

**PRACTICING AND FUTURE ENGLISH
TEACHERS' OPINIONS ABOUT DIFFERENT
LANGUAGE SKILLS IN TEACHING**

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Kielenopetuksen kannalta erilaisten kielitaitojen ja niihin liittyvien mielipiteiden tutkimus on tärkeää, koska siitä saatavien tulosten avulla opetusta voidaan kehittää ja näin helpottaa kieltenoppijoiden oppimisprosessia.</p> <p>Tässä tutkielmassa selvitettiin ammatissa olevien ja ammattiin valmistuvien englanninopettajien mielipiteitä ja arvostuksia eri kielitaitojen opettamisen tärkeydestä. Tutkielmassa selvitettiin myös, mitkä taustatekijät vaikuttivat vastaajien vastauksiin. Tutkielma toteutettiin internetkyselyn avulla, joka lähetettiin sähköpostilistojen kautta kahdelle vastaajaryhmälle, joista toinen koostui ammatissa toimivista englanninopettajista ja opettajaksi opiskelevista englanninopiskelijoista.</p> <p>Tutkielman tuloksien mukaan sekä ammatissa olevien, että ammattiin valmistuvien kieltenopettajien mielipiteet ja arvostukset seurasivat samoja suuntalinjoja. Vastaajien keskuudessa kielitaidon osa-alueista arvostettiin eniten suullista kielitaitoa, toiseksi eniten kuullun ymmärtämistä, kolmanneksi eniten luetun ymmärtämistä ja neljänneksi eniten kirjoittamistaitoja. Kielitaidon osa-alueisiin liittyvissä alataidoissa oli enemmän hajontaa, mutta sanaston tuntemus nousi joka osa-alueella tärkeäksi taidoksi.</p> <p>Taustatekijöiden suhteen huomattiin, että vastaajien omilla henkilökohtaisilla kokemuksilla ja arvostuksilla oli huomattavasti suurempi vaikutus heidän vastauksiinsa, kuin esimerkiksi opetusmateriaaleilla ja opetussuunnitelmilla.</p> <p>Opettamisen suhteen tutkielman tuloksia voidaan käyttää määrittämään, miten hyvin kielenoppimisen kannalta hyödyllisimmät taidot otetaan huomioon opetuksessa. Tutkielman tulosten perusteella näyttää myös siltä, että virallisia opetusta ohjaavia dokumentteja tulisi muokata vastaamaan paremmin nykyisiä kieltenopettamisen ja -oppimisen vaateita.</p>	
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1 Introduction

Teacher opinions and preconceptions about language teaching is a very prolific area of language research. In my opinion, this research field can be roughly divided into two main categories of study: methodology and content. Studies that focus on methodology look at things like, for example, teaching methods, whereas studies focused on content deal with the actual components of the language being taught like, for example, different speech skills. From the viewpoint of language teaching, these two categories are often intertwined and thus hold an equal importance because good teaching methods are not enough if the content is not on point and vice versa.

In this study, I have decided to focus on the latter category by looking at the opinions practicing and future English teachers in Finland have about different language skill areas in relation to teaching and how they value these areas in relation with each other. To place the collected data in a deeper context, the study also aims at finding out what background factors play a role in the respondents' answers. In my opinion, this is a good research topic because it is interesting to see how well the respondents can evaluate the importance of the different parts of the language they are teaching and what are the motivations behind these decisions.

Thus, the two main research questions for this study are:

1. What language skills do the respondents value most and what the least in terms of teaching and how they place these skills in relation with each other?
2. What reasons do the respondents have for placing the different language skills in the order they have and what background factors have affected these answers?

The main research hypothesis is that although communicative approaches to language teaching have been brought to the foreground in recent decades,

which should result in a heightened teaching emphasis placed on language skills that promote real-life communication, language teachers still focus largely on teaching grammar and vocabulary skills. Another hypothesis is that although many official documents have been put into place to regulate language teaching in Finland, teachers form their opinions about the importance of different language skills based largely on their own personal experiences about teaching as well as on their views about languages in general.

To gain answers to the questions proposed above, both current university students studying to become English teachers as well as currently practicing English teachers were interviewed via an electronic questionnaire containing both closed and open questions. The answers were compared against previous studies on the issue as well as cross referenced between the two respondent groups.

The structure of this study is so that the next chapter focuses on the theoretical background for this study as well as some previous studies. In chapter 3, I will present the research methodology and procedure used in this study, as well as give a more detailed description of the respondent groups. In chapter 4, I will present the results and discuss them, with chapter 5 being reserved for final conclusions and suggestions for further research.

2 Theoretical Background and Previous Studies

In this chapter I will present the theoretical background for this study as well as present previous studies that are related to the topic of this study. In the collection process of background material, it proved difficult to find previous studies that have approached the topic of this study from the same perspective as this one. Therefore, the previous studies presented in this study are meant to function more as further background knowledge on the issue rather than direct points of comparison. Sub-chapter 2.1 focuses on

different representations of linguistic abilities, 2.2 focuses on language education and the position of English in Finland. Sub-chapter 2.3 is dedicated to presenting previous studies.

The theoretical background for this study is largely based on different representations of linguistic abilities and in the study I use varying terms in describing these abilities. These terms are language knowledge, language proficiency and language skills. Although these terms are fairly synonymous in meaning, I use them in slightly different contexts when referring to the different aspects of a person's linguistics abilities. With the term language knowledge, I am describing the overall accumulation of the linguistic abilities person has in all the languages he or she knows. In other words, the total understanding they have of different languages. With language proficiency, I am referring to a person's linguistic abilities with regards to a specific language like, for example, English. With language skills I am referring to the individual skills that make up a person's overall language competence like, for example, reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge as a reading comprehension sub-skill.

2.1 Models of Linguistic Abilities

2.1.1 Language Skills

The "traditional" model of representing language knowledge is through language skills. Perhaps the model most familiar to most people is the one where language skills are divided into four separate main categories: speaking, listening, reading and writing. These skills are usually divided into smaller components like grammar and vocabulary. These aforementioned four skills can also be categorized according to the type of action connected with them, with listening and reading being receptive skills and writing and speaking being productive skills. Another categorization can be made according the channel of use with writing and reading making use of the

visual channel and listening and speaking making use of the auditive channel. According to Bachman and Palmer, this model has been very influential in language testing especially in the latter half of the 20th century (Bachman and Palmer 2004:75). This kind of model has both advantages as well as disadvantages. Obviously, one of the main advantages is that the model is clear and easy to understand. However, as Bachman and Palmer (2005:75) point out, this model does not take into account the language use situation and the user and thus it is a fairly mechanical and rigid presentation of language knowledge.

2.1.2 Communicative Competence and Its Refinements

The idea of communicative competence was first introduced in the beginning of the 1970s as an expansion and an alternative for Noam Chomsky's idea of performance as a measurement of language knowledge (Canale and Swain 1980:4). While Chomsky only measured language knowledge in terms of grammatical competence, communicative competence adds a sociolinguistic dimension into the picture by taking into account the appropriateness of language in language use situations.

Canale and Swain (1980:28) divide communicative competence into to three main components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence. Grammatical competence is, in their view, considered to include things such as knowledge of lexical items, morphology, syntax, semantics and phonology (Canale and Swain 1980: 29). Canale and Swain (1980:30) divide sociolinguistic competence into two sets of rules: sociocultural rules and rules of discourse. Sociocultural rules deal mostly with the knowledge of the appropriateness of language use whereas discourse rules refer to a language user's knowledge about the cohesion and coherence of language. According to Canale and Swain (1980:31), strategic competence consists of different strategies that a language user has at his or her disposal to remedy breakdowns in communicative situations. These

strategies can include both verbal strategies, such as asking for clarification, and non-verbal strategies, like using gestures.

A slightly different take on the communicative competence model is presented by Lyle Bachman. Bachman divides language knowledge into two categories of competence: organizational competence and pragmatic competence (Bachman 1990:87). According to Bachman (1990:87), organizational competence includes abilities that are related to producing and understanding grammatically correct sentences and forming them into texts. Pragmatic competence, on the other, hand deals with skills that enable the language user to express his or her intent as well use language that is considered appropriate.

Bachman (1990:87-88) further divides organizational competence into grammatical and textual competence. Grammatical competence includes areas such as vocabulary, morphology, syntax, phonology and graphology, whereas textual competence includes understanding of coherence and rhetorical organization. In other words, grammatical competence is related to single language units, whereas textual knowledge is more connected with how these units are organized into texts or speech in a meaningful manner.

Bachman divides pragmatic competence into illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence (Bachman 1990:87). Illocutionary competence includes knowledge about different kinds of speech acts, such as requests warnings etc. The basic idea behind different kinds of speech acts is that they help the language user convey his or her meaning or intent with language (Bachman 1990:89-94).

According to Bachman (1990:94), sociolinguistic competence refers to a person's ability to distinguish what kind of language use is appropriate in

different contexts. Thus, sociolinguistic competence deals with both cultural knowledge as well as general knowledge about discourse.

Together with Adrian Palmer, Bachman further refined his own model on language knowledge and added the component of strategic competence into the model. Bachman and Palmer (2004: 67-70) divide language knowledge into two separate areas: organizational knowledge and pragmatic knowledge. They further divide organizational knowledge into grammatical and textual knowledge and pragmatic knowledge into functional and sociolinguistic knowledge. In their model, grammatical knowledge is involved with how single units like words or sentences are organized in a grammatically correct manner, whereas textual knowledge deals with how these units are combined to form whole texts, whether these are in written or spoken form (Bachman and Palmer 2004: 67-69). Functional knowledge is involved in deciphering how a single utterance of a sentence is related to the communicative goal of the language user, for example, asking a question, whereas sociolinguistic knowledge is related to the setting in which the language is used (Bachman and Palmer 2004: 69-70).

In addition to these two areas of language knowledge, Bachman and Palmer (2004:70-75) add the component of strategic competence. This area of language knowledge deals not so much with actual language itself but instead with the resources of the individual and how they are used. In this sense, Bachman and Palmers' model of language knowledge takes into account the actual language user and his or her resources more so than other models that focus solely on language and its components.

2.1.3 Combining Communicative Competence with the Traditional Four Language Skills Model

As an example of more recent representations of language knowledge, Martinez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2006) present a model in which the four main

language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) are combined with the communicative competence model. In their model, communicative competence is considered as consisting of five separate areas: linguistic competence, strategic competence, discourse competence, pragmatic competence and intercultural competence. Thus, their representation of communicative competence is a combination of the original communicative competence model and its later refinements. The actual model looks at each of the four main language skills in conjunction with the five areas of communicative competence and lists what kind of individual skills belong under each language skill heading. In my opinion, this model is the best representation of a person's language knowledge because it dissects this knowledge into a detailed skill listing while still retaining the communicative, social and strategic aspects of language use within the listing. For this reason, this model was chosen as the basis in forming the questionnaire used in this study.

2.1.4 The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) Model of Language Proficiency

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (abbreviated CEFR), which will be discussed more thoroughly in the next sub-section, offers another model for describing a person's linguistic abilities. This model is used widely in the Finnish and European schooling systems. Takala (2009: 106) describes the CEFR model of language proficiency with the help of three main categories: communicative language competence, communicative language activity and use of strategies. These areas are not separate from each other but rather areas that complement each other in actual language use situations. According to Takala (2009:110), communicative language competence entails linguistic-, pragmatic- and socio-linguistic competence. Thus, this area of language proficiency is related more to the background knowledge a language user has about a language rather than the actual use of the language. The categories of communicative language activity and use

of strategies both include the same sub-skills: reception, interaction and production, with communicative language activity also including mediation as a sub-skill. These two areas, then, deal more with the actual language use situation. As this description of the CEFR model shows, its main idea is that language proficiency cannot be measured simply by a language user's "raw" knowledge of a language but rather with how this knowledge is put into use in real language use situations.

2.2 The Position of English in Finland and the Finnish Schooling System

As this study focuses on future and practicing English teachers in Finland, it is useful to shed some light on the current position of English in Finland and how the Finnish schooling systems is arranged in terms of foreign language education.

2.2.1 The Position of English in Finland

As a native language in Finland, English is the fourth most spoken language with just under fifteen thousand speakers in 2012. Russian is the most spoken native language with over 62.000 speakers (Statistics Finland 2012). More so than a native language, English seems to have major role as a secondary language in Finland. This is apparent, for example, from the fact that although it is not a mandatory subject in schools, 66.3 percent of 1-6 grade students choose it as a foreign language with 99.4 percent of 7-9 grade students doing the same (Statistics Finland 2012).

In addition to being a popular school subject, English also seems to have permeated other areas of Finnish culture as well. In the autumn of 2007, Varieng (a research unit for variation, contacts and change in English) conducted a national study about the position of English in Finland in the 2000s. They used a questionnaire that charted Finnish people's learning

experiences, uses and attitudes towards English. Altogether, 1495 respondents provided data for the questionnaire (Varieng 2011).

The study showed that among Finnish people, English holds a leading position among foreign languages. For example, in terms of education, 94.5 percent of the respondents had studied English in upper secondary school. In terms of adult education, English was also the leading language with 42.5 percent of adult education students having studied it. The second most popular language, Spanish, had only a 20.6 percent study rate (Varieng 2011, 56). The study also showed that English plays a major role in Finnish peoples' daily lives as well. In terms of using foreign language at work, 40.5 percent of the respondents had used English in the working environment with Swedish being the second most used language with a 18.1 percent use rate (Varieng 2011, 57). Also while travelling, English was the most commonly used language among Finnish people with 64.2 percent of the respondents having used it abroad. Swedish was the second most used language while abroad with 24.3 percent of the respondents having used it (Varieng 2011, 58).

When asked what language Finnish people most commonly hear or see in their surroundings, 79.6 percent responded English, with the second most common language being Russian with 48.3 percent of the respondents having heard it (Varieng 2011, 60). Based on the presented figures, it can be said that English has a very prominent role both in the Finnish schooling system as well as in the everyday lives of Finnish people.

In 2012, the European Commission conducted a language related study across the European Union. The study gives an overview about the language proficiency, language learning experiences and opinions about language of European citizens (The European Commission 2013). With regards to Finland, 1003 people took part in the survey. The high value placed on

English can also be seen from this survey, as 88 percent of the respondents considered it as the language most useful for their personal development and 89 percent as the language most useful for their children's development (European Commission 2012). When asked what foreign languages the respondents feel like they can have a conversation in, 70 percent of the respondents chose English, with German placing in second place with 18 percent (European Commission 2012). In terms of foreign language use among the Finnish respondents, the most common language situations were related to holidays abroad, the internet and watching films and the television and listening to the radio (European Commission 2012).

2.2.2 The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

There are many directives, documents and guidelines that govern language education in Finland. As Finland is a part of the European Union, one of these is the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages was compiled by the European Council and published in 2001 (Pearson Longman 2013). The CEFR was created to serve the overall aim of the European Council to increase unity between its member countries (CEFR 2013). The CEFR serves this goal by providing a common basis for European countries for describing language proficiency. In essence then, the CEFR is a collection of descriptions of the skills language learners are expected to master at a certain level of language proficiency. The CEFR is language non-specific and can thus be applied to every language or even between different languages.

From a practical standpoint, the CEFR offers language professionals, such as teachers, a tool to measure how the content of their country's language syllabuses, courses, textbooks, examinations etc. compare with those from other countries (CEFR 2013). Thus, the CEFR increases the transparency when comparing language education of different countries. The CEFR also

aims at helping teachers in their assessment of the students by providing guidelines against which the students' performance can be compared.

For language learners, the CEFR functions mainly as a tool to gauge their current language proficiency level in a certain language as well as an indicator of what language skills they need to improve upon to reach a higher proficiency level.

The CEFR describes language proficiency in the following manner: Language users are placed onto six different levels: A1-A2 (basic user), B1-B2 (independent user), C1-C2 (proficient user). Within each user level, a higher number denotes a higher proficiency. These levels are connected with five main language skill areas: listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production and writing (CEFR 2012: 26-27). This categorization follows the traditional four-fold table division of language skills with the exception that speaking is divided into two separate sub-categories.

Each user level within the aforementioned language skills is given a written description of what is expected from the language user at that level. These descriptions differ from many other descriptions of language knowledge in the sense that they focus heavily on the functional use of language. In other words, instead of listing specific skills like, for example, mastery of correct spelling, the descriptions focus on different "can do" statements (Pearson Longman 2013). For example, an A1 level language user is described in terms of writing skills as "I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example, entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form." (CEFR 2013). In this sense, the CEFR seems to be based more on a communicative view of language proficiency rather than a grammatical view of it.

2.2.3 Language Education in Finland

Language education on the level of basic education in Finland is based on the Finnish National Syllabus for Primary Education, national directives and local municipal syllabi (Finnish Board of Education 2010). There are three main national directives: the Basic Education Act, Basic Education Decree and the government decree on the goals and hourly division of basic education. These directives contain rules about the general goals of teaching, school subject, evaluation etc. (Finnish Board of Education 2010).

According to the Finnish Board of Education (2010), local syllabi are created on the basis Finnish National Syllabus for basic education. The creation of these syllabi is the duty of the local organizer of education, which is usually the municipality. Municipal syllabi contain parts that individual schools compose themselves. The Finnish law also states that the guardians of the students as well as the students themselves are allowed to take part in the design of these syllabi (Finnish Board of Education 2010).

As can be seen from the above description, the structure of the Finnish education system is so that it is composed from several levels with the higher level providing a framework under which the next level operates. This means that municipalities and schools can largely decide how they want to implement the given educational guidelines into practice with even students and their families having a say in the matter.

2.2.4 The Finnish National Syllabus for Primary Education

The rationale for the current Finnish primary education Syllabus was approved by the Finnish board of Education on the 16th January 2004. Syllabi based on this rationale could be implemented into practice at the earliest by 1st August 2004 and were mandatory on all primary education class levels at the end of the 2006-2007 academic year (Finnish National Board of education 2012). In terms of future changes to the syllabi, during summer 2012 the

Finnish government decided on new guidelines for the primary education hour division. As a part of this reform, the current rationale for the national Syllabus will be rewritten so that a new rationale is finished by the end of 2014 (Finnish National Board of Education 2012).

The primary education syllabus is targeted for students ranging in age from 7-16, which corresponds to classes 1 through 9 in the Finnish schooling system. Students generally start studying their first foreign language in the third grade but can choose a foreign language as an optional subject already during their first year of school.

The guidelines for the national primary education syllabus largely follow the contents of the CEFR. In other words, different class levels have been given goals in terms of what level of proficiency the students are expected to achieve. These goals are based on the language proficiency levels outlined on the CEFR and set individually for listening comprehension, speaking, reading comprehension and writing. The national syllabus also follows the CEFR in the sense that it also adopts a communicative view to language proficiency. This is apparent from the fact that a large part of the goals outlined on the syllabus are directly related to real-life language use situations. For example, one goal that is set for third- to six grade students is that they are able to *“give basic information on themselves and their inner circle of people as well as be able to communicate with the target language in simple, common day speech situations, relying on the help of a speech partner”* (Finnish National Board of Education 2004).

