VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES OF ADULT LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Vieraan kielen sanaston oppiminen on keskeinen osa sujuvaa ja täsmällistä kielitaitoa. Sanaston oppimisstrategioita (*vocabulary learning strategies*) on tutkittu monissa maissa, mutta Suomessa vain vähän. Sanaston oppimisstrategioilla tarkoitetaan erilaisia menetelmiä, joita oppijat käyttävät oppimisen ja muistamisen tukena. Ulkomainenkaan oppimisstrategiatutkimus ei ole yleensä kohdistunut aikuisopiskelijoihin, ja erityisen vähän tutkimustietoa on ikääntyneiden oppijoiden oppimisstrategioista kielten opiskelussa. Pyrin täyttämään tutkielmallani tätä tutkimusaukkoa. Tutkimukseni tavoitteena oli selvittää, millaisia sanaston oppimisstrategioita aikuiset englannin oppijat käyttävät. Tutkimus kohdistui Jyväskylän kansalaisopiston englannin opiskelijoihin. Kyseessä on kvantitatiivinen tutkimus, johon keräsin aineiston strukturoidulla kyselylomakkeella. Kyselylomakkeen pohjana oli Pavičić Takačin (2008: 157-158) VOLSQES-kysely, johon tein joitakin muutoksia. Kyselyyn vastasi 94 opiskelijaa kolmelta eri taitotasolta.

Tutkimuskysymykset olivat seuraavat: 1) Millaisia sanaston oppimisstrategioita aikuiset englanninopiskelijat käyttävät eniten? 2) Miten oppijan ikä, sukupuoli, syyt opiskella ja kielitaito vaikuttavat strategioiden käyttöön?
3) Mitkä ovat aikuisten englanninopiskelijoiden mielestä tehokkaimmat oppimisstrategiat?

Vastaajien yleisimmät sanaston oppimisstrategiat olivat sanan muistaminen paremmin kirjoitettuna, sanojen kääntäminen, ääneen toistaminen, mielessä toistaminen, avun pyytäminen, synonyymien käyttö keskustelussa, merkityksen arvaaminen kontekstin avulla, säännöllinen kertaaminen, sanojen oppiminen elokuvista ja televisiosta sekä vieraiden sanojen huomiotta jättäminen tekstissä. Tulokset eivät ole yllättäviä, sillä samoja strategioita on todettu yleisimmiksi strategioiksi myös aiemmissa tutkimuksissa.

Kysyttäessä hyödyllisimpiä strategioita vastaukset olivat osittain samoja kuin yleisimpiä strategioita kysyttäessä. Myös nämä tulokset vastasivat aiempia tutkimuksia. Merkille pantavaa on, että useimmat vastaajien hyödyllisimmiksi kokemat strategiat olivat dekontekstualisoituja, mikä tarkoittaa sanan opiskelua irrallaan kontekstista. Tulosten mukaan ikä ei vaikuttanut merkittävästi strategiavalintoihin, ja tämä tulos vastaa aiempien tutkimusten havaintoja. Myöskään sukupuoli ei juuri vaikuttanut strategiavalintoihin tässä tutkimuksessa. Tämä tulos puolestaan eroaa aiemmista tutkimustuloksista.

Oppijoiden yleisimmät syyt opiskella englantia olivat matkustaminen ja henkinen hyvinvointi. Syyt opiskella ja sanaston oppimisstrategiat korreloivat keskenään niin, että eri syistä opiskelevat suosivat eri strategioita. Myös kielitaidon tason ja strategiavalintojen välillä ilmeni hieman korrelaatioita. Oppijat, jotka arvioivat kielitaitonsa paremmaksi, käyttivät muita enemmän joitakin kontekstualisoituja sanaston oppimisstrategioita.

Aiemmin on todettu, että strategiaopetus voi parantaa merkittävästi oppijan kielitaitoa. Erityisen hyödyllisiä ovat strategiat, jotka sisältävät sanaston kontekstualisointia ja syväprosessointia. Strategiaopetus voisi hyödyttää myös tämän tutkimuksen kohderyhmää strategiavalikoiman monipuolistamisessa.

Asiasanat – Keywords vocabulary learning strategies, language learning strategies, depth of processing, contextualisation

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1 INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary acquisition is an essential area of language learning to achieve fluency and to be able to communicate with greater precision. Expanding one's vocabulary is necessary to anyone who wants to improve their language skills. Vocabulary learning strategies (VLS) mean different methods that learners use to support vocabulary learning and retention. Strategy preferences relate to individual learner characteristics and thus they vary from learner to learner (Pavičić Takač 2008: 132-133).

The aim of this study is to research what kinds of vocabulary learning strategies adult learners of English use to support their vocabulary acquisition and which strategies they find the most useful for learning English. The target group of this study consists of learners of English who study at an adult education centre.

