and the generalized statements - can be found in the analysis section.

The reason why it was chosen to focus on these five specific strategies is because those were the ones that were easy to observe and seemed to occur most frequently.

It was also found that if one tried to report all the strategies the students used, there would simply have been too much data to report and analyze for a bachelor's thesis. However, I might use those data in further studies such as my master's thesis and take a deeper dive into that later on.

3.4 Procedure

As mentioned, the task was a pair discussion. The aim was for the learners to use authentic English and to carry out a normal conversation using English, or as normal as possible under the circumstances. It was not without structure however, since in the task there were given questions in L1, which the learners were supposed to ask their partner using L2. Those questions were open-ended, so the partner gave their own answer using only L2, if possible. If they were not able to give the answer in L2 they hopefully solved it by using one or more compensatory strategies.

Furthermore, they were allowed to use all sorts of compensation strategies like code-switching and asking for help, but they were not explicitly told about different compensatory strategies or instructed to use them, and neither were they told what exactly would be observed in the study. Each pair was handed two different sets of questions they were supposed to ask their partner. One was "A" and one was "B" with their own sets of questions in L1, which each one then asked the other using L2, and to which they answered in their own words using L2. In order to make sure that these strategies were to be used by the students, the task was planned out in collaboration with their own teacher who knew the students well and their individual levels of linguistic competence, as well as the differences in proficiency within the students. The class was then divided into pairs with whom it would be probable that one student would be slightly more proficient in using the second language than the other, and the less proficient student would be more likely to use compensation strategies

(for example asking for help). Indeed, this was the case, and the students produced enough data to yield results within the present study, as well as for intended future research within this topic.

4 ANALYSIS

In my analysis, I shall mainly focus on five specific compensation strategies that the students used the most. The analysis showed that the most commonly used strategies were 1) asking for help 2) code switching or switching to mother tongue 3) approximating the message 4) using mime or gesture, and 5) literal translation.

Next, I shall focus on each of these strategies, discuss each strategy in more detail, elaborate on them and describe the situations and contexts where and when the students used one or more of these strategies as well as explaining in greater detail why I chose to focus on these specific strategies in particular.

According to Oxford (1990:47), compensation strategies can be divided first into two main categories. Those categories are: 1) *guessing intelligently* and 2) *overcoming limitations in speaking or writing*. While *guessing intelligently* is a big part of these strategies, I chose to focus mainly on the latter, since *guessing intelligently* consists of only two subsections, namely, **using linguistic clues** and **using other clues**, whereas *overcoming limitations in speaking and writing* consists of, in total, the following eight subsections: 1) switching to the mother tongue 2) getting help 3) using mime or gesture 4) avoiding communication partially or totally 5) selecting the topic 6) adjusting or approximating the message 7) coining words 8) using circumlocution or synonym.

I feel that my topic and the task related to it has a lot more to do with the strategies listed under “overcoming limitations in speaking and writing”, and I found them to be more easily observable and analyzed. I should mention here that many more compensatory strategies do exist and this list is not by any means exhaustive. I shall include other compensatory strategies in my analysis as well that I observed the students using and will elaborate on each strategy; their meanings and functions.

Another reason why I chose the strategies under the category “overcoming limitations in speaking and writing” is that I wanted to see students using conscious cognitive compensation strategies in an authentic language learning situation instead

of just guessing intelligently. I also felt I needed to narrow down my field of analysis to make the thesis into a more coherent and focused study.

Next, I shall illustrate each of these strategies that I chose and found, beginning from those that I observed the students using the most. The first compensation strategy I shall focus on is the one that the students used the most, namely, **adjusting or approximating the message**. I observed five pairs using this strategy for a total of 13 times, with only one pair who didn't use this strategy at all. According to Oxford (1990:50), adjusting or approximate message can be described in the following way: "*Altering the message by omitting some items of information, making ideas simpler or less precise, or saying something slightly different that means almost the same thing, such as saying pencil for pen*" (Oxford 1990).

An example of adjusting the message can be found when the students were supposed to ask each other's opinions of school uniforms and what their parents think about their clothes. Pair one omitted some information and altered the message by making it less precise when they formed the question as follows: "What your parents think your clothes" and "What you think school uniform?". Interestingly, the same person was able to use prepositions and auxiliary verbs perfectly fine elsewhere but here they left them out.