The National syllabus (2004) states that teaching for students who start their A-language (first foreign language) studies before the third class should rely on developing listening comprehension and oral skills. From third grade onwards, the main goal shifts to actual communication skills with oral skills in the forefront in the beginning stages of education and more emphasis

gradually placed on writing skills in later stages. The National syllabus also takes cultural knowledge and different learning strategies into account right from the beginning of the language learning process. This is apparent from the fact that goals for these two areas are already set for third-grade students just starting their foreign language studies.

2.2.5 The Finnish National Syllabus for High Schools

The Finnish National Board of Education approved the current rationale for the Finnish High School Syllabus on the 15th of August 2003 and the rationale was to be implemented by all high schools at the latest by 1st of August 2005 (Finnish National Board of Education 2012). As the name suggests, the syllabus is designed for high school students, which in Finland generally means students ranging in age from sixteen to eighteen years.

The Finnish National Syllabus for High Schools largely follows the guidelines laid out in the primary education syllabus. In other words, goals set for the student relate to the CEFR proficiency levels and are mainly connected to real language use situation. The main differences between the two syllabi have to do with the emphasis placed on different language skills and the actual study subjects laid out in the syllabi. The high school syllabi, for the most part, do not place oral skills ahead of writing skills, but instead roughly the same emphasis is given to both. The high school syllabus also focuses on more specific topics, such as “technology and science” and “active citizen- and entrepreneurship”. In this sense, the high school syllabus adds more specialized skills and topics into the language learning process.

2.2.6 Vocational Upper Secondary Training

The basic upper secondary vocational training degree consists of 120 study weeks, which corresponds roughly to 216 academic credits. Out these 120 study weeks, twenty are reserved for supplementary studies that consist of various subjects like physics, mathematics, physical education and language

studies (Finnish National Board of Education 2010). Out of these twenty study weeks, seven are reserved for language studies. Four study weeks are reserved for native language studies, two for second native language studies and one for foreign language studies (KIEPO 2007).

2.2.7 Universities and Universities for Applied Sciences

University studies on Finland are divided into bachelor's and master's degrees. The bachelor's degree consists of a minimum of 180 study points. Once a student has completed his or hers bachelor studies, it is possible to advance to a master's degree which consists of another minimum 120 study points. There are ten study points worth of mandatory language- and communication studies included in the degrees. These studies are completed under the bachelor degree. Out of these language studies three study points are reserved for communication studies in the native language, three for second native language studies and three for foreign language studies. (University of Jyväskylä 2013). In addition to the aforementioned studies, one study point is reserved for a research essay whose purpose is to test both the student's language skills as well as his or hers familiarity with his or her own research essay.

The basic degree in Finnish Universities for Applied Sciences is worth 210, 240 or 270 study points depending on the professional orientation of the student. After gaining the basic bachelor's degree, students can continue into advanced master's studies which are meant deepen the student's professional skills and are worth 60 to 90 study points (Ministry of Education and Culture 2013). Although each university for applied sciences compiles their own teaching programs, the basic degree always includes mandatory language studies. These studies include a native language, second native language and a foreign language component which are each worth three study points (Turku University of Applied Sciences 2013).

2.2.8 Adult Language Education in Finland

In terms of adult education, there are no set standards regarding language education in Finland. The range of offered languages depends on the municipality as well as singular educational facilities. For example, the city of Helsinki offers a selection of over 30 languages in over 450 language courses per year for adult students (University of Helsinki 2013), whereas a smaller city like Kajaani offers adult language education in only 15 languages with fewer than one hundred courses on offer (Kaukametsän Opisto 2014).

2.3 Previous Studies on Language Skills Teaching

2.3.1 Current Perspectives on Teaching the Four Skills

In his 2006 article published in *Tesol Quarterly*, Eli Hinkel gives a literature overview of the prevalent trends in teaching the four main language skills in terms of second language teaching. According to Hinkel, these trends have begun in the 1990s and 2000s and are likely to affect language teaching in the near future (Hinkel 2006: 109). As this study focuses on different language skills, I am looking at Hinkel's article from the point of view of the language skills brought to the foreground in today's L2 teaching rather from the point of view of the different strategies used to teach these skills.

In terms of speaking, Hinkel refers to research that highlights production quality as a demand for successful communication in many situations. To achieve this, a speaker needs to have fluency and accuracy as well as sufficient lexical and grammatical knowledge in the spoken language (Hinkel 2006: 114-115). With regard to pronunciation, Hinkel (2006: 115) states that teaching has moved away from teaching a native-like accent to general intelligibility. According to Hinkel (2006: 116), this means that teaching focus is on things like prosody, word stress and length and timing of pauses. In terms of the sociopragmatic side of speaking, Hinkel states that the focus is

on effective communication strategies, organization of discourse, conversational routines and different speech acts (2006: 116).

In terms of teaching listening skills, Hinkel points out that current pedagogic trends promote an approach where teaching listening comprehension is tied together with teaching other language skills (2006:118). In other words, a learner's listening skills can benefit from learning speaking skills. Hinkel also lists specific techniques like prelistening, prediction making, listening for the main idea and asking questions. According to Hinkel, these techniques have long been seen as essential in the listening comprehension process (2006: 118).

Hinkel points out that in terms of reading, learning starts from very basic things like letter and word recognition. Hinkel also refers to research that has shown that these basic skills need to be in place before learners can benefit from more complex reading strategies (2006: 120-121). In addition, Hinkel points to research that highlights the importance of vocabulary knowledge on all levels of language learning (2006: 122). In terms of writing skills, Hinkel highlights the importance of lexical and grammatical knowledge (2006: 124).

2.3.2 Study of Language Teacher Opinions in Finland

In 2006, the Centre of Applied Linguistics at the University of Jyväskylä conducted a study about the different language environments that students and teachers function in Finland today. More specifically, the study focused on finding out what kind of customs and attitudes are connected with studying and teaching languages and how these react to the changing world (Luukka et al. 2008, 15).

The final sample of respondents consisted of 1720 9th grade students and 740 language teachers, of which 417 were native language teachers and 324

foreign language students. 64 percent of the foreign language teachers were English language teachers. (Luukka et al. 2008, 35-37)

When asked how much value foreign language teacher's place on different language skills in the final student evaluation, the results showed that on average, the teachers did not view any language skill as not having any worth. This is apparent from the fact that with relation to the fourteen language skills in the questionnaire, only five skills gained answers where the teachers placed no value on them. In addition, with relation to these five skills, the average percentage of teachers who placed no value on the skills was around five percent (Luukka et al. 2008, 129-130).

The most valued skills among the teachers were daily communication skills, knowledge of structures and grammar, reading comprehension, vocabulary and phrasal knowledge, listening comprehension and speaking skills. The least valued skills among the teachers were solo speaking, cultural knowledge of studied language, different study-, communication- and understanding strategies, translation skills, pronunciation and spelling (Luukka et al. 2008, 129-130).

3 Methods

In this chapter, I will present the methodology used in this study. I will first present a more detailed description of the respondent groups and the questionnaire used in the study as well as a description of the procedure of how the questionnaire was distributed. At the end of the chapter, I will go over the methods used in analyzing the gathered data.

3.1 Respondents

The target groups for this study were Finnish future English teachers as well as Finnish English teachers who have already served in working life for a period of time. More specifically, the future English teachers were all

university language students aiming for a teaching profession. The already practicing teachers were all members of the Federation of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland. The aforementioned selection parameters were used for both groups in order to narrow down the respondents groups as well to ensure at least some degree of uniformity in the respondents' educational and professional backgrounds. However, it should be noted that in terms of the practicing teachers this narrowing down was largely unsuccessful since the respondent group was, in some respects, a very heterogeneous one.

3.1.1 Teachers

The amount of teachers who participated in the study was considerably lower than the students with a total amount of 12. This is fairly surprising because English teachers nationwide were being targeted for this study whereas the student respondents came from one university. The main reason for the small amount of respondents, in my opinion, was probably due to the fact that the questionnaire used in the study was sent to the teachers in May, which is fairly close to the summer holidays for schools and many teachers may not have had the time or motivation to participate in the study at that time. Thus, a better timing for the questionnaire could have yielded a higher amount of respondents.

As answers from four teachers were omitted for the same reasons as with regard to the students, the final group of teachers in the study consisted of eight teachers. Because all of the teachers were female, gender was not used as categorization factor for the group. The factors used were the length of their teaching career and their teaching level (high-school, adult education, primary school etc.).

As stated before, all of the teachers who participated in the study were female. The length of their teaching careers varied from 10 to 30 years, with the average length being just under 18 years. Two of the teachers taught at

lower levels of comprehensive school, one at the upper level and three as upper secondary school teachers. One of the teachers worked at a vocational school teaching business economics and administration in English.

Because of the heterogeneous nature of the teachers' professional backgrounds as well due to the fact that no male teachers took part in the study, the teachers were analyzed as a single group, disregarding the background factors set for them. This decision was made because the sample size for the group was too small to make any meaningful cross referencing within the group.

3.1.2 University Language Students

Altogether 47 university language students originally participated in the study. Data from four students were omitted on the account of their answers being either incomplete or faulty. In other words, the students had either left some parts of the questionnaire blank or had used incorrect numbers in their answers. Therefore, the total amount of students whose answers were analyzed for the study was 43. The students were categorized according to three background factors: stage of their teacher training, whether or not they had English as their major subject, and gender. The criteria for the categorization will be explained more thoroughly in the 3.2 Questionnaire-section of the paper.

Out of the 43 students whose answers were analyzed, seven had already completed their teacher training, 32 were taking it at that moment and four had not yet begun their training. 40 of the students were students majoring in English while the remaining three had English as a minor subject. 40 out of the respondents were female and three male. It should be noted that despite being categorized into different groups according to the background factors, gender of the respondent was not used as background factor in the final analysis of the data. This decision was made because only three male

respondents took part in the study and their answers followed largely along the same lines as the female students. Therefore it was felt that cross referencing answers from male and female would not have produced useful information in terms of this study. It was also decided to analyze minor and major English students as one group as this background factor did not seem to have an impact on the students' answers. Also, it was felt that the large discrepancy between respondents (40 females vs. 3 males) meant that no meaningful deductions could be made on the basis of the comparison.

3.2 Questionnaire

The data collection process for this study was conducted with the help of two separate internet questionnaires, one sent out to language teachers and one to university language students. A questionnaire was chosen as the data collection method for this study for two reasons: easy distribution among study subjects and standardized form of the data collection process.

As stated by Hirsjärvi et al. (2009, 184), one of the main benefits of surveys and questionnaires is that usually they can be used to reach a large number of people. As a goal for this study was to reach as many people as possible from the target groups, it was felt that a standardized questionnaire was the only way to achieve this.

With respect to data collection, standardization means that the desired data is collected in the exact same manner from every respondent (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009, 182). With regards to this study, this was very important as the data analysis process was in many regards a comparative one as different respondent groups were mirrored against each other in terms of their answers. Therefore it was important that each gained answer was the result to exactly same question.

In terms of their overall structure, both questionnaires consisted of seven main sections that contained both closed and open questions. The closed questions were inserted into the questionnaire to collect quantitative data which could be then arranged into different numerical charts and analyzed with the help of different statistical tools. The open questions were inserted to collect supporting qualitative data, mainly in the form explanations as to why the respondents had answered the closed questions the way they had. Five out of seven sections in both questionnaires focused on different aspects of language knowledge while the two remaining ones were used to elicit background information about the respondents. The questionnaires for both respondent groups can be found in the appendix.

3.2.1 Questions about Language Knowledge

The questionnaire was based largely on the language knowledge model presented by Usó-Juan and Martinez-Flor (2006). Their model was chosen as the basis for the questionnaire because it combines the communicative competence model of language knowledge with the traditional fourfold table-model of language in a manner that is easy to put into the form of a questionnaire. This is due to the fact that the model contains the fourfold-table division of language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) which makes it easy to divide the questionnaire into sub sections according to the four main language skills while at the same time the model retains the basics of the communicative competence model of language knowledge which, in my opinion, is the most comprehensive representation of language knowledge.

However, Usó-Juan and Martinez-Flor's model could not be used as such as the basis for the questionnaire on the account that it divided language knowledge into so many different language subs-skills. If the model had been used as such, the respondents would have had to give their opinion on at least 120 sub-skills. Thus, for the purpose of this study, the model was

subjected to skill combination and scaling down so that in the end the respondents only had to weigh 26 sub-skills against each other, with six or seven of them being placed under each of the four main sections representing the major skills of language knowledge. The main sections used in the questionnaire were: writing, listening comprehension, reading comprehension and oral communication.

The respondents were asked to rate each main section as well as the respective sub-skills in each section numerically according to which ones they valued the most and which the least. In addition to the closed questions, in each section the respondents were given a chance to explain via open answers what the reasons behind their chosen ratings were.

3.2.2 Background Information Questions

In addition to charting current and future English teachers' opinions about language knowledge, this study also aims at finding out whether or not certain background factors have an influence on those opinions. Therefore, a set of background questions was inserted into the questionnaire. The background questions differed slightly for both groups, since it was felt that certain questions used with the other would not provide meaningful information with the other. I have briefly touched on the background questions in section 3.1 where the respondent groups were presented but in this section I will give a more detailed explanation as to why each background question was chosen.

For the teachers, the affecting personal background factors that were queried were length of teaching career, teaching level and their gender. The career length question was included in order to see if teachers who had a lengthy career held different opinions than those who had worked as teachers for a shorter period of time or maybe had just entered working life. The teachers' teaching level was queried to see what kind of an effect the teaching place

and possible differences in student material had on the answers. As stated before, although a question about the teachers' gender was included, it was not used in the analysis of the collected data as there were no male respondents among the teachers.

For the students, the personal background questions concerned the stage of their teacher training, whether they were minors or majors in English and their gender. The question about their teacher training was inserted in order to see how going through this training process might affect the students' answers. A question about the students' subject status with regard to English was added to see whether English major students had differing opinions from those who had English as a minor subject. Finally, to find out if the gender of the respondents played a role in the language skill ranking, they were asked to mark whether they were male or female.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the background factors affecting the respondents' answers, they were given a list from which to choose three additional things that they considered as having been most influential in terms of their answers. The lists for both groups were almost identical (the only difference is in the wording of item 5) with both of them containing the following items:

1. One's own practical experiences about teaching
2. One's own opinion about language knowledge and how to develop it
3. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
4. City- or municipality-wide teaching curricula
5. School-specific teaching curricula (with regards to the teachers, this item referred to the school in which they were teaching at the time.)
6. One's own teaching style
7. Teaching and learning materials

In addition to the seven aforementioned items, the respondents had two optional slots in which to write their own answers if they felt a suitable option could not be found from the list.

3.3 Procedure

After the initial version of the questionnaire was compiled, it was piloted with the help of two university English students and a university level language teacher. Based on their feedback, slight changes were made to the questionnaire layout, instructions as well the actual wording of the questions. An online questionnaire was chosen as the questionnaire type for this study mainly because it was much more cost effective than a paper one. Another reason why an online survey was used was that there were clearly defined e-mail lists for both respondents groups through which a link to the questionnaire could be distributed.

The questionnaires were transferred into an online form with the help of Korppi, which is a computer software program that allows users to compile online surveys as well as gather and analyze data from these surveys. In Korppi, the questionnaire was refined to its final form with some additional tweaking done in order to fit the questionnaire into the graphical interface of the software. After this, a link to the questionnaires was sent out to the students and teachers via their respective e-mail lists in the beginning of May 2010. Both participant groups were given a three week answering period with a reminder e-mail being sent to the groups after two weeks. At the end of the third week, both questionnaires were closed to the respondent after which the data was collected and analyzed.

3.4 Data analysis

As the data for this study consists of answers to both closed and open questions, quantitative analysis methods were used in conjunction with qualitative methods. The main aim was not to analyze each type of data

separately from the other, but rather to see how the two types of data supported each other. The collected data was also compared with data from previous studies.

3.4.1 Quantitative Methods

Data from the closed questions from both study groups were compiled into six different numeric charts, with each chart representing a main section of the questionnaire. The sections are as follows:

1. Four main language skills
2. Writing
3. Listening comprehension
4. Reading comprehension
5. Oral communication
6. Background factors affecting the answers

For the purpose of data cross referencing within and between the respondent groups, the six charts from both groups were further categorized according to the background factors of each group. For example, the students' charts were categorized into three sub-groups: teacher training finished, in teacher training and training not started.

The two statistical devices used to analyze the data were the arithmetic mean average and standard deviation. The data from the closed questions in the questionnaires could be analyzed on an interval scale (as defined by Butler 1985:12) because the respondents arranged the data according to numbers with equal intervals between each other, for example, in order from one to six. According to Butler (1985:32), the mean is the best measure for central tendency (average value) when dealing with interval data. Thus, the arithmetic mean was used to calculate how the respondents ranked each main language skill and their respective sub-skills in relation with each

other. The calculation functioned so that a low average value for a skill meant that it was ranked high among the respondents, whereas a high average value denoted a low ranking.

According to Butler (1985:37), standard deviation is the most commonly used statistical method when measuring variability. Thus, the original for this study plan was to use standard deviation as a statistical tool to find out how much agreement there was between respondents about the placement of a certain language skill in the skill rankings. Here, a low standard deviation value meant that the respondents consistently ranked a language skill to a certain place in the rankings, for example, in third place. If a skill had a high standard deviation value, it meant that there was little agreement between the respondents on where to place it in the rankings.

However, based on the results from the standard deviation calculations, it was decided that it could not be used to measure the agreement between respondents. This is due to the fact that standard deviation can have a low value even though the values from the calculation have a large range between each other (Statistics Finland 2013). This led to situation where in many instances the standard deviation values were misleading. For example, a language skill that gained an equal amount of low and high rankings could yield the same standard deviation value as a skill where almost all of the respondents had ranked it somewhere in the middle. Therefore, as the group sizes for the respondent groups were fairly small, it was decided that respondent agreement could be examined without a statistical tool simply by looking at the percentages that each ranking within a skill had received.

3.4.2 Qualitative Methods

The main qualitative data analysis method for this study is content analysis. According to Holsri (as quoted by Berg 2000: 240), the broad definition for content analysis is *“any technique for making inferences by systematically and*

objectively identifying special characteristics of messages". In this sense, content analysis was a good approach for this study because the analysis process had multiple focuses. The main focus was to mirror the open answers against the closed ones and see what kind of additional information they could produce. In addition to this, the open answers were also cross referenced with each other to see whether or not they contained similar tendencies.