There is a great deal of research on VLS worldwide (e.g., Schmitt 1997; Nation 2001; Jiménez Catalán 2003; Pavičić Takač 2008; Gu 2013; Chacón-Beltrán 2018) but less in Finland (e.g., Marttinen 2008; Kovanen 2014). In addition, a lot of research on vocabulary learning strategies is targeted at young learners, teenagers, and university students (Lawson and Hogben 1998; Pavičić Takač 2008; Hardi 2010; Rogulj and Čizmić 2018) but less at adult learners in a broad age range. Thus, this study aims to fulfil these research gaps and find out what kinds of vocabulary learning strategies do adult learners of English use most in Finland. A constantly changing labour market requires lifelong learning thus making adults' learning a topical research subject. On the other hand, for other individuals, language learning is a useful hobby that broadens the world and brings joy and wellbeing for learners of all ages.

Successful learners have a wider repertoire of vocabulary learning strategies than less successful ones (Gu and Johnson 1996, cited in Nation 2001: 219). It is useful to gain knowledge of what strategies successful learners use and consider teaching these strategies also to beginners and low achieving learners. Proficiency in languages requires extensive exposure and practice, and since classroom time is limited, it is essential that learners practise the language on their own initiative also outside of formal studies (Oxford 1990: 160). Learner initiative and the time spent on language learning outside the classroom associate with better learning outcomes (Kojic-Sabo and Lightbown 1999: 189-190).

Research on vocabulary learning strategies has stemmed from research on general language learning strategies (LLS), and therefore I will deal with research on LLS in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, I will focus on theories and taxonomies of vocabulary learning strategies as well as research related to the influence of the learner's skills, age, and gender on language learning strategy choices. In Chapter 4, I will present the research design including descriptions of research questions, participants, data collection, and methodology. In Chapter 5, I will report on the results of my study. Finally, in Chapter 6, I will discuss the results in the light of VLS theory and summarise my key findings and conclusions.

2 LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES

Research on vocabulary learning strategies has stemmed from research on general language learning strategies (Pavičić Takač 2008: 58). Therefore, I discuss first language learning strategies in general before moving on to vocabulary learning strategies. Oxford (1990: 1, 8) defines language learning strategies as methods that learners use to make their learning more effective, more self-directed, and more enjoyable. According to her, the goal of strategy use is to develop learners' proficiency and communicative competence in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

2.1 Early research on language learning strategies

Academic research turned towards language strategies in earnest in the 1970s along with growing awareness of the importance of the learner's own actions (Schmitt 1997: 199). Research focused mainly on the identification of strategies of *good learners* (for example, Rubin 1975), but from the beginning, research has also aimed at creating a categorisation system for different strategies (Schmitt 1997: 200).

Early research included, inter alia, the study by O'Malley et al. (1985: 565-567, 575), which dealt with learning strategies of students learning English as a second language (ESL). Their classification involved three groups of learning strategies: metacognitive, cognitive, and socioaffective strategies. They found that students used cognitive strategies (e.g., repetition, note taking, and imagery) far more often than metacognitive or socioaffective strategies. Within cognitive strategies, beginning students used translation and imagery more often than intermediate-level students, while intermediate students used more contextualisation.

Rubin's (1975: 41, 45-47) examples of good learning strategies are willing and accurate guessing; willingness to communicate; not being inhibited; attending to form, meaning, and speech, and regular practising. She recommends teachers to help less successful students to learn the same effective strategies that good language learners use. However, Chamot and Rubin (1994: 772) state that "it is not a particular strategy that leads to improved performance". Strategy selection and the usefulness of a strategy depends on many factors, such as the learner's proficiency level or characteristics, or the task at hand (Chamot and Rubin 1994: 772; O'Malley et al. 1985: 557; Schmitt 1997: 224). Good language learners use several strategies (Oxford and Nyikos 1989: 291) and are able to choose appropriate strategies (Bates 1972, cited in Oxford and Nyikos 1989: 291).

2.2 Oxford's model of language learning strategies

Oxford's (1990) SILL questionnaire (*Strategy Inventory for Language Learning*) is a structured questionnaire that assesses the frequency of language learning strategy use. The SILL deals with language learning strategies in general, not merely with vocabulary learning strategies. It is a widely used questionnaire in research (Pavičić Takač 2008: 87).

The SILL is based on Oxford's (1990: 14) classification system, which divides learning strategies into two classes, called direct and indirect strategies, and six subgroups under these classes. Oxford (1990: 14, 37-38, 43, 47, 135) defines the classes and subgroups of her model as follows: The term direct strategies indicates that the target language is directly involved in the use of the strategy. The direct class consists of memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies. Memory strategies (for example, creating mental linkages and reviewing) assist in storing information. Cognitive strategies are used to support understanding and producing the language, and they involve techniques such as repeating, analysing expressions, or summarising. Compensation strategies, such as guessing, enable learners to communicate despite their limited language skills. Indirect strategies, on the other hand, may be employed to support an application of direct strategies. Indirect strategies include metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. Metacognitive strategies, such as planning and evaluating, are methods that learners use to guide their own learning. Affective strategies are related to the skills to regulate emotions and attitudes, such as different ways to reduce anxiety. Social strategies deal with learning through interaction.

2.3 Research on LLS in Finland

In Finland, Kristiansen (1992), Julkunen (1998) and Airola (2000) have researched general language learning strategies (Juurakko and Airola 2001, 81), and these studies included also questions concerning vocabulary learning strategies. Kristiansen (1992: abstract) studied language learning, including LLS, of Finnish pupils from grade six. Her results showed that good learners elaborated the text more regularly than the others. Interestingly, she found that good learners spent less time doing homework since they usually learnt the text at lessons (1992: 134).

