# THE SEPARATION OF GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY IN FINNISH SECONDARY SCHOOL EFL LEARNING MATERIALS:

## Encountering and learning new vocabulary in 7th-grade grammar exercises

Candidate's Thesis
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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää, tarjoavatko yläkoulun 7. luokan oppimateriaalien kielioppitehtävät oppilaille mahdollisuuden uusien sanojen oppimiseen tai omaksumiseen sisällyttämällä kielioppitehtäviin oppilaille entuudestaan tuntemattomia sanoja, vai onko kielioppitehtävien sanasto oppilaille entuudestaan tuttua. Jälkimmäisessä tapauksessa opeteltavan kielioppiasian tärkeys korostuu ja sanaston ja kieliopin erottaminen toisistaan oppimateriaalissa on selvästi nähtävissä. Aikaisemmat tutkimukset ovat osoittaneet sanastonosaamisen olevan ensiarvoisen tärkeää vieraan kielen hallitsemisessa ja painottaneet oppimateriaalien tärkeyttä sanastonoppimisessa. Lisäksi on havaittu, että useat kohtaamiset tuntemattoman sanan kanssa edesauttavat sen oppimista ja mieleen painamista.

Perinteisesti kielioppi- ja sanastotehtävät on oppimateriaaleissa täysin erotettu toisistaan, mutta myös kieliopin harjoittelua varten suunnitellut tehtävät voisivat toimia väylänä uusien sanojen kohtaamiselle. Tutkielmassa analysoitiin kahden yläkoulun 7. luokalle suunnatun englannin tehtäväkirjan kielioppitehtäviä sen perusteella, esiintyivätkö tehtävissä olevat sanat 6. luokan materiaalin aakkosellisessa sanastossa, jonka tarkoitus on edustaa 7. luokan aloittaville entuudestaan tuttuja sanoja. Tulokset osoittavat, että tehtävissä esitellään uutta sanastoa suhteellisen vähän. Molemmissa materiaaleissa noin 15% tehtävien sanoista luokiteltiin uusiksi, mukaanlukien erisnimet ja modaaliverbit, joiden oppimisen voi väittää taipumattomuuden vuoksi olevan suhteellisen helppoa. Jos nämä kaksi sanaryhmää jätetään pois, on potentiaalisesti uusien sanojen kokonaismäärä entistä pienempi. Uusia sanoja siis todennäköisesti kohdataan enimmäkseen joissain muissa kuin kielioppitehtävien tarjoamissa konteksteissa.

| Asiasanat – Keywords vocabulary learning, grammar exercises, foreign language acquisition |
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# 1  INTRODUCTION

Relatively little research has been conducted concerning the most effective task types for learning vocabulary (Folse 2004:151), despite the crucial role vocabulary mastery plays in foreign language knowledge and successful language use. Even though explicit teaching and learning have their advantages, incidental learning from encountering words in different contexts is arguably important for vocabulary acquisition and learning. Additionally, grammar seems to still dominate foreign language lessons and grammar and vocabulary are clearly separated in many English as a foreign language learning materials in Finland, even though language learning could be seen as a holistic process of acquiring intertwined knowledge of the language rather than emphasizing different areas of learning as completely separate sub skills. The purpose of the present study is to estimate whether and to which extent new vocabulary is introduced to pupils in the context of Finnish secondary school grammar exercises of two English 7th-grade workbooks, *Key English 7 Workbook* (Haavisto et al. 2009) and *Smart Moves 1 Exercises* (Folland et al. 2009). The hypothesis of the present study is that grammar tasks generally do not include much vocabulary (Folse 2004:133) and, consequently, are not likely to include many words that are new to pupils.

The present study will overview basic terminology and significant research results in the field of vocabulary, concentrating on the role of vocabulary in language teaching and teaching materials. The overview is followed by the description of the methods of data collection and data analysis used in the present study. Finally, the results will be presented, explained and analysed. The results seem to confirm the hypothesis. This implies that most of the new vocabulary pupils encounter is introduced somewhere else than in the grammar tasks. This, for its part, can be seen as an indication of a clear separation between grammar and vocabulary in the particular teaching materials. The present study provides an opening to the topic of separation of grammar and vocabulary in Finnish secondary school EFL materials and relates to the debate about the roles of vocabulary and grammar in foreign language teaching.

# 2   VIEWS ON VOCABULARY LEARNING AND TEACHING

This chapter reviews the main research results in the fields of vocabulary acquisition and learning. Additionally, the ways vocabulary and grammar are presented in English language classrooms and learning materials are discussed. Firstly, the most central terminology is explained and the fundamental approaches to vocabulary and language learning in general are briefly introduced. Different mechanisms of vocabulary learning are also discussed, accompanied by an overview to the methods of implicit and explicit vocabulary teaching and learning. Secondly, the different roles of vocabulary and grammar in language teaching materials and in language teaching in general are compared. Finally, the occurrence and treatment of vocabulary in exercises is overviewed and discussed on a more general level and more precisely concerning the Finnish secondary school.