4 Results and Discussion

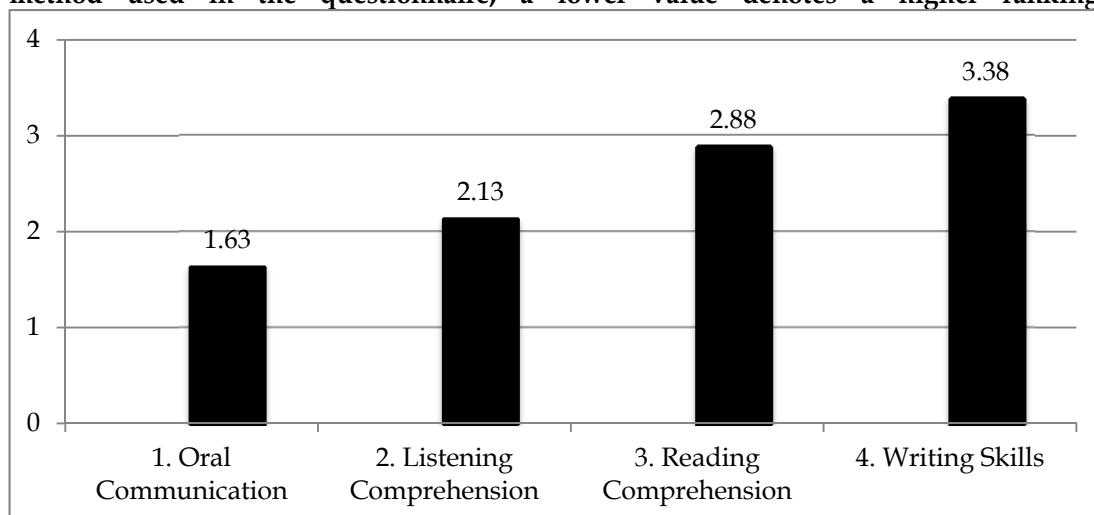
In this section of the paper I will present and discuss the results from the study. I will first present the results for each respondent group individually then compare the groups with each other and finally give a summary of the study results as a whole. The discussion of the results is largely intertwined with the analysis as I will comment and discuss the results as they are being presented.

4.1 Teachers

As stated earlier in the study, no cross-referencing in terms of background factors was performed for the teacher respondent group. This is due to the fact that all respondents in the group were female and there was very high variability within the group with regard to the other background factors. Thus, a cross-referencing data analysis would not have yielded meaningful data. However, it should perhaps be stated that although the teachers could be described as a heterogeneous groups, the results from the group were surprisingly uniform. This, in my opinion, could be a sign that a larger consensus, at least to some degree, exists among practicing teacher about what aspects of language are most important to teach.

4.1.1 Teachers: Four Main Areas of Language Knowledge

Table 1. The most important areas of language knowledge in terms of teaching arranged according to the order of importance for the teacher respondent group. Due to the scoring method used in the questionnaire, a lower value denotes a higher ranking.



In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to place the four main language knowledge areas into an order of importance according to their own opinion by addressing them a numerical value from one to four with a smaller numerical value denoting a higher importance. Thus, a lower average value for an area meant that on average it was valued higher by the teachers.

In terms of how the main areas of language knowledge were valued on average among English teachers, the results are fairly clear. As table 1 illustrates, oral communication was valued highest with listening and reading comprehension following next and writing being the least valued area of language knowledge.

The high value teachers placed on oral communication can be best seen from the fact that 63 percent (five out of eight) of the teachers chose it as their most valued area of language knowledge and 25 percent (two out of eight) placed it in second place. Based on the open answers, the teachers seemed to value oral communication so highly because it has the most real life applications.

(1) Suurimmaksi osaksi kieltä tarvitaan ihmisten väliseen kommunikointiin esim. ulkomailla ollessa. Suullisen pohjana toki on tärkeää hallita sanastoa ja kielioppia, jota tarvitaan kirjoittamisessakin. Siksi nämä on opiskeltava myös!

For the most part language is needed for communication between people, for example, when one is abroad. As a base for oral skills, one has to have an understanding of vocabulary and grammar, which are also needed in writing. Therefore it is important to study them also!

It should be noted, however, that one of the teachers placed oral communication in last place among the four main areas. This based her answer on the fact that in her work, the other main areas take precedence over oral communication. She also indicated that large student groups place restrictions on oral communication exercises.

(2) Työssä opettajana kirjoittaminen, kuultu ja luettu ovat samalla viivalla ja niitä treenataan tasaisen tappavasti lukiossa. Suullistamista tulee valitettavasti isojen ryhmien vuoksi vähemmän... ..

As a teacher, writing, hearing comprehension and reading comprehension hold an equal footing and in high school they are trained very diligently. Unfortunately because of large student groups, there are less oral exercises... ..

In my opinion, the high value placed on oral communication among the teachers could be attributed to its worth in daily communication situations. In other words, teachers valued speaking skills highly because so many of the communication exchanges between people take place via the spoken channel. This result also conforms to the results from the study conducted by Luukka et al. (2008), in which teachers placed most value on the ability to be able to communicate in daily communication situations.

On average, listening comprehension was the second most valued area but it was also the main language area which the teachers were least unanimous on. This can be seen from the fact that in addition to being placed second by four teachers, two teachers placed it in first, one in third and one in fourth place. It is hard to say why there was so much division among the teachers regarding this area of language knowledge. However, as Hinkel (2006) points out, current pedagogical trends link teaching listening skills as part of teaching other language skills. Therefore, it is possible that some of the

teachers view listening comprehension as by-product of having mastery in other language areas, and therefore do not place so much importance on it.

Reading comprehension was almost unanimously placed as the third most valued area among the teachers as 63 percent (six out of eight) teachers placed it in third place. However, as with listening comprehension, there was some dispersion in the answers as one teacher placed it first and another in fourth place. The least valued main language knowledge area among the teachers was writing skills as none of them placed it in first place and five out of eight placed it in fourth place.

The overall placing of the language knowledge areas among the teachers is interesting in the sense that on average, the teachers seemed to value skills related to the auditive channel (oral communication and listening comprehension) more than those related to the visual channel (reading and writing comprehension). This could be a further indicator that high value is placed on skills that are useful in spoken communication situations. It should be noted that placing the language knowledge areas in order was not a clear-cut decision for all respondents. In the open answers, two of the teachers pointed out the difficulty of placing the skills in any specific order. According to them, all the skills are dependent on each other and their order is related to the situation they are used in.

(3) Kun oli pakko panna järjestykseen. Mielestäni itse asiassa mitään ei voi pitää toista tärkeämpänä, ja riippuu täysin kielenkäyttötilanteesta, mikä niistä milloinkin on avainasemassa. Sitä ei opiskellessa vielä voi tietää, mitä niistä eniten tulee tarvitsemaan.

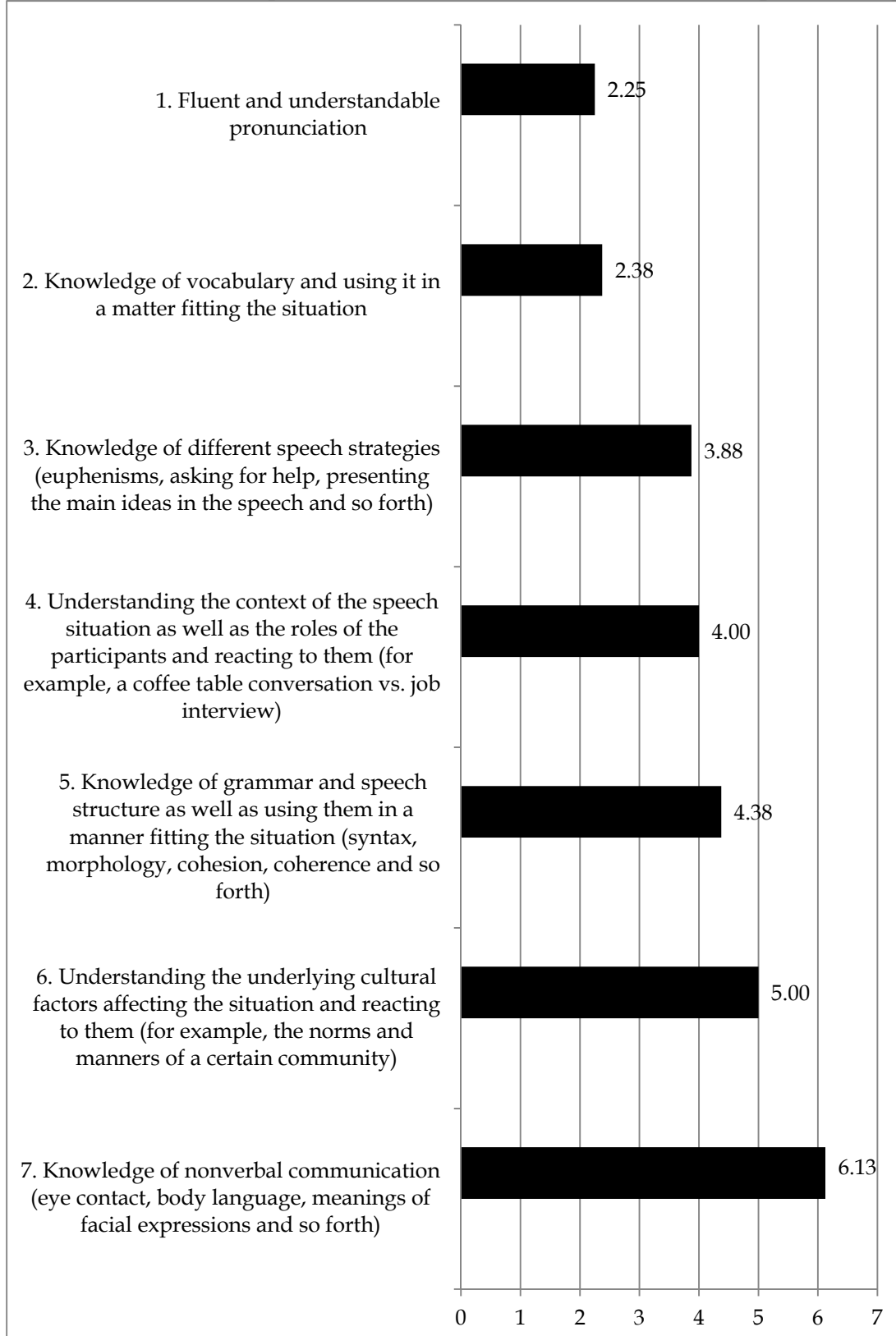
Well, these had to be placed in order. In my opinion, no area can actually be considered more important than the others, and it is totally dependent on the language use situation which one of them plays a key role. During one's studies it is impossible to know which area will be most useful in the future.

(4) Miten näitä voi laittaa tärkeysjärjestykseen? ei ole yhtä ilman toista.

How can these be arranged in an order of importance? One are cannot exist without the others.

4.1.2 Teachers: Oral Communication Sub-Skills

Table 2. The most important oral communication sub-skills in terms of teaching arranged according to the order of importance for the teacher respondent group. Due to the scoring method used in the questionnaire, a lower value denotes a higher ranking.



After placing the language knowledge areas into order, the teachers were asked to perform the same operation on sub-skills related to each of these areas. Based on average value, fluent and understandable pronunciation placed in first among the teachers. What is interesting, however, is that only two of the teachers placed it in first place among the sub-skills. It should, however, also be noted that no teacher placed it lower than as third. Thus, it seems that although teachers placed high value on pronunciation, they did not uniformly see it as the most important skill to teach. The high placing of this skill in this respondent group is interesting because in the study conducted by Luukka et al. (2008), pronunciation was placed among the least valued skills by teachers.

Knowledge and correct use of vocabulary was placed in second place according to the average value. Although 38 percent (three out of eight) of the teachers placed this skill in first place, there did not seem to be as much consensus among the teachers on this skill's placing as one of the teachers placed this skill in fourth place and one in fifth. The teachers, who placed this skill in fourth and fifth place, placed understanding the context of the speech situation in first place. This seems to indicate that at least some of the teachers do not see as much value in teaching the more mechanical aspects of language use if the user does not know how to apply these skills in real life situations. A teacher who placed knowledge of vocabulary in fifth place explained her answer in the following manner:

(4) Taas kategorisointi menee vähän randomilla. Huomaan, että yritän etsiä taas lokeroa, johon saisi laitettua vuorovaikutuksen TARKOITUKSEN: minkä takia puhutaan ja miksi on tärkeä kommunikoida? Kai se on tuota kategoriaa 5.. mutta tässäkin oletetaan, että opettajan tehtävä on opettaa sitä, miten sanotaan eikä sitä mitä sanotaan. Ja kun on nuorten kanssa tekemisissä, myös kielten tunnilla on ongelmana se, että jos ei ole sitä MITÄ sanotaan, on aika lailla turhaa yrittää opettaa sitä miten sanotaan.

Again, the categorization is done at half random. I am noticing that I am trying to find a compartment, in which to place the MEANING of interaction: why do people speak and why communication is important? I suppose it is category five... But, also here the presumption is that the task of a teacher is to teach how to say something, not what is being said. And when

one is dealing with adolescents, the problem, also in language classes, is that if there NOTHING to say, there is no point in teaching how to say it.

The placing of the first two sub-skills support Hinkel's view (2006:114-115) that fluency and lexical knowledge are among the top requirements in order for successful communication to take place.

Knowledge of different speech strategies was placed third based on the average value. Once again it should be noted, however, that there seemed to be a lot of dispute among the teachers on how to value this skill. A good indication of this is that one teacher placed this skill in first and another in last with the rest of the teachers placing it somewhere between these two placings. This, in my opinion, could be due the fact that many speech strategies can be applied across all languages. Therefore, some teachers may not place much emphasis on them as they view that the students pick up a majority of these strategies from their native and other foreign languages.

Although understanding the context of the speech situation and reacting to it was placed third in terms of average value, once again, no clear consensus seemed to exist between the teachers. Two teachers placed this skill in first place but the rest placed it in either fourth, fifth or sixth place.

Knowledge of grammar and speech structures was placed in fifth place overall. An interesting point about this skill is that in terms of oral communication skills, the teachers valued this skill much lower than in relation to writing skills where it was placed in second place. This seems to indicate that although oral communication and writing can both be seen as productive skills, teachers place a much smaller emphasis on grammar when the productive communication channel is speech.

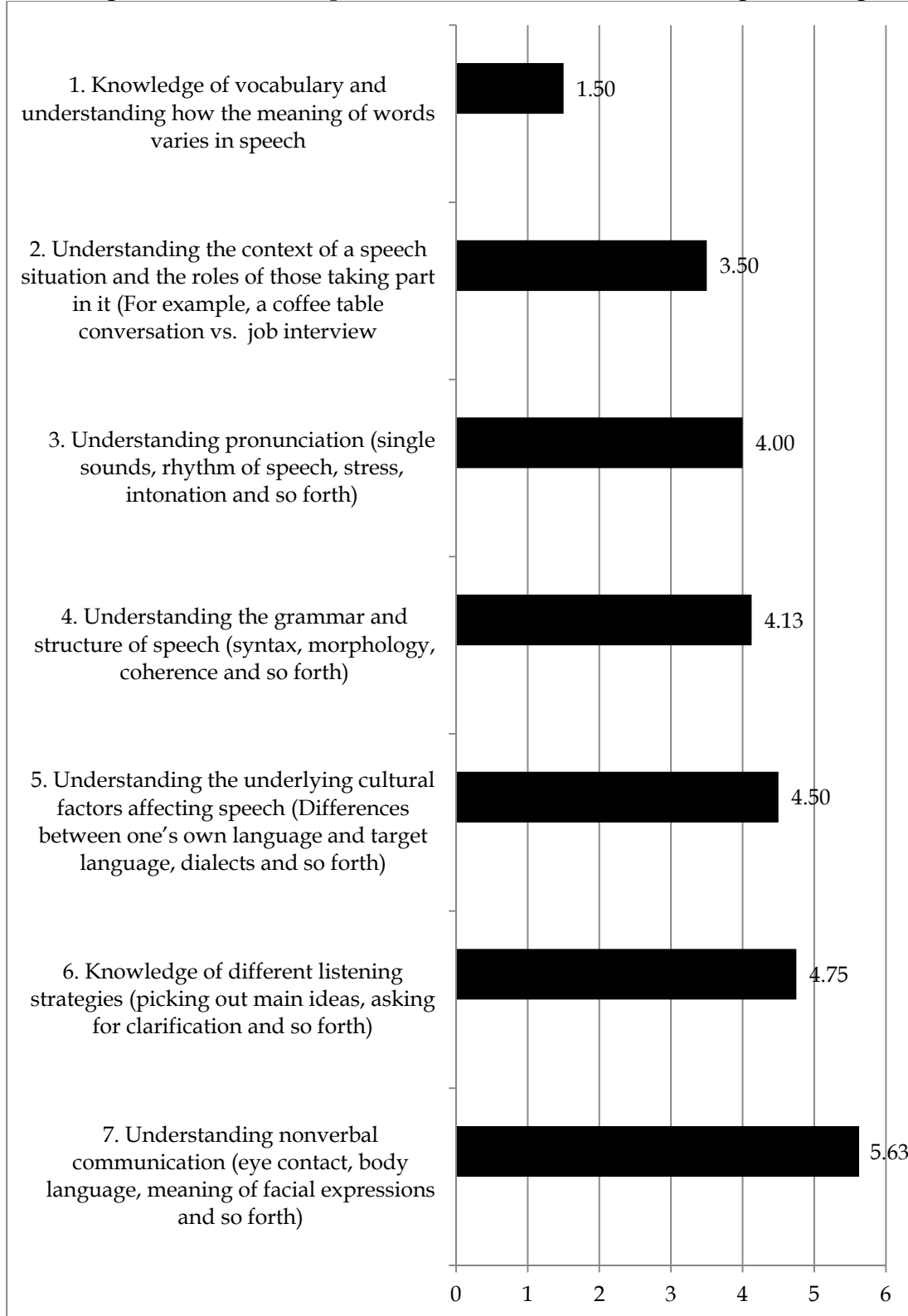
Cultural knowledge placed second to last among the oral communication sub-skills. This is largely due to the fact that 50 percent (four out of eight) of

the teachers placed the skill in sixth place. Two teachers placed this skill in second place and the remaining two in fifth and seventh place respectively. The placing may be an indication that teachers do not put much emphasis on cultural knowledge in their teaching, as this skill was placed second to last in relation with listening and reading comprehension and third in relation to writing skills. This is interesting since the CEFR clearly states cultural skills as one of the areas of language knowledge that students are expected to master.

Knowledge of non-verbal communication skills was clearly the least valued oral communication sub-skill among the teachers. This is apparent from the fact that 63 percent (five out of eight) of the teachers placed the skill in last place with two of the remaining teachers placing it fourth and fifth. Although none of the teachers explicitly explained why they valued non-verbal communication so low, the same thought process may apply here as with regards to speech strategies. In other words, as non-verbal communication is an integral part of any language, language learners already master it through their native language and thus it is not a skill that needs a lot of emphasis with regard to English teaching. The low value placed on non-verbal communication, cultural knowledge and, to some degree, speech strategies is in line with the results from the study by Luukka et al. (2008) as these skills were among the lowest valued in their study as well.

4.1.3 Teachers: Listening Comprehension Sub-Skills

Table 3. The most important listening comprehension sub-skills in terms of teaching arranged according to the order of importance for the teacher respondent group. Due to the scoring method used in the questionnaire, a lower value denotes a higher ranking.