Julkunen (1998: 24) and Airola (2000: V) used O'Malley and Chamot's (1990: 119–120) model of LLS that included three classes: metacognitive, cognitive, and social strategies. Julkunen (1998: VI) studied LLS of Finnish pupils from grade six. According to his results, students used metacognitive and social strategies more frequently than cognitive strategies. Airola (2000: III–VI) studied BBA students' oral proficiency in English and their language learning strategies in speaking. She found that low-achieving students used more strategies than good learners and first-year students used more strategies than last-year students. In addition, female students used strategies more than male students.

2.4 Later trend in language learning strategies

Language learning taxonomies and strategies have been criticised for being too general and undefined (Rose 2012: 92, 94). Dividing lines between groups are not often clear, different strategy groups overlap with each other, and researchers have differing views on how to classify single strategies (Oxford 1990: 16-17, 22). For instance, Dörnyei (2005: 168) addresses criticism on Oxford's (1990) taxonomy and states that memory strategies should be a subclass

of cognitive strategies, not a separate category, and that Oxford's compensatory strategies are related to language use rather than learning.

In aim to reduce definitional fuzziness, Dörnyei (2005: 113) introduced a model of strategic learning that was based on self-regulation. Dörnyei's self-regulation model includes the following categories:

1 Commitment control strategies, for example, keeping in mind favourable expectations
2 Metacognitive control strategies for controlling concentration
3 Satiation control strategies for adding interest to the task
4 Emotion control strategies for managing moods
5 Environmental control strategies for eliminating distractions
(Dörnyei 2005: 113)

However, Rose (2012: 95-97) argues that Dörnyei's model suffers from the same fuzziness as previous models. He also points out that Dörnyei's taxonomy focuses on the self-regulatory capacity of the learner, not so much on strategy use. Nevertheless, Dörnyei's model has influenced some more recent studies on strategic learning (ibid.). For example, Oxford's (2011: 16) updated taxonomy, *Strategic Self-Regulation (S2R)* model, merges language learning strategies with self-regulation. Rose (2012: 97) anticipates that research into strategic language learning is moving in the direction of incorporating self-regulation and strategy use.

3 VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES

Vocabulary learning strategies can be defined as "activities, behaviours, steps or techniques used by learners (often deliberately) to facilitate vocabulary learning" (Pavičić Takač 2008: 106). Different vocabulary learning strategies complement each other, and therefore the most effective approach is to combine various strategies (ibid., 83).

This chapter includes the following topics: categorisations of VLS, studies on VLS, vocabulary size, teaching of VLS and LLS, the influences of the learner's skills, age, and gender, and an adult education centre as a learning environment.

3.1 Categorisations of vocabulary learning strategies

Several models have been developed to categorise vocabulary learning strategies. In this chapter, I will introduce four of them. First, I will introduce Schmitt's (1997: 207-216) taxonomy, which may be the most well-known VLS category system. Next, I will deal with three newer models: Nation's (2001: 218) taxonomy, Pavičić Takač's (2008: 100) category system, and Gu's (2013, cited in Gu 2018: 327; Gu 2019: 2) taxonomy. Besides these categorisations, I will discuss a strategy cluster model introduced by Gu and Johnson (1996, cited in Nation 2001: 225-226).

Schmitt's (1997: 207–216) taxonomy divides strategies into five classes: determination strategies, social strategies, memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and metacognitive strategies. Besides this categorisation, Schimitt makes a dichotomy between discovery strategies and consolidation strategies. The former he describes as strategies that are used for gaining initial information about a new word and the latter strategies that are used for remembering that word. This dichotomy was originally suggested by Cook and Mayer (1983, cited in Schmitt 1997: 206) and Nation (1990, cited in Schmitt 1997: 206).

Nation's (2001: 218-222) taxonomy contains the following three major categories: planning vocabulary learning, sources, and processes. The category *planning vocabulary learning* includes strategies such as choosing words and choosing the most appropriate strategy for the task at hand. The category *sources* means finding information about words. It involves strategies that learners use to get information about the words, for instance, analysing the word, using context, and consulting a dictionary or other reference sources. The category *processes* means establishing vocabulary knowledge, and it refers to methods of noticing, retrieving, and generating vocabulary items.

Pavičić Takač's (2008: 98, 100, 157-158) *Vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire* (VOLSQES) has been formed and tested through several factor analyses, which have produced a new perspective on the VLS categorisation. She suggests the following categories:

1) Strategies of formal vocabulary learning and practising
2) Self-initiated independent vocabulary learning
3) Spontaneous (incidental) vocabulary learning (acquisition)
   (Pavičić Takač 2008: 100)

Pavičić Takač (2008: 100, 104) defines the categories as follows: The first group of strategies refers to learning in a classroom or other formal context. The second group consists

of strategies that learners use independently and consciously to support their learning. The third group includes naturalistic learning situations and communication strategies.