## 2.1   Basic terminology and main approaches to vocabulary learning

The term *foreign language* usually refers to a language that is not an official language or other language that is frequently used for a practical purpose in the surrounding society, and is thus used outside the learners' immediate environment (Saville-Troike 2006:4). To refer to this type of English teaching, the term *EFL* (English as a foreign language) is used. According to these definitions, English teaching in Finland is referred to as *EFL* teaching. However, the English language is a particular case compared to other foreign languages that are taught in Finland, since it is clearly the most popular first foreign language choice (A1-language) with over 90% of pupils choosing to start studying English in the third grade over other foreign languages (SUKOL, The Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland 2010). Additionally, English can be argued to be visibly present in Finnish youth's everyday lives, for example through television programmes, the Internet, computer games, music, advertisements, and so forth. *Acquisition* and *learning* are sometimes used as overlapping terms referring to the process of getting to know a new language. However, a distinction can be made between the two, acquisition being seen as a subconscious process, contrasted with a conscious process of learning that occurs in a formal

setting, for example in a classroom (Krashen 1981:1-2). This issue is closely related to explicit, intentional and implicit, incidental learning and teaching that will be discussed in more depth in 2.1.2.

The two approaches that are often contrasted in the field of vocabulary learning and teaching, as in language learning and teaching in general, are the more traditional, structural approach and the communicative or functional approach. Originally, the latter started in the 1970s to provide an option for the traditional approach based on Chomsky's view of language competence, whose main emphasis was on correct language structures (McDonough and Shaw 2003:17). Related closely to the communicative approach, the term *communicative competence* refers to knowledge, including extra-linguistic, sometimes cultural knowledge, that a learner needs to have to use a language appropriately according to the demands of the environment (Saville-Troike 2006:100). The following description by Baker (2006:251) sums up the main differences of the two approaches: the traditional view can be seen as conveying small pieces of language knowledge to the learners in a teacher-led setting and leaving the learners with the task of connecting those pieces. In contrast, the communicative approach is based namely on communication and authenticity, in other words bringing the learners as close to real language use situations as possible.

### 2.1.1   About mechanisms of vocabulary learning and teaching

'Knowing' a word is not necessarily as simple as it sounds. Even though a word is often regarded as 'learned' already when the spoken or written forms and meanings are known (Schmitt 2008:333, Nation 2001:47) and even though establishing a link between the form and meaning of the word can easily be seen as the most crucial step in learning a new word, there is much more to the process than that. To refer to all the information that needs to be acquired before thoroughly knowing a word, the term *learning burden* is used (Nation 2008:99; Nation 2001:23). Knowing a word has been defined as knowing its meaning or meanings, the spoken and the written form (spelling, syntax), the frequency, the grammatical behaviour (for instance, the word

is used as noun and verb), the connotations or associations, the collocations as well as the register of the word (Thornbury 2002:16; McGrath 2002:100). More briefly, Nation (2001:35, Table 2.3) lists form, meaning and use (divided into grammar collocation and constraints of use) as the different aspects of vocabulary knowledge. To be able to master these different dimensions of each vocabulary item, several repetitions are required (Nation 2001:76) and even if it included deliberate teaching, one meeting with a new item would not be sufficient for fully learning it (Nation 2001:81).

Thornbury (2002:18) describes vocabulary learning as making connections between concepts and words, categorizing and constructing a network of the words. Additionally, vocabulary learning can be seen as acquiring new information about already known words, not only learning completely new items (McGrath 2002:100-101). The *depth of vocabulary knowledge* refers to the knowledge of a vocabulary item that is required for using it appropriately, and this knowledge can be argued to be as important as the size of the learner's vocabulary considering successful language use (Schmitt 2008:333). Enhancing this knowledge seems to be one of the main challenges for vocabulary teaching, which concerns both teachers and materials designers, since, as pointed out in 2.1, the development of communicative competence requires knowledge of the appropriate use of language, including vocabulary. However, acquiring knowledge of how to use words in different situations can be enhanced with corrective feedback only if the learner already has a stock of vocabulary that she or he can experiment within a variety of situations (Meara 1995:5). Nation (2001:59) argues that in their language construction, learners rely on previous experience of how certain items are used rather than applying rules in order to construct word forms. Thus, it is beneficial that a large number of words are acquired quickly in the early stages of language learning (Meara 1995:5; Nation 2001:44).

**2.1.2 The advantages and disadvantages of implicit and explicit vocabulary learning and teaching**

Learning and teaching in general can happen explicitly or implicitly. This applies also to vocabulary. Explicit learning refers to a conscious learning process, whereas the term implicit learning is used when referring to learning that is often linked with repetition (Nation 2001:34) and focuses on something else, for example reading a passage, than the actual vocabulary items to be learned (Nation 2001:69-70). Schmitt (2008:329, 333) suggests that explicit, intentional learning and incidental learning in the form of maximized exposure should be the core elements of vocabulary learning programmes, since sufficient vocabulary cannot be acquired only from exposure. Resources are limited, especially in classroom contexts, concerning constant explicit teaching, as well as learning that involves engagement from the learners. Consequently, learners need exposure to accumulate their knowledge about vocabulary items through incidental learning, which should be maximized by teachers and material writers and considered an "equal partner" to explicit learning. (Schmitt 2008:346-347.) Additionally, because several aspects of words are often dependent on context, teaching them explicitly can be problematic at times. As a solution to this, Schmitt (2008: 333, 348 353) points out that vocabulary units bound to context, such as collocations, could be more successfully taught through exposure, since incidental learning is particularly useful for building up knowledge of words that the learners have already encountered.

Incidental learning has its advantages especially in the field of vocabulary teaching but it has been argued that vocabulary should also be taught explicitly. Schmitt (2008:341,345) claims that intentional, explicit vocabulary learning is almost always more effective (considering retention and productivity) and faster than learning that is based on incidentally encountering with vocabulary items. Only being exposed to the target language is not sufficient for reaching mastery in language production but, instead, productive tasks are needed for this. In conclusion, incidental and intentional learning should be seen as complementary methods that can be combined in a fruitful way to match different stages of the vocabulary learning process (Schmitt 2008:352-353).