On average, knowledge of vocabulary was clearly the most valued sub-skill among the teachers in relation to listening comprehension as 75 percent (six out of eight) of the teachers placed it in first place. Of the two remaining teachers, one placed it in second and one in fourth place. In my opinion, the high value placed on this skill can partly be explained by the fact that listening comprehension is a receptive skill involving mostly taking information in the form of words and trying to figure out their meaning and how they relate to each other.

Understanding the context of the speech situation placed second overall in terms of average value. Although none of the teachers placed this skill in first place, half of them placed it in the top three. Three teachers placed the skill in fourth place and one in sixth. In my opinion, this skill's placing can be seen as an indication that at least some teachers view listening comprehension as a more complex process than just processing heard words. This kind of thinking would follow the model of communicative competence, where a speech situation is viewed as having a social dimension that is crucial for a listener to understand if they wish to succeed in communication. What is interesting though, is that the teachers seemed to value this more highly in relation to listening than speaking as with regard to oral communication, this skill only placed in fourth place.

Understanding pronunciation came in third overall. One teacher placed it in second place, two in third, four in fourth place and one in sixth. One of the teachers teaching at a high-school level indicated that although she has tried to place more emphasis on recognizing pronunciation and intonation, simply mastering the required vocabulary can pose problems for the students.

(5) Ääntämisen opettamiseen olen yrittänyt panostaa, samoin sanapainojen tunnistamiseen, koska se auttaa myös kuullun ymmärtämistä, mutta aivan liian vähän. Jo pelkkä lukion sanaston hallinta tuntuu vaativan oppilailta liikaa.

I have tried to put effort into teaching pronunciation as well as intonation recognition, because it is also beneficial for listening comprehension, but far too little. Even having a command of the basic vocabulary required in high school seems to be too much for the students.

In my opinion, the previous example can be considered as an indication of the lack of time that the teachers face in the classroom. This same phenomenon was reflected in the other teachers' open answers as well. In reality, this means that although the teachers try to take into account as many sub-skills as possible, they often have to focus on what they think are the most crucial ones, because there simply is not time to teach everything.

Grammatical understanding came in at fourth place overall with only a slightly lower value placed on it than pronunciation. No clear consensus seemed to exist among the teachers with regard to this skill's placing as two teachers placed it fifth and seventh respectively, whereas the remaining three teachers placed it in either second or third place. It is interesting to notice that based on the rankings, teachers who placed this skill lower on the list, placed more value on understanding contextual and cultural factors and vice versa. Therefore, it seems that at least with this respondent group, there was a division between teachers that view listening comprehension as a more of a rigid process based on grammar on vocabulary knowledge and teachers who see it as something that is dependent on the situation.

Understanding cultural factors placed fifth overall in terms of average value. Although one teacher placed this skill in first place and two in third, 63 percent (five out of eight) of teachers placed the skill among the bottom three skills. Thus, although a part of the teachers placed very high value on cultural skills with regard to listening comprehension, the majority of the teachers did not consider it as one of the most important skills to teach.

Understanding different listening strategies was placed sixth overall. One teacher placed this skill in first place, two in seventh and the rest somewhere in between. In my opinion, this divide in the placings is an indication that

some of the teachers view listening comprehension as a passive process where the listener can only take in the information and try to process it rather than actively try to control the listening situation. This could also be an indication that listening comprehension is taught largely through “traditional” listening exercises in schools and thus the students are forced into a more passive role in these situations.

Understanding non-verbal communication placed last among the listening comprehension sub-skills. One teacher placed this skill in second place, but the others placed it in either fifth, sixth or seventh place. In my opinion, also with regard to listening comprehension, the placing could be an indication that the teachers consider this skill as something that language learners gain from their native language.

In the open answers related to listening comprehension, one of the teachers gave an off-tangent comment about language teaching and teaching in general. The teacher indicated that problems in teaching go much further than just finding the correct balance for teaching the different language skills.

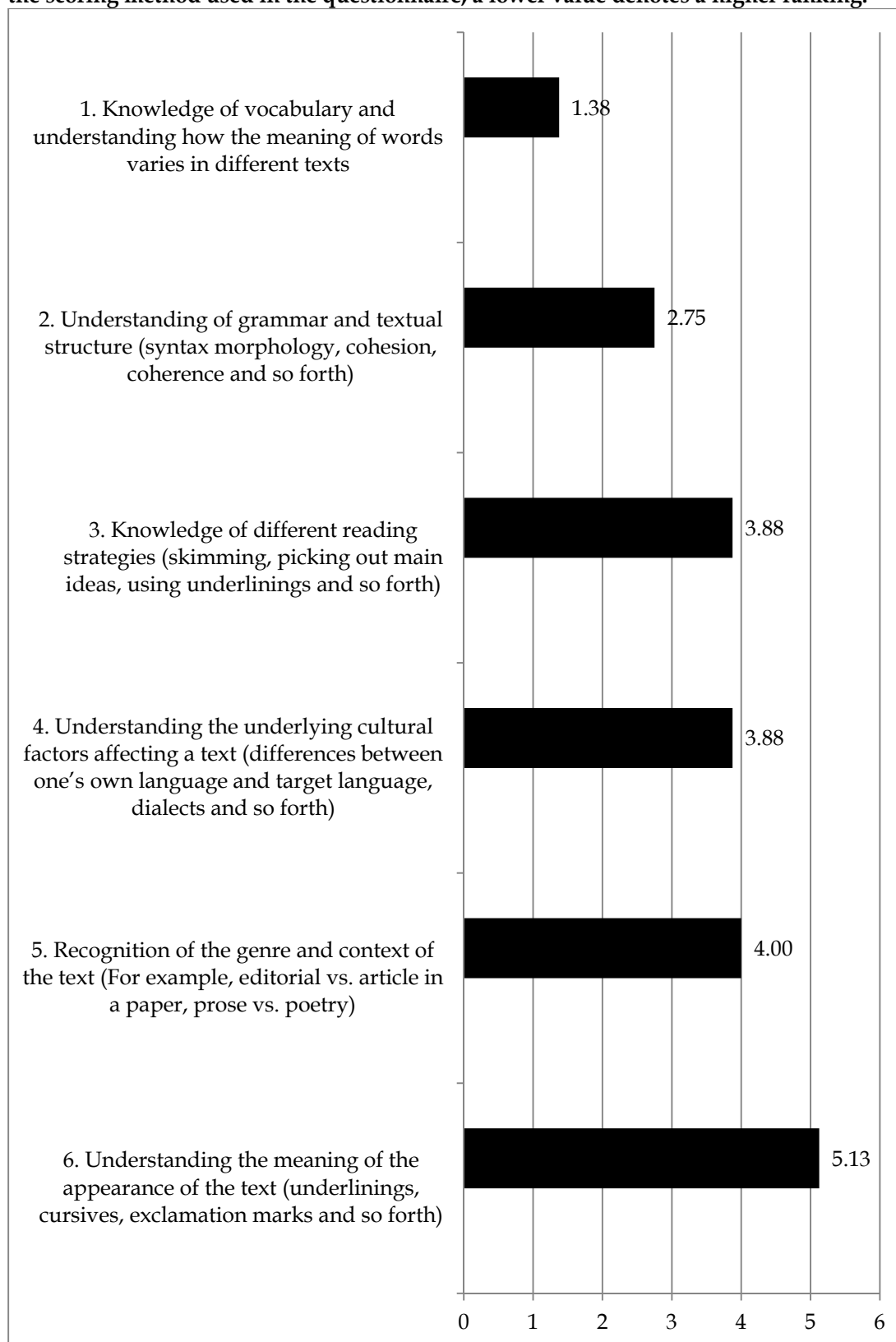
(6) Alan olla yhä enemmän sitä mieltä, että viestintää ei ole syytä pilkkoa näin atomistisiin osa-alueisiin, kun oppimisen ja opettamisen ongelmat ovat ihan eri tasolla ja koulu (=lukio) ei oikein vastaa haasteeseen opettaa ihmisyydessä tarvittavia taitoja.

More and more I am of the opinion, that there is no reason to split communication into these atomistic areas, when problems in learning and teaching are on another level and the school (=highschool) cannot rise to the challenge of teaching the skills necessary in general humanity.

This is an interesting comment in the sense that it paints a situation where teachers cannot focus on fine tuning their teaching methods and emphases because they are faced with other problems that stem from beyond the limits of their own subject.

4.1.4 Teachers: Reading Comprehension Sub-Skills

Table 4. The most important reading comprehension sub-skills in terms of teaching arranged according to the order of importance for the teacher respondent group. Due to the scoring method used in the questionnaire, a lower value denotes a higher ranking.



Knowledge of vocabulary was clearly the most valued reading comprehension sub-skill among the teachers as 75 percent (six out of eight) of them placed it in first place and the remaining two in second and third place.

Understanding grammar and textual structure placed second among the sub-skills in terms of average value. Although the teachers were not quite as unanimous with this skill as with vocabulary knowledge, it was still a fairly clear second as 50 percent (four out of eight) of the teachers placed this skill in second place. The four other teachers placed the skill in either third, fourth or fifth.

The fact that vocabulary and grammatical knowledge stood out so clearly from the other could, in my opinion, be an indication that the teachers view reading comprehension as a fairly mechanical process where success depends on how many words and rules the language learner has absorbed. The high value placed on these two skills is also supported by Hinkel (2006) who states that reading comprehension starts from letter and word recognition.

Although knowledge of different reading strategies placed third in terms of average value, there seemed to be quite a lot of disagreement among the teachers in terms of the placing as one teacher placed the skill in first place, one in second and two in third. To counterpoint the high placings for this skill, two teachers placed it fifth and two sixth. In my opinion, this could be an indication that at least a part of the teachers consider this skill as a universal skill across all languages and thus do not place a lot of emphasis on it in their teaching.

Understanding cultural factor placed fourth among the reading comprehension sub-skills. However, it should be noted that this skill had the

same average value as knowing different reading strategies. Much in the same manner as with regard to knowing different reading strategies, there seemed to be a division among the teachers about this skill's placing. Two teachers placed the skill in fourth place, two in fifth and one in sixth. In addition to the lower placings, it should be noted that one teacher placed this skill in third and one in first. Thus, although it seems that on average the teachers did not seem to consider this skill very high in value, some teachers considered it an important part of the reading process.

Genre and context recognition placed fifth among the reading comprehension sub-skills. 75 percent of the teachers (6 out of eight) placed this skill in the bottom three, but it should also be noted that one teacher placed this skill in second and one in third. Therefore it seems that although the majority of the teachers do not seem to value this skill very highly, some teachers also see recognizing the context and stylistic features as a useful skill with regard to reading comprehension.

The placing of the two aforementioned skills is, in my opinion, an indication that in the same way as with regard to listening comprehension, there are two different ways of viewing the reading process. In other words, some teachers seem to disregard the possible background factors affecting a text, whereas some see them as an integral part of the reading process and thus place more value on them in their teaching.

Understanding the meaning of the appearance of the text was clearly the least valued sub-skill among the teachers, as 63 percent (five out of eight) of them placed it in last place and of the remaining teachers, two placed it in fourth and one in third. In the open answers, one of the teachers indicated that students gain an understanding about the appearance of text through their native language teaching and thus this is not a skill that needs a lot of attention in English teaching.

(7) Ulkoasun ymmärtämisen taidon oppilaat yleensä saavat äidinkielen opetuksen kautta eikä se sen takia opetuksessa vieraassa kielessä ole kovin tärkeä. (Koska he jo hallitsevat sen)

Students usually gain a general understanding of the format of language through their native language reaching and teaching it is not that important in a foreign language. (Because they already have a command of it)

In my opinion, this is a fair assessment of this skill, because although there is obviously variation in things like capitalizations etc. between languages, for the most part these variations are so minimal and few and far between that they do not require much teaching nor do they usually have a critical effect on the understandability of a text.

In the open answers, one of the teachers indicated that she was having trouble placing the different skills in order. In her opinion, language teachers are not necessarily the best people to estimate the value of these skills and perhaps teachers of other subjects would be more suitable candidates for estimating this issue.

(8) Miksi tämäkin erottelu tuntuu niin kovin vastenmieliseltä?

Ehkä näitä asioita ei pitäisi kysyä englannin opettajalta, vaan vaikka muiden aineiden opettajilta, jotka osaavat analysoida kokonaisuuksia, mutta jotka paremmin kuin oman aineen opettajat pystyvät kertomaan, mistä taidoista olisi oikeasti enemmän hyötyä?

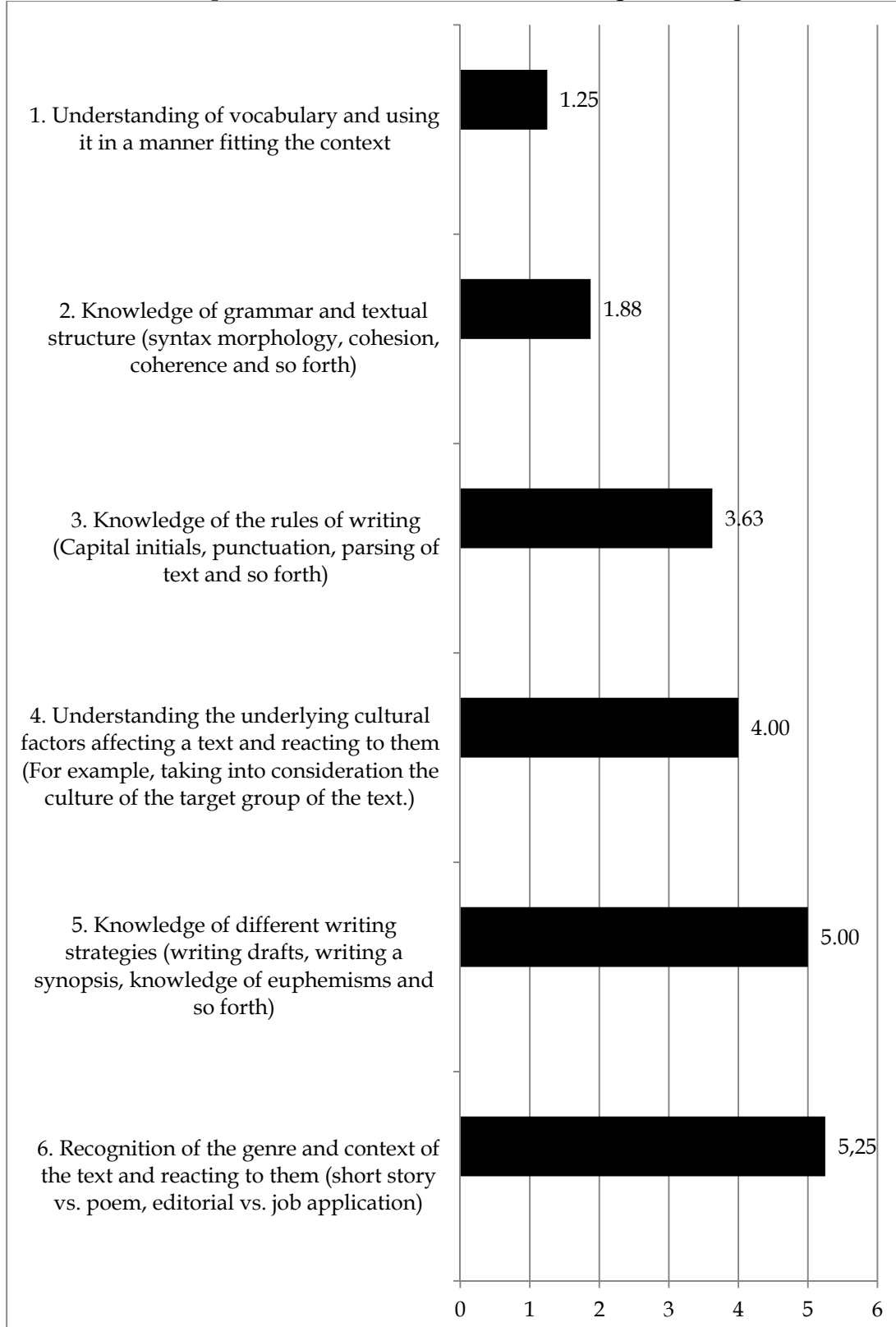
Why does this sorting also feel so awkward?

Maybe these things should not be asked from an English teacher, but rather from teachers of other subjects who can analyze wholes and can better relate than the actual teachers of that subject which skills are really most useful?

In my opinion, this is not a very valid opinion as language teachers are among the foremost professionals when it comes to language teaching and thus are very qualified for making the aforementioned assessments. However, the teacher also has a valid point in the sense that perhaps the emphasis placed on different language skills in different teaching models could be fine-tuned by taking into account, for example, the language students' opinions.

4.1.5 Teachers: Writing Skills Sub-Skills

Table 5. The most important writing skills sub-skills in terms of teaching arranged according to the order of importance for the teacher respondent group. Due to the scoring method used in the questionnaire, a lower value denotes a higher ranking.



Understanding vocabulary was clearly the most valued writing sub-skill among the teachers as 75 percent (six out of eight) of them placed it in first and the remaining two in second. Grammar knowledge was as clear a second as vocabulary knowledge was the most valued skill in this category. Two teachers placed this skill in first, five in second and one in third. The high placing of these two skills is in line with Hinkel (2006), who emphasizes the importance of these two skills in relation to the writing process. In my opinion, the high placing of both vocabulary and grammatical knowledge could be considered as an indication that the teachers view writing as a fairly mechanical process whose success is dependent on the lexical material and knowledge of rules the writers have at their disposal.

In the open answers, one of the teachers complained about the lack of time with regard to teaching and therefore was of the opinion that the aforementioned two sub-skills are the most effective way of mastering writing.

(9) En pysty näin analyttisesti opettamaan mitään annetuissa aikarajoissa, ja jos vaikka pystyisin opettamaan, kuulijakunta ei pysty vastaanottamaan, ainakaan niin että syväoppimista tapahtuisi. Parhaimmillaan voi kasvattaa tietoisuutta, ja siksi kohdat 1 ja 2 ovat nopein tapa ottaa asia haltuun.

I cannot teach very analytically within the given time limits and even if I could, the listeners are not capable of taking the subject in on such a level that any deep seated learning would take place. At best, one can only increase the students' general awareness and therefore points one and two are fastest way to take command of the subject.

General knowledge of the rules of writing placed a fairly clear third as five teachers placed it in third and two in fourth. However, it should be noted that one teacher placed this skill in sixth place. It interesting to notice that mastering the rules and the correct appearance of a text is more highly valued among the teachers with regards to writing than with reading comprehension where the similar skill placed last. In a sense, this is logical, since a text with faulty format does not necessarily prevent a language learner from understanding a text, whereas, especially in school environment, writing this kind of text would result in them being penalized.