Gu's (2013, cited in Gu 2018: 327, 350; Gu 2019: 2) taxonomy divides strategies into metacognitive and cognitive dimensions. He describes these dimensions as follows: The metacognitive dimension contains *beliefs about vocabulary learning* (such as the belief that words should be learnt through use) and *metacognitive strategies* (such as selective attention). The cognitive dimension contains *initial handling strategies* (for example, guessing strategies and dictionary strategies), *reinforcement strategies* (for example, repetition), and *activation strategies* (for example, the use of the newly learnt words).

In addition to the taxonomies above, Gu and Johnson (1996, cited in Nation 2001: 225-226) perceived that vocabulary learning strategies may form clusters and distinguished five types of learners based on these strategy clusters. They listed these five types in order of their proficiency and vocabulary size as *readers, active strategy users, non-encoders, encoders,* and *passive strategy users*. They characterised these types as follows: *Readers* were the best students, who preferred natural exposure and studying words in context. *Active strategy users* were the next best students, who used a wider range of strategies than other learners. *Non-encoders* and *encoders* were the largest groups and average users of different strategies. Finally, *passive strategy users* were the least successful students, who used less strategies than the other groups.

The organisation of the taxonomies above differs from each other, and the categories within the taxonomies are named differently. However, there are also similarities between the category systems. Schmitt's (1997: 207–216) taxonomy resembles Oxford's (1990: 14-15) model, but the difference is that Schmitt's taxonomy is focused on vocabulary learning strategies, while Oxford's model is focused on general learning strategies. Nation's (2001: 218-222) category *planning* corresponds to *metacognitive strategies* of Oxford's model. In addition, Nation's *sources* contain elements of Schmitt's *discovery strategies*, and Nation's *processes* contain elements of Schmitt's *cognitive* and *memory strategies*. Gu's (2013, 2018, 2019) *initial handling strategies* correspond to Schmitt's (ibid.) *discovery strategies* and Gu's *reinforcement strategies* correspond to Schmitt's *consolidation strategies*. Pavičić Takač's (2008: 100) category system appears different from other taxonomies described above. However, Pavičić Takač's model highlights the learner's active role in the learning process and naturalistic learning situations, which are both key elements in other taxonomies and Gu and Johnson's (1996, cited in Nation 2001: 225-226) strategy cluster model, too.

3.2 Previous studies on vocabulary learning strategies

In this section 3.2, I present some VLS survey results, such as the most used strategies according to different studies. I will also discuss a range of subject matters, including contextualisation, depth of processing, and universal core VLS.

3.2.1 Common VLS in terms of depth of processing and context

Vocabulary learning strategies can be described according to the level of contextualisation and whether they require shallow or deeper processing. In this section, I discuss a few common vocabulary learning strategies in the light of these concepts.

Dictionary use is one of the most common vocabulary learning strategies for learners at different levels of language proficiency. In Schmitt's (1997: 218-219) survey of VLS of Japanese learners of English as a foreign language (EFL), bilingual dictionary was the most frequently used strategy. A similar result was obtained by Kojic-Sabo and Lightbown (1999: 183), whose study on vocabulary learning indicated that *dictionary use* was the most frequent strategy for the ESL and EFL students who participated in the study. Oxford (1990: 84-85) states that translation may be a useful strategy particularly for beginners since it enables learners to decode meanings in their own language. However, she points out that translating is time-consuming and may therefore slow down learning. Gu (1994: 3, 13-14) compared the characteristics of two learners, *the good* and *the poor*, in a case study on vocabulary learning strategies. According to his study, the good learner frequently tried to guess the meaning of a word, was highly selective about using the dictionary, and used the dictionary for learning purposes, while the poor learner looked up every unknown word in the dictionary. Gu concludes that alongside the number of strategies one uses it is also important to pay attention to the way a strategy is used. Gu and Johnson's (1996, cited in Nation 2001: 218) study showed similar results about evaluative selective attention as a characteristic of successful learners.

Written and verbal repetition are frequently used strategies that many learners find useful for their learning (Schmitt 1997: 215). Gu and Johnson (1996, cited in Oxford 2011: 255) found that rote oral repetition improved proficiency and vocabulary size, but rote written repetition was not useful. In Lawson and Hogben's (1998: 190-191) study on foreign-language vocabulary learning of secondary school students, repetition was the most frequently used strategy for vocabulary acquisition. They found that only one third of students reported the use of more complex learning strategies.

Even though it has its benefits, repetition does not require depth of processing, which is perceived as contributing better to long-term retention. The concept of the depth of processing by Craik and Lockhart (1972: 675, 677) refers to a series of processing stages, in which later stages include deeper semantic or cognitive analysis. Deeper processing involves different methods to manipulate words, such as relating new vocabulary to prior knowledge and to learners' own experiences (Sökmen 1997: 242; Craik and Lockhart 1972: 675, 677). Through deeper analysis, information in short-term memory will be transferred to long-term memory for retention (Craik and Lockhart 1972: 675, 677). Craik and Tulving (1975: 282-283, 291) use the notion of encoding elaboration to refer to the breadth of analysis alongside depth of processing. They found in their study that greater degrees of elaboration of the target words, which included semantic analysis and the complexity of sentences, enhanced retention. Kristiansen (1998: 53, 63) summarises that length and complexity of the sentences produced by learners is beneficial for learning and retention. The downside of deeper processing activities is that they may be time-consuming and hard work for learners (Sökmen 1997: 243).