## 2.2 The roles and importance of vocabulary and grammar in EFL research, teaching and materials

As discussed above, vocabulary is an invaluable unit of language competence and use. However, this is not always visible in the teaching events and materials. Still in the 1980s and 1990s, vocabulary was a problematic and neglected aspect in language teaching (Meara 1980; Meara 1996:1; Nation 2001:xi) and even though vocabulary research has revived, it has been argued that not much has changed in practice in English language classrooms. According to Meara (1996:8-9), one reason for this could be that research on vocabulary acquisition is still making mistakes that were typical to earlier studies on vocabulary acquisition, such as concentrating on a narrow selection of Indo-European languages and generalising results based on this selection to broader theories about acquisition. Explicit vocabulary teaching has taken a more important role in language teaching (McDonough and Shaw 2003:111) but nevertheless, as pointed out by Thornbury (2002:14), grammar is prioritized and courses and syllabuses mainly built around it. McDonough and Shaw (2003:11-12) argue that the grammatical-structural syllabus type is the most familiar to English teachers in general. Thornbury (2002:11) confirms that the most commonly used syllabus type is the one concentrating on grammatical structures. Furthermore, curricula, syllabuses, materials and courses are leaving vocabulary with little attention and not providing information or guidance for obtaining vocabulary knowledge (Folse 2004:130; Schmitt 2008:329-330). In addition to this, Folse (2004:131) notes that teachers often devote the limited class time to grammar teaching rather than to vocabulary. These results are not promising considering Schmitt's (2008:333) conclusion, according to which vocabulary learning needs contribution from the four "learning partners", students, teachers, researchers and material writers, all of whom need to function in order to produce successful vocabulary learning. In practice, material writers should get reliable information about vocabulary and efficient learning methods from researchers so that they can transform this information into a form that teachers and learners can use.

Students, for their part, usually assume that they will be presented with new vocabulary on a language course, not only incidentally but formally (Thornbury 2002:75). Since learning grammar involves mostly learning patterns and the human brain recognizes complicated patterns easily, vocabulary should receive more attention in teaching than grammar that is based on patterns. Thornbury's (2002:14) explanation for the dominant role of grammar in language teaching represents a slightly similar view: learning grammar, which is a set of rules applicable to several different cases, can be seen as more productive than learning single items one by one, which is the case when learning vocabulary. As pointed out, both teachers and material writers should pay attention to recycling vocabulary in an organized way during a longer period of time (Schmitt 2008:343). In conclusion, vocabulary and grammar should be taught in mutual contexts as they appear in real language use. It is essential to present language as a whole, which helps the brain to form strong and multiple connections between pieces of information, allowing effective learning to take place. (Baker 2006:251.)

## 2.3   Vocabulary in exercises: a general view and the case of the Finnish secondary school

In practice, it would be possible to use any language learning task (whether the explicit topic is vocabulary or not) as a context to introduce new vocabulary to the students' repertoire. However, as pointed out by Thornbury (2002:34), there is considerable variation among course books concerning introducing new vocabulary. Indeed, since course book writers aim the books at a broad audience, no book can perfectly suit a certain school, syllabus or class. Thus, adaptations and changes should be made by the teacher to fit the material to the course planning (McGrath 2002:58). This should be borne in mind also when teaching vocabulary – if the book does not include it, it does not automatically mean that the course could not include it. According to Folse (2004:151), the lack of empirical research on efficient vocabulary learning tasks can at least partially explain the absence of vocabulary in learning materials. In any case, not much verified knowledge about the most effective exercise types for learning vocabulary is available (Folse 2004:133). Furthermore, even vocabulary exercises are not always successful in conveying real knowledge of the target language. Schmitt (2008:343) claims that most vocabulary exercises only

concentrate on providing students with the meaning of new words. As discussed in 2.1, however, the meaning of a new vocabulary item is only a fragment of the knowledge that is needed for successful use of the word. Effectively, as McDonough and Shaw (2003:59) point out, the teacher's role is very important in evaluating and considering the best ways of using a course material.

Using context in grammar exercises can appear unimportant or even distracting if formal fluency (correct combinations of forms to build structures) is seen as the main goal of practicing. However, if students are expected to produce "realistic, that is potentially usable and useful" language, context should be present in the language to which they are exposed (McGrath 2002:97-98.) Meara (1995:2) argues, accordingly, that if only narrow sets of vocabulary are being introduced to students, their ability to communicate often limits to classroom contexts and does not serve appropriately in real life situations. According to my observations, grammar and vocabulary are often clearly separated from each other in Finnish secondary school EFL teaching materials, as well as in classrooms. It would seem that the following description by McDonough and Shaw (2003:43) suits many EFL materials used in the Finnish secondary and upper secondary schools well: materials that are taking the traditional, or structural, approach to language learning are often organized by grammar items but have a "secondary organizing principle", such as different topics or situations that act as contexts for learning. This emphasizes the central role of grammar in learning a language. Furthermore, it underlines the idea of language being something that can be divided into smaller pieces, such as grammar and vocabulary, which can be learned and analysed on their own, as independent units.

# 3   THE PRESENT STUDY

As pointed out in Chapter 2, any language learning material can act as a context for at least incidental vocabulary learning, even though the primary learning goal would be something else than learning new words. This should be considered as valuable a form of learning as explicit, intentional learning (Schmitt 2008:346-347). However, grammar tasks are rarely a source of vocabulary learning because they simply do not include much vocabulary (Folse 2004:133). The goal of the present study is to observe this issue in the context of 7th-grade EFL materials with the approach of an applied case study (Hirsjärvi et al. 1997:132).