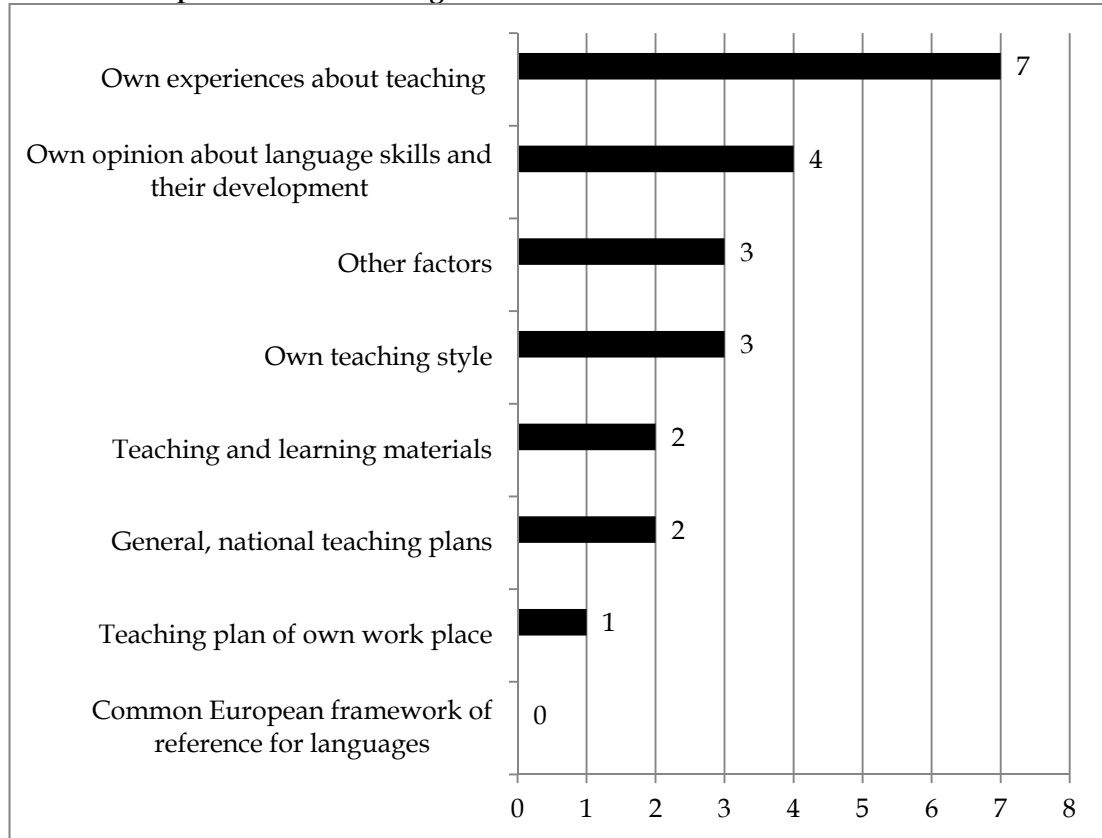
75 percent (six out of eight) of the teachers placed understanding the underlying cultural factors among the bottom three skills with the remaining two placing it in second and third. It is interesting to note that this skill placed higher among the teachers in relation to writing than with oral communication where it was placed second to last. This seems to be an indication that the teachers view cultural factors being more significant in terms of the writing process.

Knowledge of different writing strategies placed second to last among the writing sub-skills. 63 percent (five out of eight) of the teachers placed this skill in fifth place, two in sixth and one teacher in third. In my opinion, this is once again due to the fact that many of these strategies stretch across languages and thus do not require much emphasis specifically in English teaching.

Genre and context recognition and reacting to them was the least valued writing sub-skill among the teachers. Half of the teachers placed this skill in sixth place, two in fifth place and two in fourth place. The fact that this skill and teaching writing strategies were among the least valued skills is, in my opinion, an indication of the lack of time the teachers face in teaching as especially genre recognition is a skill that requires a lot time to master. It is also interesting to note that genre and context recognition placed lower than understanding cultural factors, because it seems logical that students would have to produce more texts with varying purposes rather than texts that have varying cultural recipient groups.

4.1.6 Background Factors Affecting the Teachers' Answers

Table 6. Background factors affecting the teachers' answers arranged according to the amount of responses for each background factor.



In addition to querying the teachers about their opinions about language skills, they were also asked to provide information about the background factors affecting their answers. The teachers' own experiences about teaching was clearly the most common background factor behind the teachers' answers as all of the teachers chose this factor. The second most popular background factor was the teachers' own opinions about the language skills and their development. In my opinion, the popularity of these two background factors is a clear indicator that the teachers base their values and opinions on what they view as being the most beneficial skills in terms of their everyday teaching. This can also be seen from the fact that the optional background factors the teachers chose all somehow dealt with the teacher's own lives like, for example, own life experiences and student experiences about language learning.

Only two teachers indicated teaching and learning materials as being an affecting background factor in their answers. In my opinions, this is understandable as classroom materials usually functions as a supporting tool rather than a dictating guideline for teaching.

What is more interesting is the fact that only two teachers chose national curricula and only one their own work place's curriculum as an affecting factor. In addition to this, none of the teachers indicated that the CEFR had an effect on their answers. This, in my opinion, can be seen as an indication that these official regulations do not seem to penetrate into everyday teaching situations. It is difficult to say whether or not this is truly problematic in terms of the language teaching process, but based on the teachers' answers it seems that the regulations are at least partly out of touch of the realities of language classrooms.

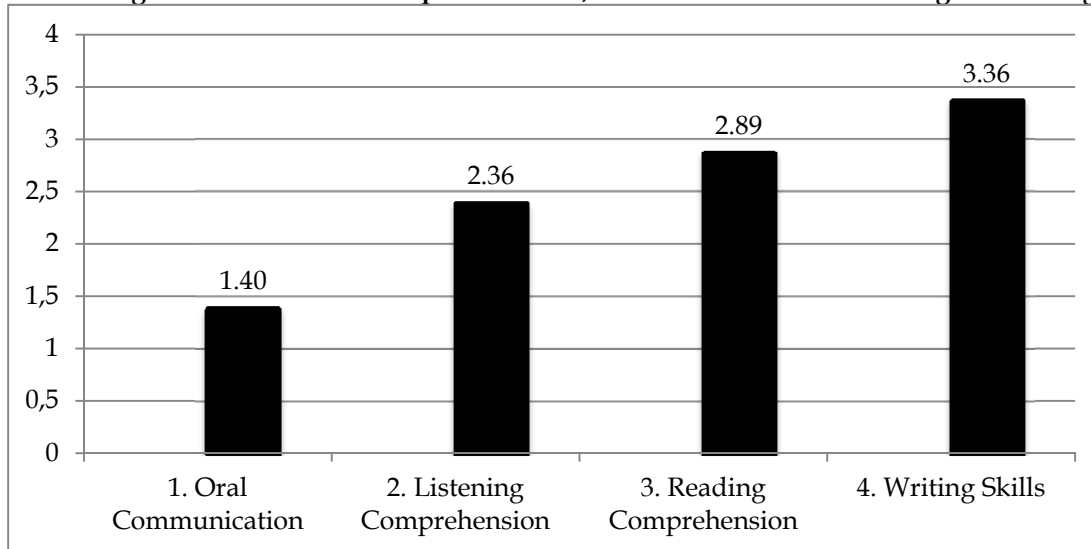
4.2 University Language Students

In the same manner as with the teacher respondent group, no deep cross-referencing analysis was performed in terms of the background factors of the university students. This was due to the fact that in preliminary categorization according to background factors, it was noticed that the background factors had, even somewhat surprisingly, little effect on the answers when compared against the respondents as a whole. However, this does not mean that the background factors did not provide useful data because, at least within the framework of this study, some conclusions can be made.

On average, it seems that gender or academic position (major vs. minor) does not seem to be an affecting factor in terms of how university students value different language skills. However, it should be noted that only three male respondents and three minor students took part in the study, so certainly no major generalizations can be made on the basis of these results. In addition to the aforementioned points, students who have completed their teacher studies seemed value language skills along the same lines as those who have not or are in the middle of these studies. This last conclusion is especially interesting because it shows that the opinions and values the university students have about different language skills seem to stay unchanged during their teacher training. In my opinion, this can be seen as an indication that the students have a fairly clear picture about the most beneficial skills for language learning and teaching even before they have tried teaching themselves.

4.2.1 Students: Four Main Areas of Language Knowledge

Table 7. The most important areas of language knowledge in terms of teaching arranged according to the order of importance for the university student respondent group. Due to the scoring method used in the questionnaire, a lower value denotes a higher ranking.



As with the teachers, the university students were asked to place the four main language knowledge areas into order by giving them a numerical value with a lower number denoting a higher value. Thus, a lower average value for an area meant that on average it was valued higher by the students.

Oral communication was clearly the most valued area of language skills among the students as 77 percent (35 out of 45) of them placed it in first place and 16 percent (7 out of 45) placed it in second. Only one student placed it in third place and three in fourth. According to the open answers, the students placed oral communication in first place due to the fact that they considered it as being the area of language knowledge that people use the most in their lives.

(10) Tämä on uskoakseni järjestys, jossa kielenkäyttötilanteita tulee vastaan tosielämässä. Eniten kieltä tarvitaan suullisessa vuorovaikutuksessa ja sen jälkeen eniten lukemisessa (nykyään paljon kirjallisuutta esim. englanniksi, englanti yleisenä akateemisena kielenä). Kaikki eivät joudu englanniksi elämässään kirjoittamaan välttämättä mitään.

I believe this is the order in which one encounters language use situations in real life. The majority of use for language occurs in oral communication, after that in reading (nowadays,

for example, a lot of English literacy and English as the common academic language). There are some people who do not necessarily have to write anything during their whole life.

(11) Suullinen vuorovaikutus on tärkein osa-alue, koska sitä tarvitaan todellisessa elämässä eniten ja puhumalla sekä ymmärtämällä puhetta selviää jo pitkälle esimerkiksi vieraassa maassa.

Oral communication is the most important area of language knowledge, because it has the most use in real life and by speaking and understanding speech one can go a long way, for example, in a foreign country.

Another reason given in several of the open answers on why oral communication was valued so highly was that, in the students' opinion, it is the main tool and enabler for communication between people.

(12) Mielestäni suullinen kielitaito tulisi olla nykyaikana pääpainona opetuksessa, koska suullinen vuorovaikutus on se kommunikaation tapa, jolla ihmiset pääosin ovat toistensa kanssa tekemisissä myös vieraalla kielellä. ...

In my opinion, oral communication skills should hold the most weight in today's teaching, because oral communication is the method of communication people mainly interact with each other in a foreign language. ...

Listening comprehension was considered as the second most important area of language knowledge. As well as placing second in terms of the average value, it was placed second by 62 percent (28 out of 45) of the students. Based on the open answers, one reason why the students value listening comprehension is that they see it as a part of the process of oral communication.

(13) Kieli on ensisijaisesti kommunikointiväline ja vaikka onkin tärkeää osata kommunikoida kirjallisesti, pidän tärkeämpänä suullista kommunikaatiota, johon toki sisältyy myös kuullun ymmärtäminen.

Language is first and foremost a tool for communication and although it is important to be able to communicate in writing, I think oral communication skills, which also include listening comprehension, are more important.

Five out of 45 students placed reading comprehension in first, four in second, and ten in fourth. A majority of the students, 55 percent, placed reading comprehension in third. It is interesting to note that a few students who placed reading comprehension in first place brought up the prevalence of texts in today's society.

(14) Mielestäni luetun ymmärtäminen on tärkein osa-alue, sillä Suomessakin eletään jo englanninkielisten kirjoitettujen tekstien ympäröimänä: niitä on mm. mainoksissa ja netissä. Lisäksi monet korkeakouluopiskelijat joutuvat opiskelemaan englanninkielisistä kurssikirjoista. ...

In my opinion, reading comprehension is the most important area of language skills since, even in Finland, people live surrounded by English written texts. In addition, many academic students have to study from English language course books. ...

(15) Englannin kanssa pärjää, vaikka ymmärtäisikin kuulemastaan vain vähän. Nykyään kaikkialla on englanninkielisiä tekstejä, joita ihmisten oletetaan ymmärtävän.

One can manage with English even if one only understand very little of what is being said. Nowadays there are English texts everywhere that people are expected to understand.

The previous examples highlight an interesting point about language use. In my opinion, especially with younger English learners, the main focus in language input is at least partially shifting from the auditive channel to the written channel due to the effect of things like the Internet and smart phones. Therefore, it will be interesting to see if reading comprehension gains more ground in relation to listening comprehension in the future.

Writing skills was the least valued area of language skills among the students. This can be seen from the fact that 55 percent (25 out of 45) placed it in fourth. Very few students specifically explained their decision to place writing skills as the least valued area of language knowledge. However, a trend that could be deducted from the open answers was that although many of the students consider writing an important area of language knowledge, they simply place more value on the other areas. One student seemed to consider writing skills an inferior part of language knowledge compared to oral communication skills with regard to the process of communication.

(16) Hieman vaikea näitä oli laittaa tärkeysjärjestykseen, koska mielestäni kaikki ovat osittain toisistaan riippuvaisia. Kirjoittamisen päädyin laittamaan viimeiseksi, koska kommunikaatio on mielestäni tärkeintä. Toisaalta ei voi kommunikoida, jos ei ymmärrä mitä vastapuoli sanoo.

These were slightly difficult to place in an order of importance, because, in my opinion, they are all partially dependent on each other. I ended up placing writing skills last, because communication is, in my opinion, the most important thing. On the other hand, one cannot communicate, if one does not understand what the other party is saying.

Another student indicated that, in her opinion, there are not many real life situations where a language user has to write texts despite this skill being useful in the school world.

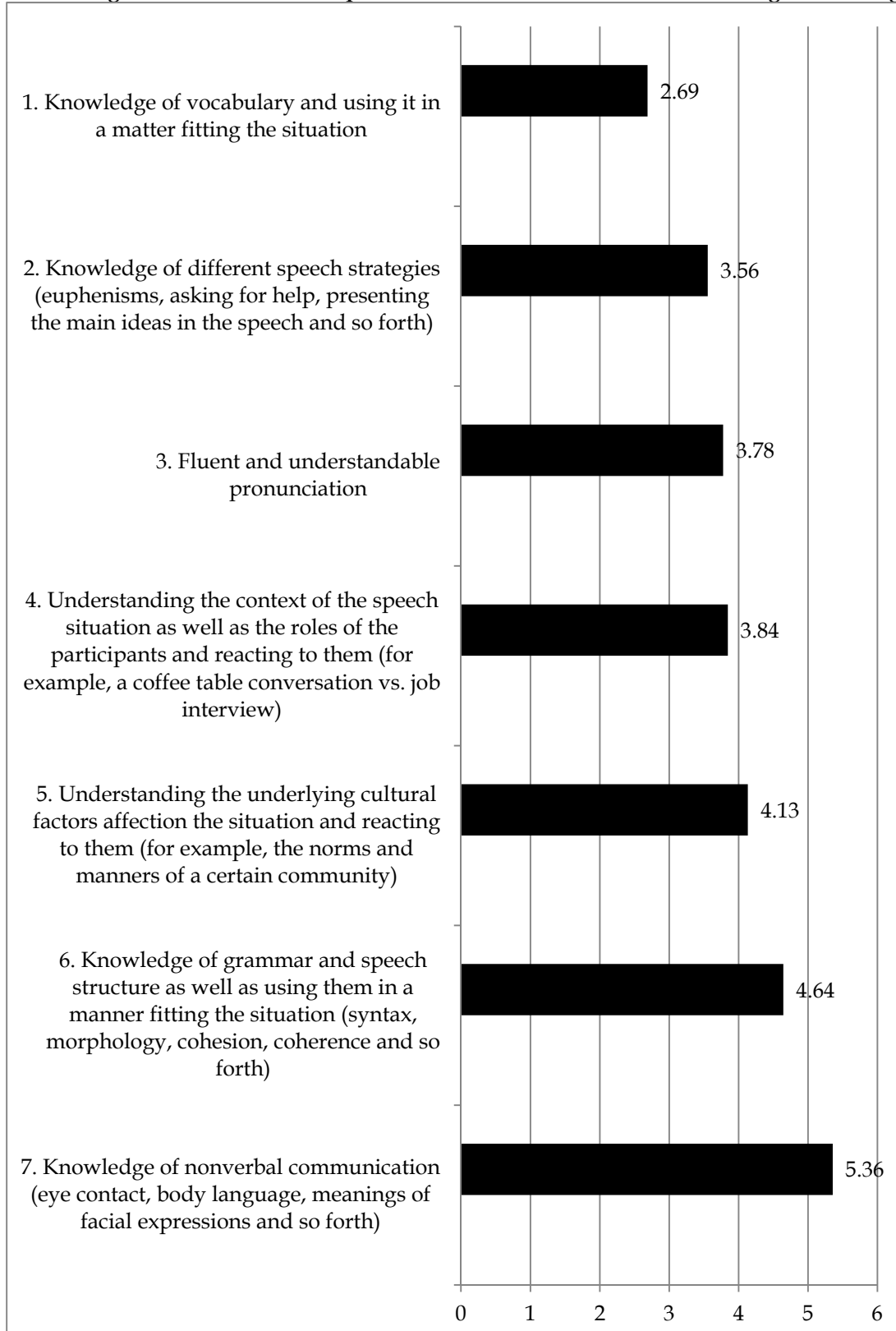
(17) Suullinen vuorovaikutus on tärkein taito vieraissa kielissä, kirjoittamista tarvitsee oikeassa elämässä harvemmin, koulumaailmassa toki paljonkin.

Oral communication is the most important skill in foreign languages. There is less need for writing skills in real, although a lot in the school world.

Example 17 shows that some of the university students do not yet consider written communication as having a major role in their own language use and teaching. This is interesting since examples 14 and 15 illustrate that some of the students hold texts in much higher regard. Thus, it seems that at least on some level there is a sort of divide among the students on what is the main channel of communication for Finnish English users.

4.2.2 Students: Oral Communication Sub-Skills

Table 8. The most important oral communication sub-skills in terms of teaching arranged according to the order of importance for the university student respondent group. Due to the scoring method used in the questionnaire, a lower value denotes a higher ranking.



The university students were also asked to place the sub-skills related to each main language knowledge areas into order. Vocabulary knowledge was the most valued sub-skill among the students in terms of average value. The high value this skill carries with the students can also be seen from the fact that 49 percent (22 out of 45) of them placed this skill in the first. Based on the open answers, many of the students seemed to consider vocabulary knowledge as the basic building block from which a language user can start building a more comprehensive oral communication proficiency. This supports Hinkel's (2006) statement that sufficient vocabulary knowledge is one of the prerequisites for successful communication.

(18) Tässä, kuten kaikissa muissakin osa-alueissa tietysti myös kulttuuriset tekijät ovat tärkeitä, mutta ensin pitää lähteä liikkeelle ns. perusasioista eli sanastosta ja ääntämisestä...

Here, as with all the other areas of language knowledge, cultural factors play an important role, but first one must start from the so called basics which are vocabulary and pronunciation...

(19) Kieltä ei ole ilman sanoja. Sanasto ja kielioppi ovat tärkeimmät osa-alueet kielen tuottamisen kannalta. ...

There's is no language without words. Vocabulary and grammar are the most important areas on language knowledge in terms language production. ...