Furthermore, vocabulary learning strategies can be distinguished in terms of their context. Nation and Waring (1997: 13) state that contextualised (for example, extensive reading) and

decontextualised (for example, word lists) strategies are complementary to each other. Prince (1996: 478, 488) suggests that learning strategies should combine both learning from word lists and learning from context. According to his study among university students (ibid.), new words in a second language (L2) were learnt more easily with their translations in the first language (L1) than by context in terms of quantity. However, he found that weaker learners were not able to recall newly learnt words when they were presented in context. Even though the use of word lists has its limitations as a means of learning, it is a strategy for having extra exposure at any level of vocabulary proficiency (Nation and Waring 1997: 13).

3.2.2 Schmitt's survey of the most used and most helpful strategies

Schmitt (1997: 218) conducted a survey to find out what strategies Japanese EFL learners used most and what strategies they found most helpful. The survey was targeted at four groups: junior high school students, high school students, university students, and adult learners, who were mainly company employees studying English for professional purposes. The ten most used strategies and the ten most helpful strategies are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The most used strategies and most helpful strategies by Schmitt (1997: 219, 221)

Most used strategies by Schmitt	Most helpful strategies by Schmitt
1. Bilingual dictionary 2. Verbal repetition 3. Written repetition 4. Study a word's spelling 5. Guess from textual context 6. Ask classmates for meaning 7. Say a new word aloud 8. Take notes in class 9. Study the sound of a word 10. Word lists Schmitt (1997: 219)	1. Bilingual dictionary 2. Say a new word aloud 3. Written repetition 4. Connect word with synonyms/antonyms 5. Continue to study over time 6. Study a word's spelling 7. Ask teacher for paraphrase/synonym 8. Take notes in class 9. Analyse pictures/gestures 10. Verbal repetition Schmitt (1997: 221)

Schmitt (1997: 220-221) points out that six of the highest ranked strategies appear in both lists, meaning that learners both used these strategies and found them helpful. Those strategies are *bilingual dictionary, verbal repetition, written repetition, study a word's spelling, say a new word aloud,* and *take notes in class*. The remaining four strategies in the second column above were rated equally helpful but used less by the respondents. Schmitt notes that perceiving benefits also in less used strategies could indicate that learners could try new strategies if they got instruction on them.

Schmitt (1997: 223-225) found that the frequency of some strategies varied between different groups of respondents. He reported the following results: Younger learners used more written repetition and word lists and emphasised spelling and form more than more mature learners. By contrast, mature learners used more strategies that involved deeper processing, such as analysis and association. The similar trend appeared when the helpfulness of different strategies was evaluated. Junior high school students perceived word lists and flash cards to be

the most helpful strategies, whereas university students and adult learners found deeper processing strategies (e.g., *connecting word with synonyms and antonyms* and *guessing from textual context*) more helpful. Schmitt did not examine the reasons why different age groups favoured different strategies. However, previous research by O'Malley et al. (1985: 557, 566-567, 571; Schmitt 1997: 224) has showed that strategies vary according to language proficiency and learning tasks. These factors may explain differences between age groups in Schmitt's study so that learners who study at the higher level of education are very probably more proficient and perform more advanced tasks than younger learners and thus use different strategies.

3.2.3 Pavičić Takač's study on vocabulary learning strategies

Pavičić Takač (2008: 108, 111) conducted a study on foreign language VLS of primary school learners aged 12-15. She found that the ten most frequently used strategies of the respondents were as follows:

1. listening to songs in target language
2. remembering words from films and TV programmes
3. translating words into L1
4. remembering words if they are written down
5. using synonyms in conversations
6. repeating new words aloud when studying
7. repeating words mentally
8. testing oneself with word lists
9. remembering words from books and magazines
10. using circumlocution

Pavičić Takač (2008: 111)

Another study by Pavičić Takač (2008: 144), a cross-linguistic study on elementary school learners suggested that some strategies may be universal core VLS since they are commonly used across different learning contexts. She mentions as examples of such strategies "Translating words into L1, Testing oneself using word lists with translation, Remembering words if they are written down, etc." (Pavičić Takač 2008: 144).

3.2.4 Vocabulary learning strategy studies in the 2010s

On the search of VLS studies of the 2010s, I came across many Asian studies, several of which were Chinese and Iranian. For the purposes of this Master's thesis, however, I searched for studies conducted somewhere closer to Finland. I did not find any Finnish VLS studies besides a few theses by students (for example, Kovanen 2014), but I will briefly present here the results of three European studies that were carried out in Hungary, Croatia, and Spain.

Hardi (2010: 115, 118, 123-124) studied VLS of teacher students of English in Hungary and analysed the results according to Oxford's (1990) taxonomy. Hardi's findings showed low level of VLS use in social and affective strategies, whereas it was more common for the

participants to use compensation and metacognitive strategies. The most used strategy was "inference followed by dictionary use" (Hardi 2010: 124). She states that this combination is among the most efficient vocabulary learning strategies.