Pair three used approximation quite a lot, for example when they omitted articles or prepositions, as in here: "Do you use new clothes or do you buy them second-hand shop", and when asked what kinds of shops they usually buy their clothes from, the answer was: "I don't know... sports. I like sports." when they wanted to say they like to buy their clothes from sports shops. Usually, the students omitted a lot of prepositions and articles but interestingly used them elsewhere without any problems whatsoever. Therefore, this strategy was clearly used whenever they were unsure or unconfident and wanted to make ideas simpler or less precise.

The second strategy that students used the most is somewhat difficult to determine, since interestingly, in total, three of the five strategies observed were used exactly the same number of times. Those strategies were: 1) *asking for help*, where the students simply express their need for help by hesitating or specifically asking others

for help 2) *code switching or switching to mother tongue*, where the students use their mother tongue for a word in the middle of a sentence or for a whole utterance, and 4) *using literal translation*, which differs from code switching in that when code switching takes place, L1 is used instead of L2, but here a lexical item (a word, a form, an idiom or structure) is translated from L1 to L2, and lastly 5) *using mime or gesture*, which is described by Oxford (1990:95) as “physical motion, such as mime or gesture, in place of an expression during a conversation to indicate the meaning”, such as holding one’s nose and making a disgusted face instead of being able to use the target language to say something smells bad.

Where code switching was used by four pairs out of five, asking for help and literal translation were used only by three pairs out of the five. That is why I interpret code switching or switching to mother tongue to be the strategy that the students used the most after approximating the message.

Interestingly, both asking for help and literal translation were both used also in total nine times. Both of those strategies were used by three pairs out of the five pairs observed. Moreover, even more interestingly, each pair who used asking for help or literal translation used both of those strategies exactly the same number of times. For example, pair one used both of those strategies five times, pair three used both strategies two times, and pair four used both of those strategies two times as well, so both asking for help and literal translation were used the exact same number of times.

4.1 Asking for help

Whenever the students wanted to ask help, especially pair one, there was a lot of hesitation paired with eye-contact; first they paused and hinted the other non-verbally that they might need some help, and most of the times it worked and their partner provided them with the information they needed. Only when their partner would not automatically recognize or notice that they needed help, or that the other one tried to

make eye contact, they expressed their need for help verbally, and most of the times it worked as well. This was especially true with pair one, however most pairs hesitated first and only then asked for help. There was only one person who did not usually hesitate at all but asked right away if there was something they needed help with. I suspect that the social relations played a role here, where friends hesitated less and those not close to each other used more subtle hints and paused more.

Another interesting detail that was noticed when analyzing the results is that the second most used strategy, asking for help, was mostly used by girls and very little by boys. Where girls often took initiative, were ready to ask for help and did not hesitate to make eye contact and use nonlinguistic cues, boys were distant, quiet, passive and hesitant to make eye contact, did not ask for help (at least directly, they often just ignored or skipped a word they did not use or switched to their mother tongue) and did not take initiative as much as the girls. It seems the girls' strategies were more embodied than boys' and they were more willing to accept they had gaps in their knowledge and that they needed help.

One could assume that at least in this case, that the girls and their readiness to recognize their own linguistic limitations and willingness to fix those limitations serves them better than the boys' way of dealing with their shortcomings. It seems the strategies the girls used are more efficient when it comes to language learning because they do not reject or avoid using all available compensation strategies and thus have a wider variety of linguistic language learning tools available to them. The fact that girls used more compensation strategies than other sexes did is in line with previous research. According to Dörnyei (2005:171) gender differences are regularly observed in studies about second language learning, and furthermore, according to Oxford (1996): "gender often influences strategy use, with females typically reporting more strategy use than males in many different cultures".