It should be noted, however, that while vocabulary knowledge was the most valued skill among the students, this was hardly a uniform result as many students placed it among the least valued skills. The students who placed vocabulary knowledge among the least valued skills generally also placed different speaking strategies and cultural- and situational knowledge ahead of vocabulary knowledge. This seems to indicate that at least a part of the students see oral communication as more dependent on the understanding of the prevailing speech situation rather than on lexical and grammatical skills.

Knowledge of different speech strategies placed second in terms of average value. Although 24 percent (11 out of 45) students placed this skill in first place, it should be noted that 22 percent (10 out of 45) placed it in sixth place. Therefore, it seems that there is a division among the students on how

beneficial different speech strategies are in terms of oral communication. Much in the same way as with the teachers, some of the university students might consider many speech strategies as being applicable across different languages and therefore do not place much emphasis on them in English teaching. Based on the open answers, students who placed speech strategies high among the oral communication sub-skills see them as a valuable asset in being understood by other people.

(20) Puhestrategiat ovat tärkeitä ymmärretyksi tulemisen kannalta, mikä on kieliä opetettaessa mielestäni ensisijainen tavoite. ...

Speech strategies are important in terms of being understood, which, in my opinion, is the primary goal in language teaching. ...

Fluent and understandable pronunciation was the third most valued skill according to the average value. Although many of the students brought up the fact that pronunciation is a crucial part of being understood, they also emphasized that a native-like a pronunciation should not be the main goal, but instead general understandability.

(21) ... Ääntäminenkin on tärkeää siinä mielessä, että tulee ymmärretyksi, mutta oma luonnollinen aksentti ei usein häiritse viestin perillemenoa!

... Pronunciation is important in the sense, that one gets understood, but one's own natural accent rarely interferes with getting the message across!

(22) Aantamisen osalta tartuin tuohon "ymmärrettävään" aantamiseen. Loppujen lopuksi sillä ei ole niinkaan valia, lausuuko sanan X brittienglannilla, sanan Y texasilaisittain ja sanan G suomalaisella apinaenglannilla kunhan aantaminen on sen verran ymmärrettävää, että joku saa siitä selvää. ...

In terms of pronunciation, the term "understandable" pronunciation caught my eye. In the end it does not matter whether one uses a British accent with word X, a Texas accent with word Y and Finnish monkey English with word G as long as the pronunciation is understandable enough for people to make sense of it. ...

Understanding the context of the speech situation placed fourth among the oral communication sub-skills. Although 22 percent of the students placed this skill in second, the same amount also placed it in fourth. This seems to indicate that although the student value this fairly highly, a part of them do not necessarily see it as being one of the most crucial skills to teach.

Cultural understanding placed fifth among the oral communication sub-skills. The answers of the students seem to indicate that there is deviation between the respondents in terms of how they value this skill, as 22 percent of the students placed the skill in third and the same amount in sixth. A student who placed cultural understanding in third explained her choice by the importance of this skill with regard to behaving correctly in a speech situation.

(23) ... Kulttuurintuntemus on myös tärkeää, jotta ei vahingossa käyttäydy tilanteeseen sopimattomalla tavalla.

... Cultural knowledge is also important, so that does not accidentally act inappropriately in a certain situation.

The fact that some students gave high value to speech strategies, contextual skills and understanding cultural factors is, in my opinion, an indication that a part of the students conform to the communicative competence model of language knowledge where the aforementioned skills have a pronounced position, whereas another part of the students have a more traditional view, in which grammar and vocabulary knowledge have the most weight.

Grammatical knowledge placed sixth among the oral communication sub-skills. 53 percent of the students placed this skill among the three least valued sub-skills. What is perhaps the most interesting aspect about this sub-skill is that with relation to writing skills, 86 percent of the students placed this skill in the top three sub-skills. Therefore, it seems that the students do not place such a high value on grammar with regards to speech as they do with writing. The fact that the students placed such high value on vocabulary knowledge is also interesting since it seems to indicate that although, on average, the students value having a good command of vocabulary, they are not so concerned whether or not the vocabulary is put to use according to the grammatical rules.

Knowledge of non-verbal communication came in at last place. While many of the students indicated in the open answers that non-verbal communication is an important part of communication situations, almost all of them also pointed out that there is no need to spend a significant amount of time teaching it as it is a skill that language users have already adopted from their native language.

(24) ... Uskon kuitenkin, että nonverbaalinen viestintä tulee hyvin pitkälti luonnostaan, eikä sitä välttämättä tarvitse erikseen opettaa, ellei oman ja opetettavan kulttuurin välillä ole radikaaleja eroja.

... However, I do believe that nonverbal communication mostly comes naturally and it does not need to be specifically taught unless there are radical difference between one's culture and the one being taught.

(25) ... Esimerkiksi nonverbaalinen viestintä on todella tärkeä osa-alue, mutta sitä on ehkä melko hankalaa käytännössä opettaa onnistuneesti, sitäpaitsi jokainen meistä hallitsee sitä luonnostaan enemmän tai vähemmän, eikä välttämättä ole koulun tehtävä opettaa sitä. ...

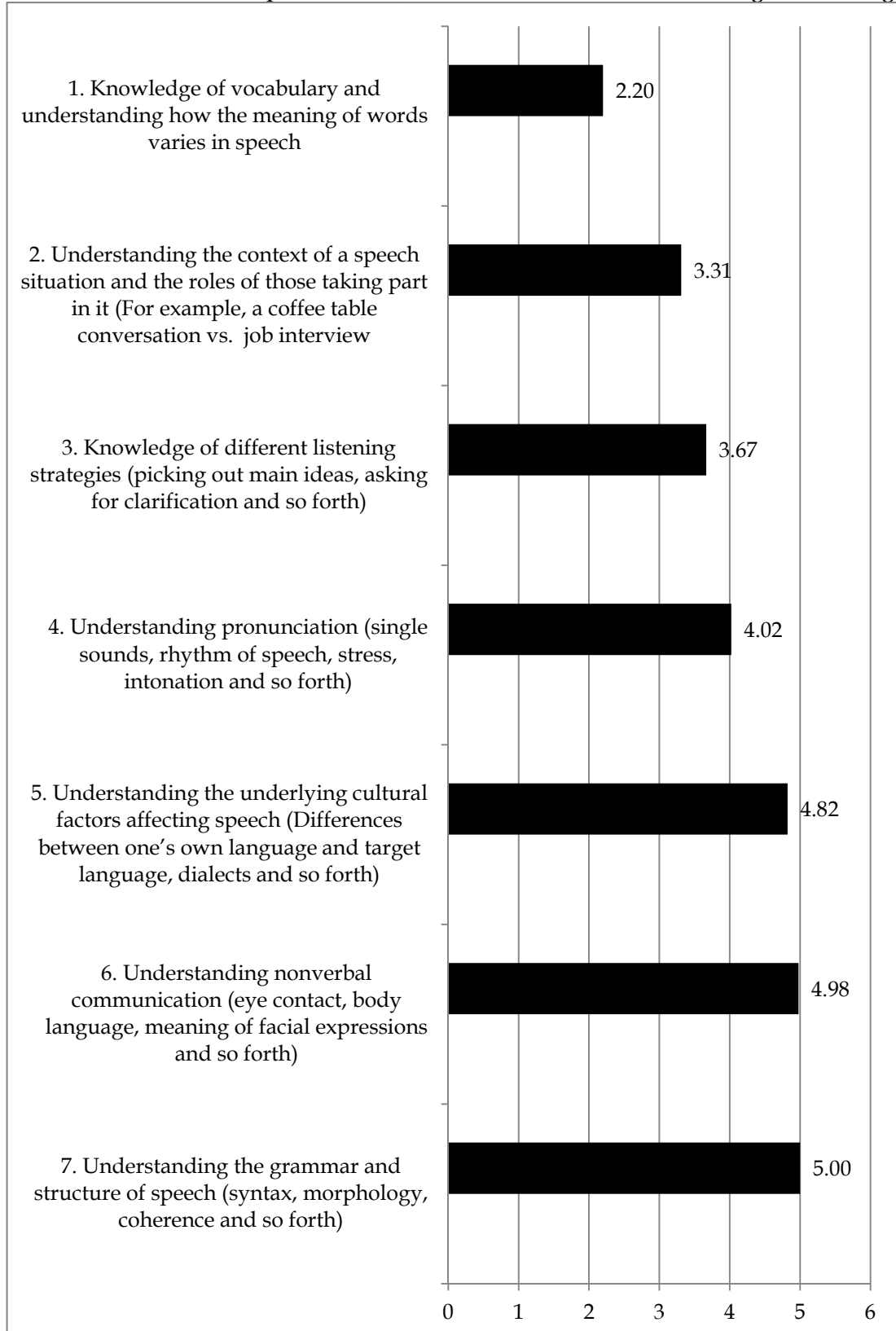
... For example, nonverbal communication is a very important area, but in practice it is fairly difficult to teach in a successful manner. And besides, each and every one of us has at least some level of proficiency in it and it is not necessarily the school's task to teach it. ...

(26) ... Tässä jätin nonverbaalisen viestinnän viimeiseksi, vaikka se suullisessa vuorovaikutuksessa onkin ehkä se ensimmäiseksi opittava osa, koska en usko, että sitä tarvitsee suomalaisille englannin oppijoille juurikaan erikseen opettaa(, koska hallitsevat jo luonnostaan länsimaalaisen elekielen).

Here, I placed nonverbal communication last, although in oral communication it is the component that is learned first, because I do not think that it needs to be specifically taught to Finnish English students (because they already naturally master the western body language).

4.2.3 Students: Listening Comprehension Sub-Skills

Table 9. The most important Listening sub-skills in terms of teaching arranged according to the order of importance for the university student respondent group. Due to the scoring method used in the questionnaire, a lower value denotes a higher ranking.



Vocabulary knowledge was rated highest among the listening comprehension sub-skills. In addition to being the most valued sub-skill according to the average value, 51 percent (23 out of 45) of the students also placed it in first. Five students placed this skill in second, nine in third, three in fourth, three in fifth and two in sixth place with none of the them placing the skill seventh. In the open answers, many students expressed the opinion that they view vocabulary as the basic building block of understanding language on which the other skills are based on.

(27) Jotta kuuntelija siis voisi ymmärtää syvempiä merkityksiä, konteksteja, kulttuuritekijöitä jne., on hänen ensin luonnollisesti ymmärrettävä kuulemansa pelkästään rakenteiden ja sanaston tasolla. Jos nämä perusasiat onnistuvat, voidaan taas jatkaa syvemmälle ja alkaa kiinnittää huomiota muihin osa-alueisiin. Ensin täytyy kuitenkin olla edes jotain perustietoa kuulemansa kielen sanastoista ja rakenteista.

In order for a listener to understand deeper meanings, contexts, cultural factors etc., he or she must first naturally understand what they are hearing on the level of structures and vocabulary only. If these basic things are under control, one can continue deeper and pay attention to other aspects. First one must have at least some basic information on the vocabulary and structures of a language.

Understanding the context of the speech situation placed second among the listening comprehension sub-skills. Although only six students placed this skill in first place, 55 percent of them placed it among the top three skills. Based on the open answers, students valued this skill because they see it as key element in the overall understanding of the speech situation.

(28) ... Mielestäni puhetilanteita seurattaessa tai niihin osallistuttaessa kontekstin ja tilanteen etenemisen ymmärtäminen on ensiarvoisen tärkeää, siksi valitsin kohdan 4. ensimmäiseksi. ...

... In my opinion, in following or partaking in speech situations, understanding the progression of the situation is crucial and therefore I placed point number four in first place. ...

It is interesting to notice that in relation to oral communication, this skill placed only in fourth place. Therefore it seems that students view understanding contextual factors as being more important for the listening process than for speaking.

Knowledge of different listening strategies placed third among the listening comprehension sub-skills. Although the students placed this skill fairly evenly among places two through seven, it is worth noting that 22 percent placed this skill in first. It is also worth noting that different strategic skills consistently placed lower with regards to the other main language skill knowledge areas than with regards to listening comprehension. The high value many students placed on this skill is in line with Hinkel's (2006) statement about the importance of difference listening techniques as being a crucial part of the listening process.

Understanding pronunciation placed fourth among the listening comprehension sub-skills. No place in the ranking had less than five votes or more than nine. This seems to indicate that on average there is no clear consensus among the students as to how beneficial understanding pronunciation is in the listening process.

Cultural understanding placed fifth among the listening comprehension sub-skills. As only 24 percent of the students placed this sub-skill among the top three skills, it seems that on average the students do not place a very high value on this skill in terms of listening comprehension. One student expressed his opinion that cultural skills should be given more weight in English teaching due to the fact that Finnish people have a fairly good command of other skills.

(29) Suomalaisilla yleensä on tosi hyvä englannin passiivinen kielitaito, tilannetajua ja kulttuurikohtaisia juttuja pitäisi korostaa enemmänkin!

Finnish people usually have really good passive English language skills. More emphasis should be placed on situational awareness and culturally related issues!

Whether or not the previous statement is true, it would be interesting to see if teachers' who teach high level English students, for example in the latter stages of high school, bring these cultural and situational skills more to the foreground in their teaching.

Understanding nonverbal communication placed second to last among the listening sub-skills. In my opinion this could be an indication of two separate things. The placing of this skill can be evidence that the students do not connect listening comprehension to normal conversations with other people but rather see it as a process only involving the auditory channel. This was also brought out in one of the open answers.

(30) On tärkeää muistaa, että kielistudioissa tehtävät kuunteluharjoitukset vastaavat ainoastaan esimerkiksi puhelimen tai radion kautta käytäviä keskustelutilanteita, mutta yleensä vuorovaikutuksessa tulisi käyttää hyödykseen nimenomaan nonverbaalista viestintää. Sanoja voi kiertää ja selittää käyttämällä kehoa apuna ja ilmeet kertovat enemmän kuin tuhat sanaa ja siksi olen listannut nonverbaalisen viestinnän listan huipulle!

It is important to remember that listening exercises done in language studios correlate only with conversation situations done via phone or radio, but generally communication should make use of nonverbal communication. One can work around different words and explain with the help of the body and expressions tell more than a thousand words. Therefore, I have placed nonverbal communication at the top of the list!

Another reason for the low placing of this skill could, in my opinion, be that the students view nonverbal communication as being so inherent to all languages that they do not see too much extra value in it with regards to English teaching.

(31) ... Nonverbaalinen viestintä on asia, jota jokainen oppii varmasti muuallakin kuin englannintunneilla.

... Nonverbal communication is a thing that everyone surely learns elsewhere than just during English lessons.

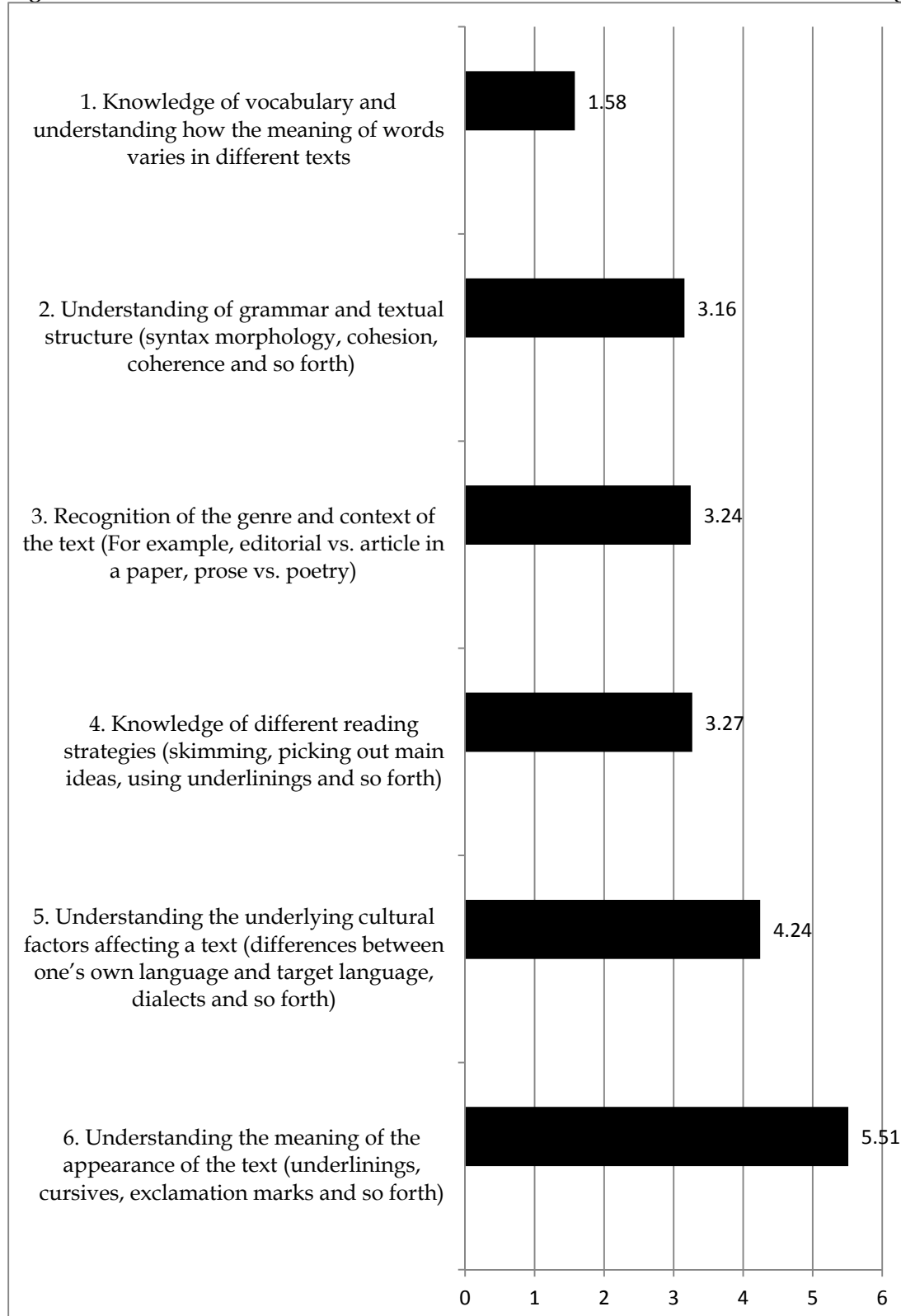
Grammatical understanding came in last place among the listening comprehension sub-skills. This is interesting in the sense that this skill placed consistently higher with regards to writing, oral communication and reading comprehension. Therefore, it seems that the students consider vocabulary knowledge in itself as being enough to understand spoken language without the need for deep grammatical understanding. This was also stated in one of the open answers.

(32) Mielestäni kuullunymmärtämisessä on tärkeintä ymmärtää puheen pääajatus eli se mitä puhuja haluaa kuuntelijalle viestittää. Tärkeä taito on myös osata kysyä selvennystä, jos ei ymmärrä. Sen sijaan puheen kieliopin ymmärtäminen ei mielestäni ole kovinkaan oleellista jos vain ymmärtää viestin.