Rogulj and Čizmić (2018: 44, 52, 54) researched VLS used by medical students in Croatia. The survey was conducted by utilising Pavičić Takač's (2008: 100) classification system and Pavičić Takač's (2008: 153-156) Vocabulary Learning Strategy Questionnaire, which was adapted for the target group. Rogulj and Čizmić (2018: 44, 52, 54) found the following results: Medical students used VLS frequently. Their most frequent strategies belonged to the category of self-initiated vocabulary learning. The strategies that combined verbal material with visual were emphasised, which probably reflected the practices of the discipline. Among the category spontaneous (incidental) vocabulary learning, the most frequent strategies were "picking up words from films, TV programmes, Internet, computer games, books, and magazines" (Rogulj and Čizmić 2018: 52). These results indicated that the respondents favoured authentic English language via different media. In the category of formal vocabulary learning, the most used strategies were "the use of bilingual dictionaries and dealing with word lists" (Rogulj and Čizmić 2018: 52). The extensive use of word lists was another finding that seemed to be specific to medical students.

Chacón-Beltrán (2018: 583, 590-591) carried out a study with 736 Spanish course participants who were taught the 1000 most common words in English and several vocabulary learning strategies. The course was provided as a MOOC (massive online open course). The participants were adult learners who were beginners in English. Chacón-Beltrán found that learners' vocabulary knowledge improved significantly, and they adopted newly learnt strategies and planned to use them also in the future.

3.2.5 Master's theses on vocabulary learning strategies

Language learning strategies have attracted the research interest of a number of students in Finland and elsewhere. For the present thesis, I familiarised myself with Marttinen's (2008), Kovanen's (2014), and Tukiainen's (2003) Master's theses. They have researched VLS or LLS of learners of English in Finland. The former two theses were approved by the University of Jyväskylä and the latter by the University of Tampere. These Master's theses found similar results with other research presented in the present study. Besides these theses, I found only few Finnish LLS studies (see section 2.3 in the present study), but not any VLS surveys conducted in Finland. Thus, these theses provide points of comparison for the present study.

Marttinen's (2008: 45-46, 81, 83) survey deals with VLS of upper secondary school students. She collected the data with a questionnaire that contained open questions. The analysis is mainly qualitative but also partly quantitative and utilises Schmitt's (1997: 207-208) taxonomy of VLS and Jiménez Catalán's (2003) study on gender differences in vocabulary learning strategies. Marttinen found that the most frequently mentioned strategies were repetition by reading, repetition by writing, translation, and English language media. According to her study, higher motivation was associated with better performance in language studies and a more extensive repertoire of vocabulary learning strategies.

Correspondingly, Kovanen's (2014: the abstract, 41, 71-72, 88) survey focused on VLS of upper secondary school students. The aim was to find out what strategies students used most and which strategies they considered the most useful. The survey questionnaire was designed according to Schmitt's (Schmitt and Schmitt 1993: 28-30) original VLS taxonomy. The study showed that students preferred strategies that required only shallow processing (for example, word lists and repeating). Deep processing strategies, such as mental imagery and association, were used less frequently even though students found deeper strategies more useful for learning. One conclusion of the study was that there is a need to include more VLS instruction in language teaching.

Tukiainen (2003: 34, 43, 65, 70) studied general language learning strategies of learners of English at an adult education centre. The study was qualitative and involved a questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaire included a strategy list that was based on Oxford's (1990) model of language learning strategies. The findings showed that there was a great deal of variation in strategies employed by respondents, and females used slightly more strategies than males. Instead, age or education level did not influence strategy use. The most common strategies of the respondents were the regular use of resources (for example, dictionaries and grammar books), guessing, and planning for a language task. The thesis concludes that it is beneficial to provide learners with strategy training.

This section 3.2 presented the findings of several VLS surveys. The comparison between different studies shows that many vocabulary learning strategies are commonly used in various learning contexts. On the other hand, learners' language skills affect their strategy choices concerning the level of contextualisation and depth of processing (Schmitt 1997: 223-225; Gu 1994: 3, 13-14). As I stated above, the research on VLS is scarce in Finland. In addition, VLS studies are mainly targeted at young people, although some studies above concerned also adult learners (Schmitt 1997; Chacón-Beltrán 2018). Taking into account these factors, there is a need to know more about vocabulary learning strategies of adult learners of English in Finland.

3.3 Vocabulary size and teaching of VLS and LLS

Vocabulary size correlates with general English proficiency (Gu and Johnson 1996: 660, cited in Nation, 2001: 225). However, language learners often encounter difficulties in acquiring a sufficient vocabulary for fluent communication (Oxford 1990: 39). A discussion about vocabulary learning raises question of the size of the vocabulary that the learner of English as a second or foreign language has to master to be a proficient language user. The vocabulary of an educated adult native speaker may consist of about 20,000 word families of total of over 54,000 word families of English (Nation and Waring 1997: 10). A word family contains a base word, its inflections, and the most common derivations (Bauer and Nation 1993: 253; Nation and Waring 1997: 8). However, not all the words are equally important for general understanding, and the learner already gets along quite well with a much smaller vocabulary (Nation 2001: 9).