## 3.1 Research Questions

The aim is to conduct an applied case study (Hirsjärvi et al. 1997:132) on the grammar exercises in two 7th-grade EFL exercise books to map out whether words likely to be new for pupils starting the seventh grade are included in the chosen exercises. Thus, the research question of the present study is whether and to what extent grammar tasks introduce new vocabulary to this target group. As discussed above, the role of material designers is crucial in the vocabulary learning process. The present study aims to observe whether the possibility of expanding students' vocabulary in EFL course books, in this particular case in grammar exercises, is taken seriously.

## 3.2 Data Collection

The present study analyses two EFL exercise books for Finnish secondary school 7th-graders: *Smart Moves 1 Exercises* (Folland et al. 2009, Otava) and *Key English 7 Workbook* (Haavisto et al. 2009, WSOY). Two recently published books of the same level were chosen to enable maximal comparison between the two sets of teaching materials. However, to avoid too many

similarities between the exercises, the study observes two publishers' materials. The focus of the present study is only on the tasks that were specifically marked as grammar exercises in the table of contents of each of the exercise books. Because of the limitations of the length of and time for a pro seminar study, only a third of the total number of the grammar tasks was chosen for further analysis. As a hypothesis, it was assumed that grammar tasks would not include a significant number of words new for the target level (Folse 2004:133).

Firstly, to obtain information about the repetition of vocabulary items, every single word was counted in all the tasks included (i.e. every third grammar task excluding the ones that did not include any English vocabulary), also words that were repeated within a single task. The items in this count will be referred to as *tokens* (Nation 2001:7). Finding out the frequency or infrequency of items can be argued to be important, since incidental learning is particularly useful for building up knowledge of words that learners have already encountered (Schmitt 2008:348). An additional goal of mapping out the repetition of the vocabulary items was to draw a clear overall image of the quality of the collected data. If each item had been recorded only once, the data would have become flat in the sense that each word would have been equally represented in the data, which was assumed not to be the case in the actual tasks. Secondly, to answer the actual research question about the quantity of new words in the tasks, another listing of words of both books was made, excluding the repetition of the items to avoid biased results. In other words, in this listing each item occurred only once. These items will be referred to as *types* (Nation 2001:7). Word frequency and repetition in the grammar exercises will also be taken into account alongside with the quantity of new words introduced.

The alphabetical vocabularies of *Smart Moves 1 Texts*, *Key English 7 Textbook* and *Wow 6 Study Book* were collected on separate Excel sheets to enable comparisons between the overall vocabulary included in the 6th-grade textbook and the two 7th-grade textbooks. In the data collection of workbooks, all the text between the exercise number and the last word of the exercise was taken into account of the tasks that were included in the analysis, including exemplary phrases, additional speech bubbles, Finnish translations for some of the words in the

tasks and other elements that were not necessarily a part of the task but were visually in its immediate environment. This decision was made because incidental learning undoubtedly occurs regardless of where in the text the words are. Only the words belonging to the most significant word classes (nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs) were included in the study. Thus, words from other word classes were not taken into account in the total number of items. This was done to narrow down the study and also because other word classes, such as prepositions or pronouns, do not grow or change and can thus be argued to be relatively easy to learn by heart. In addition to the vocabulary items, additional details, such as the wordclass, the task number, the instructions of the task and whether the word had been translated to Finnish in the immediate task context were noted on the Excel Worksheet.

Verbs were counted on their own as one verb even though they would be a part of a bigger chunk such as an idiom. The rest of the idiom was ignored unless it included nouns, adjectives or adverbs. Auxiliary verbs and modal verbs were also classified as verbs without further distinctions. The inflected forms of words (regular or irregular) were not taken into account as separate words, because it would have expanded the data too much. Instead, the inflected forms were counted as if they were the basic form of the verb, for example, *went=go*, *men=man, walked=walk*, *cats=cat* and *better=good*. There were also some grammar tasks in the exercise books that did not contain any English vocabulary, for example tasks aimed at practicing translation from Finnish into English. These tasks were discarded from the count, since they did not include relevant information of the number of new words introduced. As a general guideline to the categorisation of the words, the word class of a given word was determined by the environment in which it occurred in the grammar exercise.

## 3.3 Methods of Analysis

Of the four goals for a study, mapping, explaining, describing and forecasting, (Hirsjärvi et al. 1997:138-139), the most appropriate way to evaluate two exercise books' grammar exercises would be mapping their content in relation to the research questions, and describing the results of

the mapping. With as narrow a study as the present one, explaining or forecasting any phenomena would be too ambitious a goal. To obtain information about the quality of vocabulary presented in the tasks, numerical data needed to be built up. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used side by side to enable the generalization of results to cover a bigger group of data than the one analysed by simple calculations and intensive qualitative study (Hirsjärvi et al. 1997:137). In practice, the present study aims at making conclusions that should be generalizable to cover all the grammar exercises in these two books, *Smart Moves 1 Exercises* and *Key English 7 Workbook*, even though only a third of each book's grammar exercises is analysed.