One needs to ask why do the boys then reject (or at least are less willing to use) some of these tools or strategies available to them? Further study is needed, but if this is indeed the case, that cis males in aggregate are not willing to use all the available strategies available to them, one reason could be that perhaps it is in part the way

school as an institution encourages the students not to take initiative and be active learners. For example, one could ask if learning situations in schools still require the students to be passive and quiet, obedient and “well behaved” instead of encouraging the students to be active and more embodied in regards to their schoolwork? If this is the case, perhaps the students and boys should be encouraged and allowed to express themselves more freely and to become more aware of all kinds of language learning strategies, and to notice that they do not need to be ashamed of not knowing something. Perhaps there is an affective aspect as well, where boys have been socialized into a very narrow image of a traditional man who does not need help, is capable and if anything suggests that this is not the case, it is something that they need to feel ashamed of and something they feel they need to hide from others. In this case the students should be taught that not knowing is not a weakness, but that finding out about one’s limitations and being able to recognize and fix those limitations is a wonderful thing and an absolute strength, and, above all, that it is also ok to be weak and to have weaknesses, as everyone has the right to be weak.

4.2 Code switching

Code switching was used mostly to replace unfamiliar L2 words with L1 counterparts, like pair one did when they said: “sometimes but not niinku yleensä” (they were looking for the word usually). There were occasions when structures or phrases were replaced with L1 as well, like with pair one when they Switched to L1 when they were supposed to ask which clothes their partner has bought most recently: “what clothes have you niinku viimeks ostanut”, or pair four when they switched to L1 when asking if their partner goes to flea markets or second hand shops: “do you go flea market or... niinku käytettyjen vaatteiden liikkeessä”.

One could have perhaps expected code switching to occur more frequently, however the students were quite proficient in English and they had recently practiced

vocabulary about clothes and talking about shopping, which may at least in part explain why code switching did not take place more.

4.3 Using mime or gesture

Interestingly, there was a somewhat surprising lack of the students using mime or gesture given that the task included a non-verbal aspect which was to be observed (meaning the audiovisual element of the videos instead of just observable text or verbal language). For the purposes of the present study, one can only speculate why a lack of using gestures and mime was so noticeable. Perhaps it is that the targets were Finnish seventh graders and the pairs usually consisted of different sexes; the students were perhaps nervous or tired, or not comfortable with expressing themselves non-linguistically. Perhaps they were a little bit shy or maybe the fact that the conversations were being recorded and analyzed made them stiff up and non-expressive, or maybe on average, Finnish youngsters just do not express themselves non-linguistically by gestures and mime that much. This is another point of interest where further study would be both interesting and needed, and a questionnaire could have shed some light on some of these points.

Keeping that in mind, this data is very much inconclusive when it comes to these kinds of things and no conclusions can be drawn from a small data set such as this. In fact, using mime or gesture was the strategy that the pairs used the least out of the reported strategies here. Using mime or gesture was only used by two pairs for a total of three times. As an example, when discussing clothes one person wanted to say they like mostly black or gray clothes, however, for whatever reason they seemed to momentarily forget the word "gray", so they pointed to a gray part on their shirt. Another example of mime or gesture was when a student wanted to say that their siblings are taller than they are (and therefore they don't use their clothes), instead of using the word tall, they made an upwards motion with their hand, keeping the palm of their

hand horizontal. Interestingly, immediately after the students had used mime or gesture, either they themselves or their partner uttered the correct phrase in the target language.

4.4 Literal translation

Literal translation was interesting and sometimes surprising to notice. For example, one pair used literal translation when they said: “What clothes do you usually keep at school” when they were supposed to ask what they wear to school. In Finnish one “keeps” clothes (on), so here “wear” was translated directly from L1 to L2. Another example where literal translation happened was when one pair was discussing donating or selling their old clothes, one student used literal translation from L1 to L2 when they said “in the net” instead of saying “online” or “on the internet”.

To summarize my findings: the strategy the students used the most was adjusting or approximating the message, followed by asking for help, code switching and literal translation. Interestingly, the strategies that were most commonly used in Kesen et al. (2019) were non-verbal signals (such as mime or gesture) and approximating the message, and in Gallardo-del-Puerto et al. (2020) asking for help (or as they call it: “appealing for assistance”) followed by paraphrasing.

The present study also found that girls used a wider variety of strategies than boys, and this is something where further study could be useful. I shall revisit these themes in the next segment.