The goals of vocabulary learning affect the choice of learning strategies. Nation (2001: 11, 14, 21) distinguishes four groups of vocabulary, which require different teaching strategies: high-frequency words, academic words, technical words, and low-frequency words. High-

frequency vocabulary consists of the most common words in the language. Nation states that the 2,000 most common words in English cover approximately 80% of the words in most uses of the language. For satisfactory reading comprehension, the learner has to know about 5,000 words in English (including around 3,000 high-frequency words), which covers about 95% of the words in most texts (Laufer 1989: 321; Nation and Waring 1997: 11). High-frequency words are prerequisite for further learning, and thus it is justified to teach them explicitly (Schmitt and McCarthy 1997: 3; Nation 2001: 11, 14, 21). Furthermore, Nation (2001: 12, 17-18, 21) continues that academic and technical words are essential for some learners: academic vocabulary consists of words that are common to various academic texts and technical vocabulary includes words that are related to particular subject areas. Finally, Nation describes the group of low-frequency words as the largest group of words, which includes all the other words that do not belong to the other groups. He says that low-frequency words are not so important for general understanding, and thus there is no need to teach these words so explicitly. Instead, low-frequency words may be best learnt through indirect or incidental learning (Nation and Waring 1997: 11; Schmitt and McCarthy 1997: 3). Learners may practise VLS independently with low-frequency words by reading extensively and guessing the meaning from context (Nation 2001: 21; Nation and Waring 1997: 11; Schmitt and McCarthy 1997: 3). Teachers may improve learners' guessing skills, for example, by asking for their predictions about the storyline at the beginning or in the middle of a reading or listening task (Oxford 1990: 90, 94).

Research shows that VLS use may significantly improve the learner's vocabulary performance (Nyikos and Fan 2007: 273, cited in Oxford 2011: 256). For example, Kojic-Sabo and Lightbown's (1999: 189-190) study on vocabulary learning suggests that extensive strategy use, learner initiative, independent learning activities and the time spent on language learning outside the classroom are the most important factors associated with better learning outcomes. Pavičić (1999, 2000, cited in Pavičić Takač 2008: 73) states that "more advanced learners use strategies more frequently". Nyikos and Fan (2007: 273, cited in Oxford 2011: 256) state that it is more effective to combine metacognitive and specific VLS than use them separately.

There are conflicting findings whether teaching of LLS or VLS influences learners' strategy choices or not. O'Malley and Chamot (1990: 174) found in their study that strategy training clearly affects learners' strategy use. In contrast, Pavičić Takač (2008: 107, 132-133) researched how vocabulary teaching affected VLS of primary school learners of English. The results showed that learners do use VLS but select strategies independently and teaching does not have much effect on their selection. Her findings indicate that learning strategies relate to individual learner characteristics. However, she argues that teaching has its place in raising learners' awareness of the existence of different strategies that learners can add to their personal inventory of VLS.

Both Oxford (1990: 193-194, 199-200) and Pavičić Takač (2008: 150) argue that for planning and conducting strategy training, the teacher should have knowledge of their students' current learning strategies. They state that information on learners' strategies can be collected by using a questionnaire, self-report survey, observation, or interviews. According to them, the results help teachers to provide training on more effective strategy use and learning. A strategy survey is also useful for learners as it helps them to recognise their own strategies and encourage them to try new ones (Pavičić Takač 2008: 150).

According to Oxford (1990: 10, 160, 201), language learning strategies reinforce learners' self-direction, and therefore training should also deal with students' feelings about their increased responsibility for their learning. She states that self-direction is necessary for the development of language skills since the acquisition of fluency requires a vast amount of exposure also outside the classroom. She concludes that the concept of LLS positions learners in an active role in their learning process while the teacher's role shifts towards that of a facilitator and guide.

3.4 The influences of the learner's age and gender

According to Oxford (1990: 13), the following factors influence the choice of learning strategies: "degree of awareness, stage of learning, task requirements, teacher expectations, age, sex, nationality/ethnicity, general learning style, personality traits, motivation level, and purpose for learning the language". In the previous chapters, I have dealt with the influence of the learner's skills and stage of learning on language learning strategy choices. This chapter covers the influences of the learner's age and gender. Related to the age factor, I will also discuss studying English as a foreign language in Finland over the last decades.

3.4.1 The influence of age

Age is a factor that affects language learning. Yule (2010: 187-188, 286) states that the optimal age for acquiring native-like pronunciation in L2 is during the critical period through natural exposure. He defines the critical period as the time from early infancy until puberty, which is the optimal age for language acquisition. He continues that for the adult learner without early experience using the L2, native-like pronunciation is harder to reach even if the learner had become highly proficient in written language. However, critical period refers to natural acquisition of a first or a second language, and in the formal language classroom with explicit teaching, early instruction does not offer a similar advantage (Singleton 2018: 20, 26; DeKeyser 2013: 54-55; Johnson and Newport 1989: 81).