After the data was collected and classified according to word classes, each item was evaluated as either familiar or new to a pupil entering the seventh grade. The evaluation of the vocabulary items was conducted by comparing them to the alphabetical vocabulary list of a textbook designed for the previous year, i.e., *Wow 6 Study Book* (WSOY). For example, the vocabulary found in the tasks of *Smart Moves 1 Exercises* was compared to the alphabetical vocabulary list in the back of the textbook *Wow 6 Study Book*. Words that did not occur in the *Wow 6 Study Book* alphabetical vocabulary were considered new for the pupils. This comparison is meant to describe the gap between vocabulary learned in the elementary school until the end of the sixth grade and the vocabulary presented in materials the pupils start using at the beginning of the seventh grade. However, there were some items that did not occur in *Wow 6 Study Book* but were still classified as familiar, as they should be known by most pupils finishing the sixth grade (Curriculum of the Finnish National Council of Education for grades 3-6 2004:139-140). Names of countries and cities as well as words that had been translated in the task context of the 7th-grade grammar tasks were considered new unless they could be argued to be easy words, such as *golf* (the same orthography in Finnish). It has to be noted that geographical proper nouns like *Paris* or *Italy* are probably familiar to most pupils starting the seventh grade but because their orthography is not identical with the corresponding Finnish words, some of these items could be argued to be valuable learning content for some pupils. The basic conjugation of verbs and the most significant modalities is included in the learning goals for grades 7 to 9 in the Curriculum of the Finnish National Council of Education (2004:141), so all modal verbs (e.g. *will*, *would*)

occurring in the tasks were automatically classified as new words, since the Curriculum (2004:138-140) does not directly assume them to be taught at the elementary school level.

It is important to note that not all the words occurring in the *Wow 6 Study Book* vocabulary list are mastered by all 7th-grade pupils. Thus, the figures obtained by comparing the words in the tasks to *Wow 6 Study Book* vocabulary can be seen as the minimum amount of vocabulary that the grammar tasks of *Smart Moves 1 Exercises* and *Key English 7 Workbook* introduce to pupils who are starting the seventh grade. Then again, some pupils probably master words that are not in the vocabulary lists, so not all the words classified unfamiliar are necessarily unfamiliar to all pupils. However, the present study aims to map out what kind of vocabulary is included in grammar tasks in this particular case and thus pupils' individual differences do not affect the result. The main emphasis remains on the estimated proportion of new vocabulary introduced compared to what pupils already know from elementary school.

There were some items in the data that occurred in the *Wow 6 Study Book* alphabetical word list (and were consequently classified as familiar) but did not occur in the corresponding 7th-grade text books (*Smart Moves 1 Texts* or *Key English 7 Textbook*) alphabetical vocabulary. The argument for classifying these items still as familiar is that many of them were weekdays and other rather low proficiency words, for example *dog*, *cat*, *dad*, *girl*, *boy* and *food*. The material writers assumedly left these words out of the 7th-grade alphabetical vocabularies because they were assumed to be already familiar to pupils. Additionally, the goals of the Curriculum of foreign languages of the Finnish National Council of Education (2004:138-139) cover the following topics by the end of the sixth grade: close environment and familiar people, things and actions that are an essential part of the environment, for example home and family members, school and peers and teachers, and living in the countryside and in the city, free-time activities and running errands in different situations typical to the age group. When needed, these criteria were used to distinguish potentially new words from words with which pupils are expected to be familiar when starting the seventh grade.

The analysis of the alphabetical vocabularies of the textbooks *Smart Moves 1 Texts* and *Key English 7 Textbook* was made by comparing them to the *Wow 6 Study Book* alphabetical vocabulary. The goal of this comparison was to map out the number of words that cannot be found in *Wow 6 Study Book* but do occur in the 7th-grade textbooks' alphabetical vocabularies. In this way, the materials could be, to some extent, compared with each other as a whole and not only on the level of the grammar tasks. The alphabetical vocabulary of each book represented the total amount of vocabulary in each material. It was observed whether the proportion of new words introduced in grammar tasks would be similar to the proportion of words that occurred in the 7th-grade alphabetical vocabularies but not in *Wow 6*. However, no disctinction between familiar and new words was made with the words in the alphabetical vocabulary lists. The number of vocabulary items per exercise was not recorded because the present study concerns a small proportion of tasks within which the number of words per task was very variable.

# 4 NEW WORDS IN THE ALPHABETICAL VOCABULARIES AND IN THE GRAMMAR EXERCISES

The results of the study will be discussed as follows: firstly, the overall structure of the data is presented, including some notions of word repetition in the data. Secondly, the results of the comparisons between the alphabetical vocabularies of *Wow 6 Study Book* and the two 7th grade materials are presented to illustrate the differences between the vocabulary encountered in elementary school and the vocabulary pupils will encounter in the first grade of secondary school. Thirdly, the proportions of new words introduced and the quality of those words (i.e. proportions of word classes etc.) is discussed in closer detail. All the results are based on the data that, as mentioned above in Chapter 3, consists of verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs collected from every third grammar task of *Smart Moves 1 Exercises* and *Key English 7 Workbook.* The possible interpretations of the results for each case are discussed throughout the chapter. Finally, the study and its results as a whole are discussed in the light of the hypothesis of the study.