5 CONCLUSION

The present study was conducted to study and discover which linguistic compensation strategies Finnish 7th graders and ESL students use when they cannot produce or do not understand something in the target language. It was a qualitative content analysis with just one class of students who worked in pairs and filmed themselves conducting the oral exercise assigned to them. The original goal was to analyze the results and even interview the students in order to understand if there would have been something that the students or the teacher could have taken advantage of when learning or teaching a foreign language. However, for practical reasons and because of the limitations of this study, I chose to focus on just five strategies the students used the most and report my findings. To summarize my findings: the strategy the students used the most was adjusting or approximating the message, followed by asking for help, code switching and literal translation. These results seem to somewhat correlate with the findings of previous research, since the compensation strategies that the students were observed using most (approximating the message and asking for help) both of which were also present in the study by Kesen et al. (2019) as well as in the study by Gallardo-del-Puerto et al. (2020). Another observation was that Girls used a wider variety of strategies than boys, and this is something where further study would be useful.

Based on the results, one can say that the findings were interesting and noteworthy. Some of the results were somewhat surprising as well, and it can be said that most likely the age and cultural background of the students has an influence on the results. Girls were observed to engage more, ask for help more and overall use compensatory strategies more than boys. This raises a question if girls have an advantage in foreign language learning because of this, and how boys could be made aware of compensation strategies, the role of compensatory strategies in language learning and how boys could be encouraged to use them more. Furthermore, the students' awareness of compensation strategies could give them more linguistic tools to observe and

use when learning and using a foreign language, and the benefits and usage of compensation strategies should be discussed and practiced in language learning situations in order to broaden the students' spectrum of linguistic tools in order to make learning more effective. However, this is something where further study is needed, and I am thinking about continuing to research this in my master's thesis. The results of Peker&Erdemir (2022) about compensation strategy instruction (CSI) seem to point to a possibility that learners could indeed benefit from CSI, however, further study is needed.

Collecting the data for the present study worked very well. As mentioned, the target group was a class of 7th graders who were presented with an oral task in the form of a pair discussion. They worked in pairs and (video)recorded their work on iPads, so there was a lot of audiovisual data to process. All pairs could be seen and heard well in their recordings, and they did not get to practice the task beforehand, so the results are authentic and reliable. Plenty of data was gathered intentionally, since my idea is to use the same set of data as a part of my master's thesis or other research in the future.

For further study, however, more data from a wider variety of sources could be needed. The present study and its findings were carried out with just one class of students of one school, with just one oral exercise, conducted within just one day. This is very limiting, since it represents only a very small sample of people from one, mostly heterogeneous cultural background and is limited to one place at one time. Ideally data for a larger study of this kind would be gathered from a variety of physical or virtual learning environments with people of different age groups and cultural backgrounds, conducting a number of different linguistic tasks requiring a spectrum of different kinds of linguistic compensation strategies.

REFERENCES

- Cohen, A. D. (2011). *Strategies in learning and using a second language* (2nd ed). Pearson/Longman.
- Denscombe, M. (2010). *The good research guide: For small-scale social research projects* (4. ed). Open University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. L. Erlbaum.
- Gallardo-del-Puerto, F., Basterrechea, M., & Martínez-Adrián, M. (2020). Target language proficiency and reported use of compensatory strategies by young CLIL learners. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 30(1), 3–18.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/ijal.12252>
- Gül Peker, B., & Erdemir, N. (2021). Does compensation strategy instruction work? An action research study. *ELT Journal*, 75(3), 351–361.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccaa073>
- Kesen, A., Solhi, M., & Gokhan, C. (2019). Self-efficacy and the use of compensatory strategies: A study on efl learners. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 8(1), 249–255. <https://doi.org/10.12973/eu-jer.8.1.249>
- Oxford, R. L. (Ed.). (1996). *Language learning strategies around the world: Cross-cultural perspectives*. Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Center, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.
- Oxford. (1990). *Language learning strategies : what every teacher should know*. Newbury House.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Page 1 of the oral exercise

LET'S TALK ABOUT CLOTHES!

LUE OHJEET TARKASTI!