In my opinion, the most important thing in listening comprehension is to understand the main idea of the speech. In other words, what the speaker wants to convey to the listener. The ability to ask for clarification is also an important skill, if one does not understand what is being said. Understanding grammar, on the other hand, is not very essential if one understands the message.

4.2.4 Students: Reading Comprehension Sub-skills

Table 10. The most important reading comprehension sub-skills in terms of teaching arranged according to the order of importance for the university student respondent group. Due to the scoring method used in the questionnaire, a lower value denotes a higher ranking.



Vocabulary knowledge was clearly the most valued reading comprehension sub-skill among the students according to the average value. In addition to this, the high value students place on this skill can be seen from the fact that 62 percent (28 out of 45) of the students placed it in first. In the open answers, many of the students who placed this skill high on the list, emphasized that vocabulary knowledge is the basis for reading comprehension and is crucial to the process.

(33) Mielestäni luetun ymmärtäminen lähtee sanaston tuntemisesta.

In my opinion reading comprehension starts from knowing the vocabulary.

(34) On vaikea ymmärtää, mitä lukee, jos ei tunne sanastoa. ...

It is difficult to understand what one is reading if one does not know the vocabulary. ...

The previous examples and the skill's high placing is line with Hinkel's (2006) assessment that vocabulary and letter recognition are the starting points for reading comprehension.

Grammatical understanding placed second among the reading comprehension sub-skills. Although 62 percent (28 out of 45) of the students placed this skill in the top three, 22 percent (10 out of 45) placed it in fourth. Thus, it seems that although a majority of the students deemed this skill valuable for reading comprehension, a part of the them do not necessarily view it as one of the more important reading comprehension sub-skills. One student wrote in the open answers that although grammar is, in his opinion, important, command of it should come as a side product from teaching other skills.

(35) Vastaukseni saattavat vaikuttaa siltä, etten pidä kielioppia kovinkaan arvossa. Se ei pidä paikkaansa, mutten myöskään halua sen olevan kaiken keskipiste. Olisi parasta oppia kieliopilliset seikat tavallaan sivutuotteena muun oppimisen ohessa, kuitenkin unohtamatta kieliopillisten kiemuroiden selittämistä oppilaille. ...

My answers may seem like I do not hold grammar in great value. That is not true, but I do not want it to be the central point of everything. The best way would be to learn grammatical points as sort of a side product for all the other learning, without forgetting to explain the grammatical kinks to the students. ...

Genre and context recognition skills placed third among the reading comprehension sub-skills. Although this skill placed in the top three on the basis of the average value, 43 percent of the students placed it outside the top three sub-skills. Therefore, it seems that with regards to this skill, the students are divided on how highly they value it. Out of the students who placed this skills among the reading comprehension sub-skills, one pointed out that genre and context recognition are useful skills because they can help fill gaps in understanding.

(36) Konteksti on jälleen mielestäni tärkeä, koska se tarjoaa niin paljon mahdollisuuksia arvaamiseen. ...

In my opinion, context is once again an important point, because it offers so many possibilities for guessing. ...

Knowledge of different reading strategies placed fourth among the reading comprehension sub-skills. What is interesting about this skill's placing is that 24 percent (11 out of 45) of the students placed this skill in first and another 24 percent in fifth. Thus, there seems to be a clear division among the students between those who value this skill very highly and those who do not. One student who placed this skill high on the list based her answers on the fact that reading strategies are helpful when there is limited time to deal with a text. Another student pointed out that different reading strategies are important when a reader has to deal what many different types of texts.

(37) Aina ei ole aikaa lukea koko tekstiä syvällisesti, joten erilaiset lukemisstrategiat tulevat varmasti tarpeen. ...

There is not always time to read the text comprehensively, so different reading strategies are surely necessary. ...

(38) ... Lukemisstrategiat ovat erityisen tärkeitä, jos lukee monenlaisia tekstejä ja niitä pitäisi opettaa koulussa esimerkiksi erilaisilla lukuharjoituksilla. Vapaaehtoista lukemista pitäisi lisätä.

... Reading strategies are especially important, if one reads different kinds of texts and they should be taught in schools with different reading exercises. The amount of voluntary reading should be increased.

Cultural understanding placed second to last among the reading comprehension sub-skills. 75 percent of the students placed it among the bottom three sub-skills. What is interesting is that when compared to the other main language skills areas, cultural comprehension placed relatively low among the area's other sub-skills. This may be an indication that the students do not see cultural skill being crucial in reading comprehension.

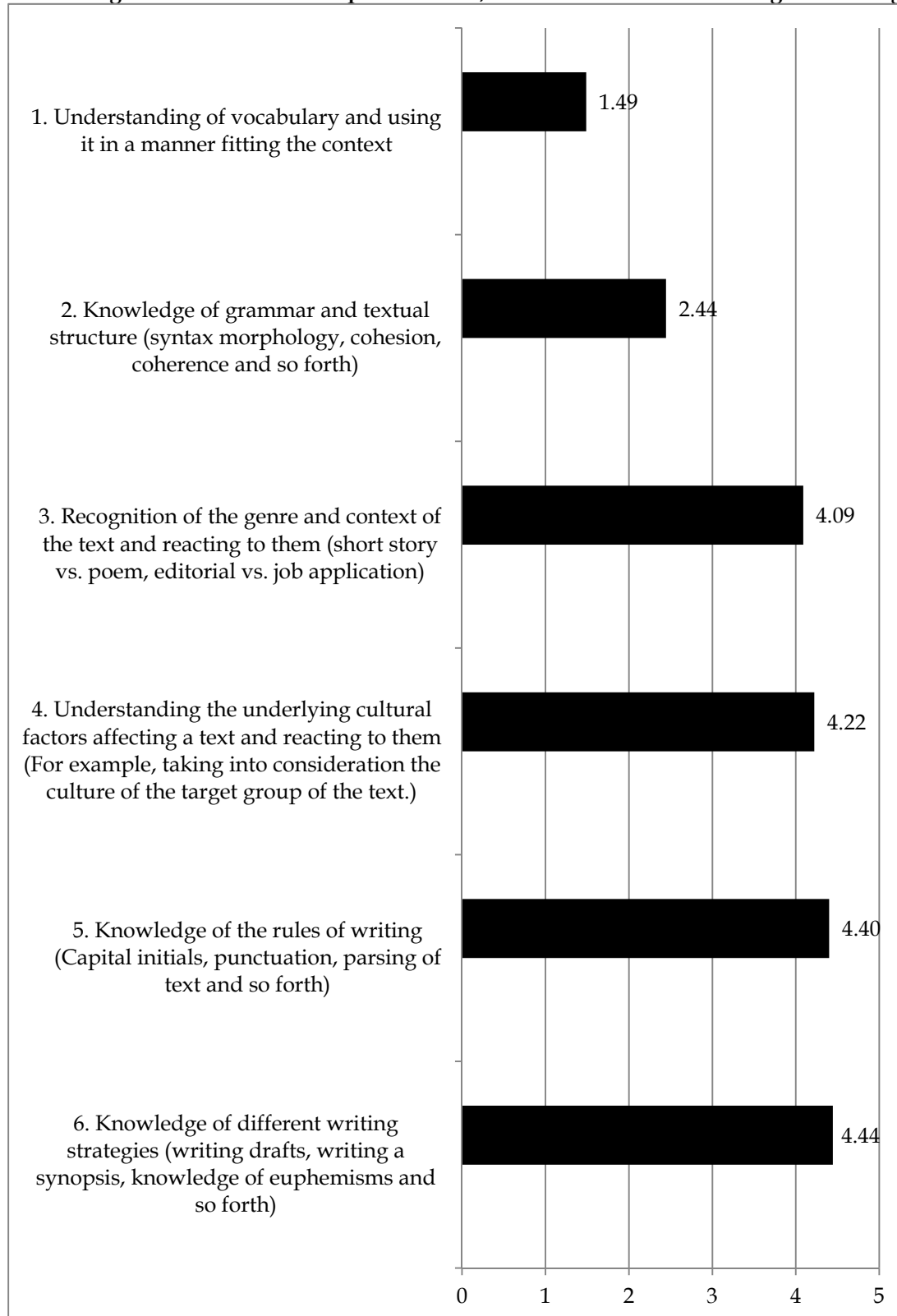
75 percent of the students placed understanding the meaning of the appearance of the text in last place among the reading comprehension sub-skills making it clearly the least valued sub-skill. In my opinion, this can largely be explained by the fact that things like underlinings and exclamation marks carry roughly the same meaning in all languages, and therefore there is no need to focus on them specifically in English teaching. One of the students also pointed this out in her open answer.

(39) Laitoin kohdan 5 viimeiseksi, koska vastaavat taidot mitä luultavimmin (tai toivottavasti) opitaan äidinkielen tunneilla, eikä niihin pitäisi tarvita enää erityisesti kiinnittää huomiota englanninopetuksessa.

I placed point number five last, because the equivalent skills are most probably (or hopefully) learned in native language classes and there should be no need to give them special attention in English teaching.

4.2.5 Students: Writing Skills Sub-Skills

Table 11. The most important writing skills sub-skills in terms of teaching arranged according to the order of importance for the university student respondent group. Due to the scoring method used in the questionnaire, a lower value denotes a higher ranking.



Understanding and using vocabulary in a correct way was clearly the most valued writing sub-skill among the students based on the average value. In addition, 69 (31 out of 45) percent placed this skill in first place and 20 (9 out of 45) percent in second place. Three students placed this skill in third, one in fourth and one fifth with no one placing it in sixth. Many of the open answers described vocabulary knowledge as the basic building block in the writing process.

(40) Ilman sanaston tuntemusta on vaikea kirjoittaa mitään. ...

Without vocabulary knowledge it is difficult to write anything. ...

(41) ... Sanasto ja kielioppi ovat kirjoittamisen kulmakivet, mutta esimerkiksi tarkoilla pilkkusäännöillä ei ole niin väliä jos muuten tulee ymmärretyksi. ...

... Vocabulary and grammar are the cornerstones for writing but, for example, exact punctuation rules do not matter so much if one gets the message across. ...

Grammatical knowledge placed second among the students. 86 percent of the students placed this skill among the top three writing sub-skills. Two students placed this skill on fourth place, three in fifth, and one in sixth. In the open answers, many of the students link this skill with vocabulary knowledge and consider the two as the basis for the writing process.

(42) Kaksi ensimmäistä kohtaa oli helpointa valita, koska ei voi kirjoittaa ilman sanoja tai sääntöjä niiden sijainnista lauseissa. Loput olikin vaikeampi järjestää. ...

The first two skills were the easiest to pick, because one cannot write without words or rules about their positioning in sentences. The rest, however, were more difficult to place in order. ...

(43) Englanninopettajan työ on mielestäni enimmäkseen kieliopin ja sanaston opettamista, välillä jopa sääntöjen "takomista" oppilaiden päähän. Muut listalla olevat asiat ovat tärkeitä kirjoittamisen kannalta mutta ikävä kyllä englanninopettajalla ei ole aina aikaa keskittyä muihin asioihin kovinkaan syvästi. ...

The profession of an English teacher is, in my opinion, teaching grammar and vocabulary, sometimes even "hammering" the rules into the students' heads. The other things on the list are important for writing, but unfortunately an English teacher does not have time to focus on the other things very profoundly. ...

It is interesting to notice that in terms of writing skills, vocabulary and grammar seem to be much more tightly connected with each other than in

relation to the other main language knowledge areas. Although the students placed high value on vocabulary with relation to all the language knowledge areas, the value placed on grammatical knowledge was less pronounced with the other areas. One student pointed out that due to the different nature of writing and speaking, vocabulary and grammatical knowledge have a more important role with regards to the writing process.

(44) Sanasto- ja kielioppivirheet haittaavat tekstin ymmärtämistä eniten eikä lukija voi pyytää kirjoittajalta selvennystä näihin toisin kuin puhetilanteessa.

Vocabulary and grammar errors interfere with understanding a text and the reader cannot ask for clarification from the writer unlike in speech situations.

44 percent of the students placed genre and context recognition in fourth with the rest of them placing it fairly evenly among second, third, fifth and sixth place. None of the students chose this skill as their most valued skill. Although some students wrote in the open answers that they view genre and context recognition as an important skill, they also pointed out that it is difficult to master without first gaining mastery in some of the more basic skills, like vocabulary and grammatical knowledge.

Cultural understanding placed fourth among the writing sub-skills. The most interesting aspect of this skill's placing is that 28 (13 out of 45) percent of the students placed this skill in third and the same amount in sixth. Thus, it seems that also with this skill, there is a divide among the students about how important cultural understanding is for the writing process. One student pointed out, much in the same way as with context and genre recognition, that cultural skills are something that is possible to master only in the later stages of language studies.

(45) Kulttuuristen tekijöiden ymmärtäminen todella on mahdollista vasta myöhemmässä opiskelun vaiheessa, joka perustuu muiden taitojen oppimiselle. ...

Understanding cultural factors is truly possible only in a later stage of one's studies, because it is based on learning the other skills. ...

Knowledge of the rules of writing placed fifth among the writing sub-skills. 69 percent of the students placed this skill among the three least valued skills. However, it should be noted that although this skill was not very highly valued on average, 22 percent of the students placed this skill in third place and some even in first place. Thus, it seems that at least a part of the students place value on knowing the correct formal appearance of a text. This was evident from the open answers, where some students stressed the importance of knowing the correct writing rules. On the other hand, one student (example 46) expressed that this skill can be viewed as “fine tuning”.

(45) Laitoin tärkeimmäksi kirjoitussääntöjen hallinnan, koska mielestäni hyväkin teksti menee pilalle, jos tuollaiset perusasiat eivät ole hallinnassa. Jos perusasiat taas ovat kunnossa, heikompikin teksti vaikuttaa paremmalta.

I placed mastery of writing first because, in my opinion, even a good text is ruined if these kinds of basic are not in order. However, if the basics are in order, even a weaker text seems better.

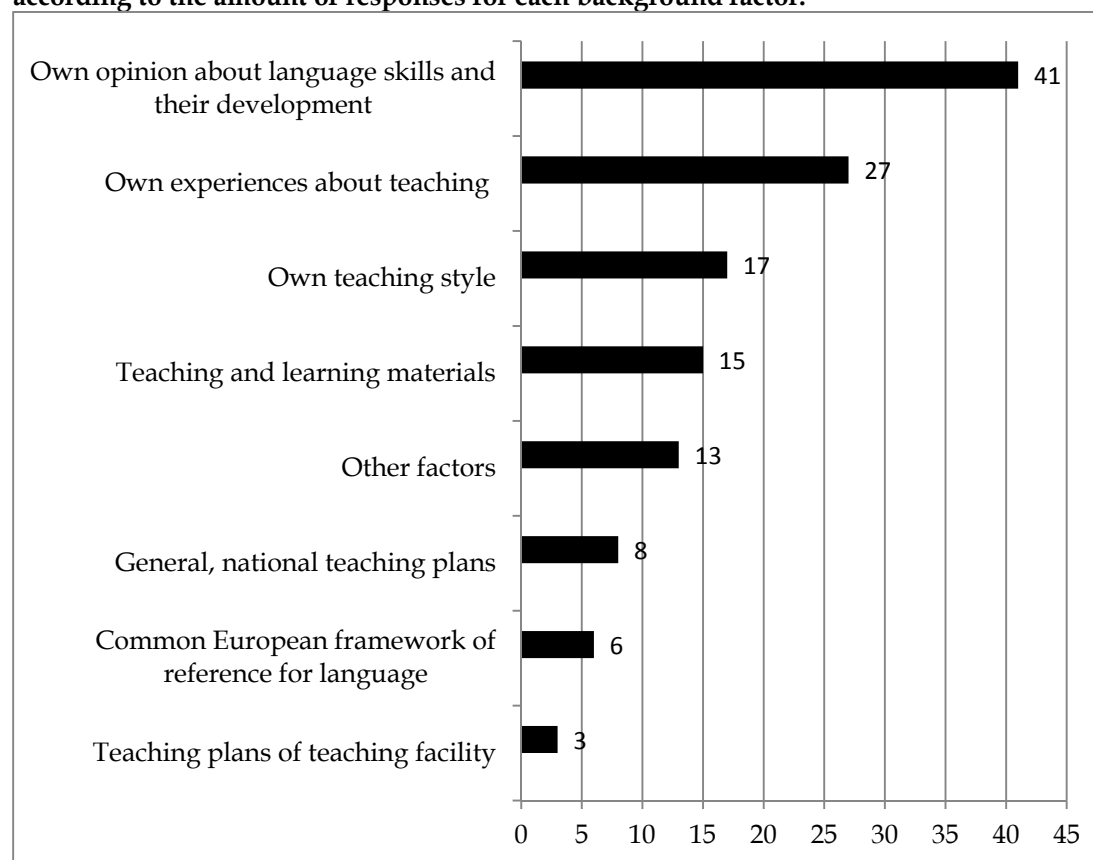
(46) ... lopuksi kirjoitussääntöjen hallinta sekä kulttuuristen tekijöiden ymmärtäminen. Nämä kaksi viimeistä tuntuvat lähinnä hienosäädöitä, jotka on melko helppoa laittaa kohdalleen, kunhan tekstin tekemisen perusasiat ovat hallussa. Toki niitäkin tulee mielestäni pitää opetuksessa esillä vähän väliä (etteivät unohtuisi), mutta eivät ole mielestäni pääasia.

(46) ... and finally having a command of the rules of writing and understanding cultural factors. The last two seem mostly like fine tuning, which are fairly easy to put into place once the basics for making a text are under control. Of course they should also be introduced in teaching now and then (so they are not forgotten) but, in my opinion, they are not the main focus.

Different writing strategies placed last among the writing sub-skills. The fact that this skill is the least valued sub-skill among the students can be seen from the fact that 64 percent of the students placed this skill in either fifth or sixth. In my opinion, the low value placed on this skill can be partly explained by the fact that many writing strategies have cross-lingual applications. Thus, because they can be taught to the pupils in many different language subjects, there is no need to place high emphasis on them in English teaching.

4.2.6 Background Factors Affecting the Students' Answers

Table 12. Background factors affecting the university students' answers arranged according to the amount of responses for each background factor.



As table 12 illustrates, the students' own opinions about language learning, experiences about language teaching and own teaching style are the most dominant background factors among the students. Thus, it is evident that the students' personal beliefs and opinions are the factors that contribute most to how the students value different language skills. This is also evident from the optional background factors that were not on the list. The influence of personal experience was highlighted among these as well as 7 out of 13 answers were somehow connected to the students' own opinions or experiences about language learning or teaching. Three of the students' optional background factors were related to their studies. In other words, they listed things like current courses and presented language theories as something that had an impact on their answers. Perhaps the most interesting about the optional

background factors was that three students listed their own discontent with language teaching as an affecting factor in their answers. In other words, they view English teaching in Finland as being somehow faulty in its content. Two of the answers expressed complaint that there is not enough practical focus in English teaching and that it is mostly geared towards doing well in different test and exams.