## 4.1 Overall structure of the data: *Key English 7 Workbook* and *Smart Moves 1 Exercises*

The following table illustrates the overall structure of the data collected in the exercise books:

Table 1. The quantities of analysed and omitted tasks and vocabulary items collected.

| | Number of analysed tasks | Number of ignored (i.e. "empty") tasks | Number of *tokens* (with repetition) | Number of *types* (without repetition) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Key English 7 Workbook | 25 | 4 | 586 | 267 |
| Smart Moves 1 Exercises | 23 | 9 | 426 | 231 |
| Total | 48 | 13 | 1012 | 498 |

This table illustrates only the data collected in the workbooks' grammar exercises. The results concerning the comparison of the alphabetical vocabularies of the 7th-grade textbooks and *Wow 6*

*Study Book* will be discussed in 4.2. The first column of Table 1. shows the number of each book's exercises that were analysed for the study, i.e., a third of each book's vocabulary exercises that included English vocabulary. This accounts for 25 tasks in *Key English 7 Workbook* and 23 tasks in *Smart Moves1 Exercises*. The second column illustrates the number of tasks that had to be omitted from the analysis because they did not include any English vocabulary. For *Key English 7 Workbook* the number of omitted tasks was four and for *Smart Moves 1 Exercises* more than double of that, nine tasks. These tasks would have been chosen by the systematic count of every third task but since they were "empty", the next task including English words was chosen instead. Sometimes several exercises in a row were omitted before coming across the next task that included English vocabulary. These figures could be interpreted as indications of the proportion of "empty" (i.e. the task is completely in Finnish) tasks in these two materials but since the study was conducted in a very small scale, it cannot be reliably argued that *Smart Moves 1 Exercises* would as a whole tend to use more Finnish in its grammar exercises than *Key English 7 Workbook*. It is possible that the particular tasks chosen for the present study give a biased representation of the material, so in order to reliably confirm the number of "empty" tasks, every grammar task of each workbook would need to be examined.

As mentioned in 3.2, two different counts of vocabulary items were made for the vocabulary found in the chosen tasks. The first one, concerning *tokens*, included every vocabulary item from the four word classes (verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs) with possible repetition. This means that the same item can occur several times within the total number of words. For example, the verbs *be* and *have* were by far the most frequently occurring words in both materials – *be* appearing in *Key English 7 Workbook* 28 times (constituting 4.8% of the total number of 586 words) and in *Smart Moves 1 Exercises* 21 times (constituting 4.9% of the total number of 426 words). The third column in Table 1. indicates the number of words extracted from the tasks chosen for the analysis including this kind of repetition. For *Key English 7 Workbook* the 25 analysed tasks included 586 words, so on average 23 words per task, whereas the 23 tasks of *Smart Moves 1 Exercises* included 426 words, which is approximately 18 words per task. However, the average amounts per task are used to illustrate only the relative quantity of words in proportion to the

quantity of tasks analysed. The averages do not illustrate the real state of the exercises, since several exercises included only a few English words, whereas some included more than 30.

Most vocabulary per exercise was found in tasks including a piece of text to read or a conversation to listen to (printed in the book), in which one was asked to look for, i.e. underline, a certain grammatical form (e.g. 43 tokens in *Smart Moves 1 Exercises*:177:B; 64 tokens in *Key English 7 Workbook*: 50:G13). Additionally, tasks giving a list of vocabulary with Finnish translations to be used in a productive (oral or written) activity included relatively large proportions of words. (e.g. *Smart Moves 1 Exercises*:197:C that introduces a list of vocabulary with which pupils are asked to describe the classroom, such as *overhead projector*, *smartboard* and *basin* with their Finnish translations.) Thus, the average number of tokens per task is not a description of the actual number of words that concretely occurred in each task, since most tasks included significantly fewer words than the examples above. Instead, the average should be seen as a scale that helps to compare the two materials, as the number of tasks analysed was different. The second count was made with *types*, excluding all repetitive items, so that each vocabulary item would be equally represented in the final analysis where the proportions of new words were calculated. The fourth column illustrates the number of types for each material after the repetition had been eliminated. These figures, 267 words for *Key English 7 Workbook* and 231 words for *Smart Moves 1 Exercises* were used as the basis for analysing the proportions of new words in each material. The results of this analysis will be discussed more closely in 4.3.

**4.2    Comparison between the textbooks' alphabetical vocabulary lists:  the overall vocabulary included in *Key English 7* and *Smart Moves 1* versus *Wow 6 Study Book***

This section discusses the results of the comparison that was made between the alphabetical vocabularies of the 7th-grade textbooks and the alphabetical vocabulary of *Wow 6 Study Book*. Table 2. and Table 3. illustrate the proportions of the words of each 7th-grade textbook's alphabetical vocabulary list in comparison to the *Wow 6 Study Book* alphabetical vocabulary list.

Table 2. Comparison: alphabetical vocabularies of *Smart Moves 1 Texts* and *Wow 6*

| Words in *S.M.* – Total | 1457 | 100 % |
|---|---|---|
| Not found in *Wow 6 Study Book* alphabet | 670 | 46 % |
| Found in *Wow 6 Study Book* alphabet | 787 | 54 % |

Table 3. Comparison: alphabetical vocabularies of *Key English 7 Textbook* and *Wow 6*

| Words in *K.E.* – Total | 1934 | 100 % |
|---|---|---|
| Not found in *Wow 6 Study Book* alphabet | 917 | 47 % |
| Found in *Wow 6 Study Book* alphabet | 1017 | 53 % |

The alphabetical vocabularies were used as representations of the overall vocabulary of each material, so it was assumed that nearly all vocabulary included in either the workbook or the textbook of each book series would be present in the alphabetical vocabulary of the textbook. An interesting finding was made when comparing the two 7th-grade alphabetical vocabularies to that of *Wow 6 Study Book*. It was found that of the words present in both of the alphabetical vocabularies of the 7th-grade materials nearly 50% was not found in the *Wow 6 Study Book* alphabetical vocabulary list. Interestingly, the results of the two comparisons were almost identical, the proportion of words not occurring in *Wow 6 Study Book* being 46% for *Smart Moves 1* and 47% for *Key English 7*. Even though the books are from different publishers, the difference between *Wow 6 Study Book* and the 7th-grade materials seems very consistent. This would mean that the pupils who have used *Wow 6 Study Book* have encountered only half of the words that are included in *Smart Moves 1* or *Key English 7* in their 6th-grade material. Learning materials are obviously not the only possible context for encountering new words but is still a very significant one. Thus, even if all these words were not truly new for the pupils, the percentage looks promising considering the opportunities for encountering new words in the material. It is important to note that in this comparison a selection for excluding possibly familiar or easy words (based on the Curriculum of the National Council or other criteria) has not been made. This is why the results are not fully comparable with the results concerning new vocabulary in the grammar tasks, even though in the classification of the words in the grammar exercises (see 4.3), few items' classification changed from new to familiar based on the Curriculum of the National Council or for other reasons, such as orthography (e.g. *golf*).