1. Teille jaetaan pareittain padit. Käykää oheiset keskustelut suomenkielisten vihjeiden avulla englanniksi.
2. Lukekaa ensin ohjeet huolellisesti alusta loppuun, myös keskustelujen jälkeiset laatikot, ennekuin aloitatte.
3. Toinen teistä on "A" ja toinen "B".
Käykää vihjeiden avulla KESKUSTELU englanniksi, älkää siis vain lukeko lauseita paperista.
Käyttäkää pelkästään englantia, tai ainakin niin paljon, kuin mahdollista.
Reagoi, kysele ja vastaile parillesi samaan tapaan kuin normaalissa keskustelussa.
Muista käyttää kuuluvaa ääntä!
4. Kuvatkaa ja tallentakaa keskustelunne padilla siten, että molemmat näkyvät koko keskustelun ajan. Pistäkää esim. pystyyn jonnekin, siten että näytte molemmat.

VARMISTAKAA, ETTÄ KUVAUS ON PÄÄLLÄ, KUN ALOITATTE

5. Palatkaa keskustelun jälkeen luokkaan.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

Appendix 2: Page 2 of the oral exercise

Pukeutuminen / Parikeskustelu

A Keskustele parin kanssa pukeutumisesta ENGLANNIKSI. *Kommentoi parisi vastauksia ja sano oma mielipiteesi. Kysykää vuorotellen. Jos et tiedä jotakin sanaa, koita selittää se jollakin muulla tavalla.*

- Mitä vaatteita et koskaan pidä ylläsi/käytä? Miksi et?
- Käytätkö kavereidesi kanssa samanlaisia vaatteita vai haluatko erottua joukosta?
- Millaisia vaatteita yleensä pidät?
- Ostatko uusia vaatteita vai käytkö kirpputorilla / käytettyjen vaatteiden liikkeessä?
- Käytätkö joskus vanhempien sisarustesi vaatteita tai muita käytettyjä vaatteita?
- Miten usein käyt ostoksilla?
- Millaisista kaupoista pidät? Miksi?
- Jos Suomessa olisi koulupuku, millainen se olisi jos sinä saisit päättää?
- Lahjoitatko (donate) vanhoja vaatteitasi?

Kun keskustele, muista olla kohtelias. Osoita kiinnostuksesi puhekumppaniasi kohtaan paitsi sanoin, myös ilmein ja elein. Tee tarpeen vaatiessa selventäviä lisäkysymyksiä. Tällä tavalla viet keskustelua luontevasti eteenpäin.

HUOM! Muista myös, että saman asian voi sanoa monella eri tavalla. Jos et esimerkiksi muista jotain sanaa, yritä keksiä jokin kiertoilmaisu, jonka avulla voit selittää saman asian. Voit käyttää myös esim. elekieltä apuna.

Appendix 3: Page 3 of the oral exercise

B Keskustele parin kanssa pukeutumisesta ENGLANNIKSI. *Komentoi parisi vastauksia ja sano oma mielipiteesi. Kysykää vuorotellen. Jos et tiedä jotakin sanaa, koita selittää se jollakin muulla tavalla!*

- Mitkä ovat suosikkivaatteitasi?
- Ostatko vaatteet kavereiden kanssa, yksin vai vanhempien kanssa?
- Mitä mieltä olet vaatteiden hinnoista?
- Mistä yleensä ostat vaatteesi?
- Mitä olet viimeksi ostanut? Mitä aiot ostaa seuraavaksi?
- Mitä mieltä vanhempiasi ovat vaatteistasi? Miksi?
- Mitä vaatteita yleensä pidät koulussa? Entä kotona?
- Mitä mieltä olet koulupuvun käytöstä? Miksi?
- Mitä tapahtuu vaatteillesi, kun et enää käytä niitä?

Kun keskustelet, muista olla kohtelias. Osoita kiinnostuksesi puhekumppaniasi kohtaan paitsi sanoin, myös ilmein ja elein. Tee tarpeen vaatiessa selventäviä lisäkysymyksiä. Tällä tavalla viet keskustelua luontevasti eteenpäin.

HUOM!

Muista myös, että saman asian voi sanoa monella eri tavalla. Jos et esimerkiksi muista jotain sanaa, yritä keksiä jokin kiertoilmaisu, jonka avulla voit selittää saman asian. Voit käyttää myös esim. elekieltä apuna.