Teaching materials was the fourth most popular background factor, with roughly one third of the students listing them as having an effect on their answers. The national teaching plans and the CEFR were the third and second least influential background factors. This is interesting in the sense that although 33 students were in the middle of their pedagogical studies where both of these things are highlighted, only 8 students chose national teaching plans and 6 the CEFR as a background factor. Teaching facility specific curricula were the least influential background factor among the students as only three chose it. It should be noted, however, that only 7 students had completed their pedagogical studies at the time they took the questionnaire. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that most of the students have not had a great deal of experience on the curricula of singular schools. This could be a reason why so few of them listed it as a background factor.

4.3 Comparison between Language Teachers and University Students

Although the two respondent groups were not analyzed in terms of their background, a cross reference analysis was performed between them to gain information on how much the language teachers' answers vary from those of the university students'. In this section I will briefly summarize the differences and similarities found between the two respondent groups. In terms of the four major areas of language knowledge, both respondent groups placed them in the same order with largely the same average values for each area. This result is in line with previous studies, as in the study

conducted by Luukka et al. (2008), speaking skills were among the most valued skills among the respondents.

In terms of oral communication skills, the answers also followed along the same lines for both respondent groups, with slight deviations between them. On average, the teachers valued pronunciation skills the most, whereas the students held vocabulary skills in the highest regard. However, the top three skills for each respondent group were the same. In the study by Luukka et al. (2008), pronunciation skills were among the least valued skills among the respondents. In that sense, the results from the teacher respondent group go against those results. However, it should be noted that in his overview, Hinkel (2006) lists fluency and accuracy as demands for successful communication, which is in line with the teacher opinions from this study. Both groups valued contextual skills as belonging in the middle in the skill rankings and neither group held grammar and cultural skills in very high regard. The teachers placed more value on grammar skills and less on cultural skills, whereas the situation was the opposite with the students. Both respondent groups placed non-verbal communication as their least valued skill in terms of oral communication.

With listening comprehension, both groups placed vocabulary knowledge as their most valued skill. Among the teachers' group, this skill's top placing was more pronounced than among the university students. Understanding the context of the speech situation was the second most valued listening comprehension sub-skill for both groups. The major difference between the groups comes from the value placed on knowing different speech strategies. Among the students, this was the third most valued skill, whereas with the teachers it placed in sixth place. The students' result conforms to Hinkel's (2006) notion that different listening techniques are essential for the listening process. The teachers also placed more value on grammar skills as this skill

was placed fourth among them, whereas with the student group, grammar knowledge placed last.

With regards to reading comprehension, vocabulary knowledge was clearly the most valued sub-skill among both groups, with grammar skills placing almost as clearly in second place with both groups. This is in line with the study by Luukka et al. (2008), where vocabulary and grammatical knowledge were among the most valued skills. The teachers placed less value on genre and context recognition skills as they placed them in fifth, whereas among the students, this skill placed in third. The teachers placed more value on reading strategies and less on cultural skills, whereas the situation was the opposite among the student. In terms of the least valued reading comprehension sub-skill, both groups placed understanding the appearance of a text in last place.

Vocabulary skills was clearly the most valued writing sub-skills among both respondent groups with grammatical knowledge placing in second, also with both groups. As with regards to reading comprehension, this result also conforms to the results from the study by Luukka et al (2008). Teachers held knowing the general rules of writing in high regard, whereas the university students placed more value on genre and context recognition skills. In fact, genre and context recognition skills placed in last place among the teachers. Different reading strategies did not gain a high value with either group as this skill placed second to last among the teachers and last among the students.

In terms of background factors, personal experiences about language learning and teaching were clearly the most popular factors. Teaching and learning materials were not a very popular background factor with either group, although slightly more so among the students. From the results, it was obvious that neither group considered official decrees or documents

like, for example the CEFR, as meaningful background factors affecting their answers. However, these held a slightly more influential position among the students.

In terms of the overall picture, the teachers' and students' answers followed along mostly similar lines. The teachers perhaps placed slightly more value on more "traditional" skills like grammar and vocabulary knowledge whereas contextual, strategic and cultural skills were more pronounced among the university students. In my opinion, this difference could be attributed to the fact that the teachers have more actual teaching experience and the realities of classrooms drive the teachers towards these traditional language skills. However, it is worth noting that while on average the university students placed more value on skills that promote the communicative competence model of language knowledge, a large part of them also emphasize the importance of skills like grammar and vocabulary knowledge as the basic building blocks of a person's language knowledge.

The results from both respondents largely conform to the study conducted by Luukka et al. (2008). However, the results also differ from those results in the sense that especially the student respondents seemed to value different strategic skills more than the respondents in that study. The value placed on cultural skills was also higher in this study than in the study by Luukka et al. The literature overview by Hinkel (2006) also highlights the same skills as the ones that were the most valued in this study, most prominently grammar and vocabulary knowledge. Many of the respondents also brought up the same idea as Hinkel (2006), which is that a language learner has to have command of the basic skills, such as the aforementioned grammatical and lexical knowledge, before they can master more complex skills like cultural knowledge.

5 Conclusion

Based on the results from this study, it can be said that while both of the respondent groups held communicative skills in fairly high regard, even more value was placed on knowing grammar and vocabulary. The teachers especially expressed that this is due to the fact that they do not have the time or resources to teach the more communicative and cultural aspects of English. It also seems that while both respondent groups would like to promote a more practical and communicative approach to English teaching, the current schooling system is more geared towards preparing the language learners for different exams and tests. This is evident from the fact that both respondent groups placed oral communication as their most valued area of language knowledge but at the same time many respondents from both groups expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of oral exercises that are performed during English lessons.

It should be noted that the aforementioned notions arose from the answers of two fairly small respondent groups and therefore may not be generalized. The small respondent group size, especially in terms of the teachers, is one of the major weaknesses of this study. Therefore, in the future it would be interesting to include more people as respondents in order to get more generalizable results. Another weakness of this study is that although the questionnaire succeeded in giving a comprehensive overview of the respondents' opinions about the different language skills, the reasons behind these opinions were left somewhat vague. In my opinion, the open answers provided the most interesting data for this study. Therefore, a future improvement to the structure of the questionnaire would perhaps be to transfer more emphasis to the open questions and finding out the reasons *why* the respondents answered the way they did.

It is also evident from the study that official decrees and documents like the CEFR and school curricula seem to have fairly little effect on how both

respondent groups view language learning. It would be interesting to conduct further studies on what kind of opinions language teachers and future language learners have about these decrees and documents. Based on this study, it seems that at least on some level, many of the more communicative and practical goals of these decrees and documents do not seem to get transferred into the classroom. In my opinion, this is a shame, as many of these goals promote the exact thing both of the respondent groups in this study were looking after.

In terms of language teaching, the implications of this study are twofold. The study shows that there are certain language skills that the respondents hold in high regard and give large emphasis in their teaching. Comparing these results against studies that have studied the most beneficial language skills for language learning would give an indication of the effectiveness of English teaching in Finland. Therefore, this would obviously be an interesting topic for future study. The study also indicates that the CEFR and different curricula do not connect very well with everyday language teaching, at least in terms of English. This can be problematic since these are things that are expected to give the basic framework for language teaching. Therefore, the contents and goals of these documents should be modified to meet the real demands of language teaching and learning today. In my opinion, this could be most easily achieved by including teachers and language learners more tightly in the design process for these matters.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Questionnaire for Practicing English Teachers

TAUSTATIETOJA

Sukupuolesi

Mies Nainen

Pääaine, ellei englanti:

Olen suorittanut opettajan pedagogiset opinnot.

Olen parhaillaan suorittamassa opettajan pedagogisia opintoja.

En ole vielä suorittanut opettajan pedagogisia opintoja.

Vapaaehtoinen sähköpostiosoite palkinnon arvontaa varten:

ENGLANNIN OPETUKSEN OSA-ALUEET

Järjestä seuraavat englannin kielen osa-alueet tärkeysjärjestykseen sen mukaan, mikä on mielestäsi tärkein ja mikä vähiten tärkein englannin opetuksen kannalta. Käytä vastaamisessa numeroita 1-4 siten, että numero 1 vastaa mielestäsi tärkeintä osa-aluetta ja numero 4 vähiten tärkeintä.

Kirjoittaminen

Kuullun ymmärtäminen

Luetun ymmärtäminen

Suullinen vuorovaikutus

Alla olevaan tekstikenttään voit halutessasi kommentoida, miksi päädyit valitsemaasi järjestykseen.

KIRJOITTAMINEN

Järjestä alla olevat kirjoittamisen osataidot järjestykseen sen mukaan, mitä pidät tärkeimpinä ja mitä vähiten tärkeinä englannin opetuksen kannalta. Numeroi taidot niin, että 1 vastaa mielestäsi tärkeintä osataittoa, 2 seuraavaksi tärkeintä jne.

Kirjoittamisen osataidot

1. Sanaston tuntemus ja käyttäminen kontekstiin sopivalla tavalla
2. Kieliopin ja tekstin rakenteen hallinta (syntaksi, morfologia, koheesio, koherenssi jne.)
3. Tekstiin vaikuttavien kulttuuristen tekijöiden ymmärtäminen ja niihin reagointi (esimerkiksi tekstin kohderyhmän kulttuurin huomioonottaminen)
4. Kirjoitussääntöjen hallinta (isot alkukirjaimet, pilkkusäännöt, tekstin jäsentely jne.)
5. Tekstin genren ja kontekstin tunnistaminen ja niihin reagointi (novelli vs. runo, mielipidekirjoitus vs. työnhakuilmoitus)
6. Erilaisten kirjoitusstrategioiden hallinta (luonnoksien laatiminen, tiivistäminen, kiertoilmauksien hallinta jne.)

Alla olevaan tekstikenttään voit halutessasi lisätä perusteluja, miksi päädyit valitsemaasi järjestykseen. Voit myös kommentoida kirjoittamisen opettamista yleisesti. Kaikki lisäkommentit ovat erittäin tervetulleita!

KUULLUN YMMÄRTÄMINEN

Järjestä alla olevat kuullun ymmärtämisen osataidot järjestykseen sen mukaan, mitä pidät tärkeimpinä ja mitä vähiten tärkeinä englannin opetuksen kannalta. Numeroi taidot niin, että 1 vastaa mielestäsi tärkeintä osataittoa, 2 seuraavaksi tärkeintä jne.

Kuullun ymmärtämisen osataidot

1. Sanaston tuntemus ja ymmärrys, miten sanojen merkitys vaihtelee puheessa
2. Puheen kieliopin ja rakenteen ymmärtäminen (syntaksi, morfologia, koheesio, koherenssi jne.)
3. Puheeseen vaikuttavien kulttuuritekijöiden ymmärrys (erot oman ja kohdekielen kulttuurin välillä, murteet jne.)
4. Puhetilanteen kontekstin ja osallistujien roolien ymmärtäminen (esimerkiksi kahvipöytäkeskustelu vs. työhaastattelu)
5. Ääntämisen ymmärtäminen (yksittäiset äänteet, puheen rytmi, painotukset, intonaatio jne.)
6. Nonverbaalisen viestinnän ymmärtäminen (silmäkontakti, ruumiinkieli, ilmeiden merkitykset jne.)
7. Erilaisten kuuntelustrategioiden hallinta (pääajatuksien poimiminen, selvennyksen pyytäminen jne.)

Alla olevaan tekstikenttään voit halutessasi lisätä perusteluja, miksi päädyit valitsemaasi järjestykseen. Voit myös kommentoida kuullun ymmärtämisen opettamista yleisesti. Kaikki lisäkommentit ovat erittäin tervetulleita!

LUETUN YMMÄRTÄMINEN

Järjestä alla olevat luetun ymmärtämisen osataidot järjestykseen sen mukaan, mitä pidät tärkeimpinä ja mitä vähiten tärkeinä englannin opetuksen kannalta. Numeroi taidot niin, että 1 vastaa mielestäsi tärkeintä osataittoa, 2 seuraavaksi tärkeintä jne.

Luetun ymmärtämisen osataidot

1. Sanaston tuntemus ja ymmärrys siitä, miten sanojen merkitys vaihtelee eri teksteissä
2. Kieliopin ja tekstin rakenteen ymmärtäminen (syntaksi, morfologia, koheesio, koherenssi jne.)
3. Tekstiin vaikuttavien kulttuuristen tekijöiden ymmärtäminen (erot oman ja kohdekielen kulttuurin välillä, murteet jne.)
4. Tekstin kontekstin ja genren tunnistaminen (esimerkiksi mielipidekirjoitus vs. lehtiartikkeli, proosa vs. runous)
5. Tekstin ulkoasun merkityksen ymmärtäminen (alleviivaukset, kursivoinnit, huutomerkki jne.)
6. Erilaisten lukemisstrategioiden hallinta (tekstin silmäily, pääajatuksien poimiminen, alleviivauksien käyttö jne.)

Alla olevaan tekstikenttään voit halutessasi lisätä perusteluja, miksi päädyit valitsemaasi järjestykseen. Voit myös kommentoida luetun ymmärtämisen opettamista yleisesti. Kaikki lisäkommentit ovat erittäin tervetulleita!

SUULLINEN VUOROVAIKUTUS

Järjestä alla olevat suullisen vuorovaikutuksen osataidot järjestykseen sen mukaan, mitä pidät tärkeimpinä ja mitä vähiten tärkeinä englannin opetuksen kannalta. Numeroi taidot niin, että 1 vastaa mielestäsi tärkeintä osataittoa, 2 seuraavaksi tärkeintä jne.

Suullisen vuorovaikutuksen osataidot

1. Sanaston tuntemus ja käyttäminen tilanteeseen sopivalla tavalla
2. Puheen kieliopin ja rakenteen hallinta, sekä sopiva käyttö tilanteessa (syntaksi, morfologia, koheesio, koherenssi jne.)
3. Puhetilanteeseen vaikuttavien kulttuuritekijöiden ymmärtäminen ja niihin reagointi (esimerkiksi tietyssä yhteisössä vallitsevat tavat ja normit)
4. Sujuvan ja ymmärrettävän ääntämisen hallinta
5. Puhetilanteen kontekstin ja osallistujien roolien ymmärtäminen ja niihin reagointi (esimerkiksi kahvipöytäkeskustelu vs. työhaastattelu)
6. Erilaisten puhestrategioiden hallinta (kiertoilmaukset, avun pyytäminen, puheen pääajatuksien tiivistäminen jne.)
7. Nonverbaalisen viestinnän hallinta (katsekontakti, ruumiinkieli, ilmeiden merkitykset jne.)

Alla olevaan tekstikenttään voit halutessasi lisätä perusteluja, miksi päädyit valitsemaasi järjestykseen. Voit myös kommentoida suullisen vuorovaikutuksen opettamista yleisesti. Kaikki lisäkommentit ovat erittäin tervetulleita!

VASTAUKSIIN VAIKUTTANEET TAUSTATEKIJÄT

Rastita alle olevista vaihtoehdoista kolme taustatekijää, joiden koet vaikuttaneen eniten vastauksiisi kyselyssä. Voit myös lisätä kaksi omaa valintaasi, jos listasta ei mielestäsi löydy sopivia vaihtoehtoja.

Omat käytännön kokemukset opetuksesta

Oma mielipide kielitaidosta ja sen kehittämisestä

Yleiseurooppalainen viitekehys

Yleiset opetussuunnitelmat

Opetuslaitoksien omat opetussuunnitelmat

Oma opetustyyli

Opetus- ja oppimateriaalit

Jokin muu taustatekijä:

Jokin muu taustatekijä:

Appendix B: Questionnaire for University English students

TAUSTATIETOJA

Sukupuolesi

Mies Nainen

Pääaine, ellei englanti:

Olen suorittanut opettajan pedagogiset opinnot.

Olen parhaillaan suorittamassa opettajan pedagogisia opintoja.

En ole vielä suorittanut opettajan pedagogisia opintoja.

Vapaaehtoinen sähköpostiosoite palkinnon arvontaa varten:

ENGLANNIN OPETUKSEN OSA-ALUEET

Järjestä seuraavat englannin kielen osa-alueet tärkeysjärjestykseen sen mukaan, mikä on mielestäsi tärkein ja mikä vähiten tärkein englannin opetuksen kannalta. Käytä vastaamisessa numeroita 1-4 siten, että numero 1 vastaa mielestäsi tärkeintä osa-aluetta ja numero 4 vähiten tärkeintä.

Kirjoittaminen

Kuullun ymmärtäminen

Luetun ymmärtäminen

Suullinen vuorovaikutus

Alla olevaan tekstikenttään voit halutessasi kommentoida, miksi päädyit valitsemaasi järjestykseen.

KIRJOITTAMINEN

Järjestä alla olevat kirjoittamisen osataidot järjestykseen sen mukaan, mitä pidät tärkeimpinä ja mitä vähiten tärkeinä englannin opetuksen kannalta. Numeroi taidot niin, että 1 vastaa mielestäsi tärkeintä osataittoa, 2 seuraavaksi tärkeintä jne.

Kirjoittamisen osataidot

1. Sanaston tuntemus ja käyttäminen kontekstiin sopivalla tavalla
2. Kieliopin ja tekstin rakenteen hallinta (syntaksi, morfologia, koheesio, koherenssi jne.)
3. Tekstiin vaikuttavien kulttuuristen tekijöiden ymmärtäminen ja niihin reagointi (esimerkiksi tekstin kohderyhmän kulttuurin huomioonottaminen)
4. Kirjoitussääntöjen hallinta (isot alkukirjaimet, pilkkusäännöt, tekstin jäsentely jne.)
5. Tekstin genren ja kontekstin tunnistaminen ja niihin reagointi (novelli vs. runo, mielipidekirjoitus vs. työnhakuilmoitus)
6. Erilaisten kirjoitusstrategioiden hallinta (luonnoksien laatiminen, tiivistäminen, kiertoilmauksien hallinta jne.)

Alla olevaan tekstikenttään voit halutessasi lisätä perusteluja, miksi päädyit valitsemaasi järjestykseen. Voit myös kommentoida kirjoittamisen opettamista yleisesti. Kaikki lisäkommentit ovat erittäin tervetulleita!

KUULLUN YMMÄRTÄMINEN

Järjestä alla olevat kuullun ymmärtämisen osataidot järjestykseen sen mukaan, mitä pidät tärkeimpinä ja mitä vähiten tärkeinä englannin opetuksen kannalta. Numeroi taidot niin, että 1 vastaa mielestäsi tärkeintä osataittoa, 2 seuraavaksi tärkeintä jne.

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1. Sanaston tuntemus ja ymmärrys, miten sanojen merkitys vaihtelee puheessa
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Järjestä alla olevat luetun ymmärtämisen osataidot järjestykseen sen mukaan, mitä pidät tärkeimpinä ja mitä vähiten tärkeinä englannin opetuksen kannalta. Numeroi taidot niin, että 1 vastaa mielestäsi tärkeintä osataittoa, 2 seuraavaksi tärkeintä jne.

Luetun ymmärtämisen osataidot

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Oma mielipide kielitaidosta ja sen kehittämisestä

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