### 4.3 New and familiar words in the grammar exercises: *Key English 7 Workbook* and *Smart Moves 1 Exercises*

This section answers the research question concerning vocabulary included in grammar exercises. The results of the comparison were quite different when observing the proportions of new words only in the chosen grammar tasks instead of the alphabetical vocabularies. The proportion of new words introduced in the grammar tasks of *Smart Moves 1 Exercises* and *Key English 7 Workbook* when compared to the *Wow 6 Study Book* alphabetical vocabulary is illustrated in Table 4.and Table 5.:

Table 4. New words in the grammar tasks of *Smart Moves 1 Exercises*

| Total number of *types* | 231 | 100 % |
|---|---|---|
| New (not in *Wow 6 Study Book* alphabetical vocabulary) | **36** | **16%** |
| Familiar (in *Wow 6 Study Book* alphabetical vocabulary) | 195 | 84% |

Table 5. New words in the grammar tasks of *Key English 7 Workbook*

| Total number of *types* | 267 | 100 % |
|---|---|---|
| New (not in *Wow 6 Study Book* alphabetical vocabulary) | **41** | **15 %** |
| Familiar (in *Wow 6 Study Book* alphabetical vocabulary) | 226 | 85 % |

The results for the two materials were again surprisingly uniform. According to the comparison, the proportion of new words was 15% in *Smart Moves 1 Exercises* and 16% in *Key English 7 Workbook*, leaving 84-85% of the words in the category of familiar. This would indicate that most of the new vocabulary input and chances for learning or acquiring vocabulary from input come from some other components of the materials than the grammar tasks of the workbooks.

As pointed out, the grammar exercises introduced relatively few new words. The number was 36 for *Smart Moves 1 Exercises* and 41 for *Key English 7 Workbook*. Since only stating the number of potentially new vocabulary does not give a clear picture of the data, the vocabulary classified as new was analyzed further by observing the proportions of word classes within each book's new words. The following tables illustrate the numbers of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs within the new vocabulary. The proportions of each word class are shown in percentages next to the number of items. To better illustrate the differences between the two materials in this aspect,

the word classes are organized in the tables by the frequency of occurrence. Nouns were the most frequently occurring word class within the new words in both materials, so it is presented first in both tables. In *Key English 7 Workbook* adjectives were the second largest group but in *Smart Moves 1 Exercises*, however, the second largest group was verbs, so the table is organized accordingly. A further analysis was made with the two most represented word classes – nouns and verbs. The number of proper nouns, mostly names of cities, countries and other geographical names, is marked separately below the total number of nouns. For verbs, the number of modal verbs, such as *will*, *would* and *could*, is marked separately below the total number of verbs. The goal of these distinctions is to give as precise a picture as possible of the differences between the two workbooks in the kinds of words that were classified as new.

Table 6.a) Proportions of word classes within the new vocabulary introduced in the grammar tasks: *Key English 7 Workbook*

| New words in *Key English 7 Workbook* Grammar Tasks | | |
|---|---|---|
| TOTAL | 41 | 100 % |
| Nouns - out of which proper nouns | **17** 12 | 41 % |
| Adjectives | **9** | 22 % |
| Verbs - out of which modal verbs | **8** 4 | 20 % |
| Adverbs | **7** | 17 % |

Table 6.b) Proportions of word classes within the new vocabulary introduced in the grammar tasks: *Smart Moves 1 Exercises*

| New words in *Smart Moves 1 Exercises* Grammar Tasks | | |
|---|---|---|
| TOTAL | 36 | 100 % |
| Nouns - out of which proper nouns | **26** 5 | 72 % |
| Verbs - out of which modal verbs | **4** 3 | 11 % |
| Adjectives | **4** | 11 % |
| Adverbs | **2** | 6 % |

As shown in the tables above, the two workbooks were not very similar when observing more closely the word classes of new vocabulary introduced in the grammar exercises. The first notion is that the distribution of different word classes is much more even in *Key English 7 Workbook* than in *Smart Moves 1 Exercises*. In *Key English 7 Workbook*, nouns as the largest word class represented 41% of the total amount of vocabulary and each of the three remaining word classes represents approximately 20%  (with a margin of 3%) of the total amount of vocabulary. This is not the case for *Smart Moves 1 Exercises* where nouns cover up to 72% of all the new vocabulary

introduced and the less represented word classes all in all less than a third of the total number of new words. Secondly, the occurrence of proper nouns, too, was very different within the two workbooks' new words. Whereas *Smart Moves 1 Exercises* presents 26 nouns out of the 36 new words found, only five of all the nouns are proper nouns. This means that most of the new vocabulary (36-5) in *Smart Moves 1 Exercises* consists of words that are not easily guessable. The number of proper nouns is much larger in *Key English 7 Workbook*, 12 out of 17 nouns. Since many of the proper nouns in the exercises were names of cities (e.g. *Rome*), names of countries (e.g. *Scotland*), or other geographical names (e.g. *Thames*), some of these are arguably familiar or at least guessable for some pupils. On the other hand, proper nouns like *Ben Nevis* (a mountain) or even *The British Isles* might not be familiar at all for pupils entering the seventh grade. This is why reliably distinguishing the possibly familiar proper nouns from the ones that are likely to be new to all or most pupils seemed impossible. Thus, all proper nouns not found in the alphabetical vocabulary of the comparison material *Wow 6 Study Book* were included in the category of new words.


This classification is very rough and black and white but it should give some indication of how these particular materials treat vocabulary in the context of grammar tasks. These results can be generalized to reliably cover these materials but not any other. Even though the study cannot be further generalized, it implies something of the trends of the kind of vocabulary that is included in grammar exercises, as well as of the ways in which vocabulary is included. Course books are a source of incidental vocabulary and vocabulary often appears as "segregated vocabulary sections, integrated into text-based activities and incidentally, as in grammar explanations and exercises, task instructions etc." It has been shown that learning materials could successfully act as contexts for new or already encountered vocabulary items and can thus increase incidental vocabulary learning. Additionally, "usefulness, frequency, learnability and teachability" should be the criteria for choosing the vocabulary items of a course book (Thornbury 2002:43, 34-35.) There is no reason why these kinds of vocabulary items could not be included in reasonable amounts also in grammar exercises, for example, even if the primary aim of the task were not vocabulary learning. Viewing language from this more holistic point of view could enable pupils to form a

more unified picture of language as an interrelated and interdependent system, not as a collection of independent subsystems, such as grammar and vocabulary.

The study observed the vocabulary included in the 7th-grade materials' grammar tasks from different points of view. Firstly, the alphabetical vocabularies of *Smart Moves 1 Exercises* and *Key English 7 Workbook* were compared to that of *Wow 6* to see how many words in the 7th-grade textbooks' vocabulary lists did not occur at all in the 6th-grade material. Secondly, *tokens* were counted by including the word repetition within the data collected from the grammar tasks of the 7th-grade materials. Thirdly, word repetition was eliminated in the count of *types* and this data was used to estimate the quantity of new words in the grammar tasks. Finally, the word classes of the new words were observed to illustrate the overall distribution of different kinds of vocabulary items within the category of new words. The main finding of the study was that the analysed grammar included 15-16% new vocabulary and 84-85% familiar words. Within the category of the new words, the most common word class was nouns, which constituted 41% of the new words in the tasks of *Key English 7 Workbook* and up to 72% of the new words in the grammar tasks of *Smart Moves 1 Exercises*. The amount of new vocabulary presented in grammar exercises is arguably quite low, since 50% of the words in both 7th-grade books' alphabetical vocabularies was not presented in the *Wow 6* alphabetical vocabulary. This indicates that half of the words that these 7th-grade materials introduce to pupils are potentially new to them, particularly if they have used the *Wow* series in elementary school. In conclusion, most of these new words are presented to pupils in other contexts than that of the grammar exercises.

# 5  CONCLUSION

The results of the present study would seem to indicate that relatively little vocabulary new to the target group is included in grammar exercises. It might be a conscious choice of the writers to keep grammar and vocabulary almost completely separated. This could be a consequence of trying to keep exercises as simple or understandable as possible and the grammar patterns as salient as possible from the learners' point of view.

It has to be noted that the 6th-grade material, *Wow 6 Study Book,* used as the principal guideline for classifying vocabulary items as new or familiar, is published by WSOY, as is the *Key English* series. It is likely that the results would have been different had a 6th-grade book from Otava (the publisher of the *Smart Moves* series*)* or any other publisher been used in addition to or instead of *Wow 6 Study Book* for defining the new and the familiar items. Additionally, had vocabulary from more than one 6th-grade material been used for the classification of words, the results could be argued to be more reliable than they are now. Undoubtedly, *Wow 6 Study Book*, or any other material alone, cannot be seen as a comprehensive list of vocabulary that is known by a given target group. This is one of the major weaknesses of the study, since the results obtained can be true in the case of some pupils and completely invalid in the case of others. In other words, it is more likely that using the alphabetical vocabulary of *Wow 6 Study Book* as a representation of familiar vocabulary is more successful when considering the skills of pupils who have actually been using the *Wow* series throughout elementary school than when considering those who have used another book series. This is why some words classified as familiar might not be familiar at all to some pupils entering the seventh grade. Another weakness can be mentioned about the classification of words as familiar is that the further evaluation based on the curriculum of foreign languages (the Finnish National Board of Education 2004), orthography and general estimations about the level of pupils entering secondary school was rough and approximate. It is possible that many words that are familiar to many pupils passed this stage as new, only because it was impossible to reliably make any more precise evaluations with the tools mentioned above.

All in all, the results serve as a description of the major trends of what kind of vocabulary is included, and to what extent, in the grammar exercises of the two materials at stake. Thus, the present study succeeded, with some reservations, in answering the research question. It would seem that new vocabulary is primarily presented to learners in other contexts than that of the grammar exercises. This, in the light of the hypothesis, was the expected result.The present study was, however, conducted on small scale because of the limitations set for a pro seminar study, which is also reflected in the results. The results of the present study describe only the vocabulary found in particular grammar tasks in *Key English 7 Workbook* and *Smart Moves 1 Exercises* and cannot be generalized to cover any other case. Thus, to obtain more generally applicable knowledge about the vocabulary content of grammar exercises, a study should be conducted on a much larger scale, including more grammar exercises to be analysed and more support for why words are analysed in a certain way, i.e. why a word is classified either new or familiar.

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