Not much research has explored language learning strategies of mature learners (Pawlak, Derenowski and Mystkowska-Wiertelak 2018: 79-80). One exception is Ohly's (2007, cited in Pawlak et al. 2018: 80) study that focused on LLS used by foreign language learners who studied at a university of the third age or adult education college in England. The third age refers to people who are 50 years of age and over (Pawlak et al. 2018: 77). According to Ohly's results, LLS of more mature learners did not differ from the LLS of younger learners (Ohly 2007: 101, cited in Pawlak et al. 2018: 80). Furthermore, Pawlak et al. (2018: 80-82, 86, 88) conducted a small-scale study on LLS of senior language learners (aged 55-70) of English in Poland. Their questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions. They had the following findings: The participants reported on the use of several memory strategies and cognitive strategies, such as the use of the handbook, dictionaries, or translators, reading aloud, oral repetition, using associations, listening to recordings, or attempting to be active in class. However, the results indicated that senior students were not active users of indirect LLS (that is metacognitive, affective, and social strategies). Only few of the respondents reported that they planned,

monitored, or self-evaluated their learning. They also suffered with negative emotions, such as anxiety. In addition, they did not effectively cooperate with their classmates nor ask help from the teacher.

Pawlak et al. (2018: 85) examined the motivations of third-age learners in Poland to study English. The main reason for the respondents was their perception that studying a foreign language kept them mentally active. Another important reason to attend the course was their need to socialise with other people. Additionally, plans to travel abroad or the feeling of satisfaction that came along with progress in learning were also mentioned as sources of motivation. Viktorova, Kocharian, and Korotun (2018: 25, 27) obtained similar results but in different proportions. They conducted a survey in Ukraine that, among other things, aimed to identify the reasons for third-age learners to learn English. Their results indicated that 65% of the respondents attended English language courses "for communication with other people", 25% "for personal development", and 10% "to maintain their proactive attitude" (Viktorova et al. 2018: 27).

According to Kuikka and Pulliainen (1995: 429-439), research has found that short-term memory tasks are more demanding for aged people than young people. They state that ageing begins to affect memory in 50-60 years of age, although the changes are individual and normal age-related memory loss is very mild. They continue that with healthy people, ageing does not affect semantic memory, and an elderly person can increase the contents of semantic memory and learn new skills. Ageing does not materially affect retaining either (Kuikka and Pulliainen 1995: 439; Singleton 2018: 21). With healthy aged people, brain changes are probably compensated for by physical or mental activity (Kuikka and Pulliainen 1995: 439). Along with ageing, the speed and effectiveness of cognitive processing decreases to some extent, and this may influence memory performance (Kuikka and Pulliainen 1995: 435, 439; Singleton 2018: 21). In addition, older learners (60 years of age and over) often have low expectations of their own capability to learn a foreign language and seem to believe that ageing will reduce their ability to learn (Singleton 2018: 22; Kliesch et al. 2018: 50).

Health factors, such as age-related hearing loss, may impede language learning in late adulthood (Kliesch et al. 2018: 53; Singleton 2018: 19). Diseases may also limit activity or influence brain functions (Kuikka and Pulliainen 1995: 439). However, research has shown that brain activation related to foreign language learning may prevent or delay Alzheimer's disease or dementia (Gabryś-Barker 2018: XX, numbered with Roman numerals).

Another age-related factor is that not all senior citizens in Finland have studied English in their formal education. Piri (2001: 114, 116–117, 310) writes that in 1962, 56.9% of pupils studied English as their first foreign language, whereas 42.6% studied German. She continues that English as the first foreign language became more common rapidly, and in the latter part of the 1970's English was the only foreign language for most pupils in compulsory education alongside Swedish or Finnish as a second language. At present, almost all the pupils in Finnish-speaking basic education in Finland study English as their first foreign language (Hämäläinen, Väisänen and Latomaa 2007: 59).

3.4.2 The influence of gender

Oxford and Nyikos (1989: 291, 293, 295; Oxford 1994: 146) investigated LLS of university students studying foreign languages in the United States. They found that there were significant differences in language learning strategies between females and males. Females reported more frequent strategy use in three of five categories: formal rule-related practice, general study strategies, and conversational input elicitation.

Some other studies have yielded similar results. For example, Willing (1988, cited in Oxford 1994: 146) studied LLS of adult migrant learners of ESL in Australia and found that men and women rated similarly most strategies given in the survey. However, women reported significantly more use of the following four strategies: "learning many new words, learning words by seeing, learning words by doing something and learning by talking to friends in English" (Willing 1988, cited in Oxford 1994: 146).

Jiménez Catalán (2003: 54, 59, 61, 63, 65-66) studied VLS of Spanish-speaking students studying English at primary, secondary or university level or Basque in courses for civil servants. The age range of participants was 11-56. According to her survey, nine out of the eleven most frequent strategies were common for males and females: using a bilingual dictionary, taking notes in class, guessing from textual context, asking the teacher, asking classmates, analysing part of speech, connecting the word to cognates, using English-language media, and saying the word aloud. She remarks that a few of these strategies appeared to be the most frequent also in Schmitt's (1997: 219) survey of VLS of learners of English in Japan: "using a bilingual dictionary, guessing from context, asking classmates for meaning, and saying the new word aloud when studying" (Jiménez Catalán 2003: 63). However, there were also differences between females and males in Jiménez Catalán's study. She found that females used the following types of strategies more than males: "formal rule strategies, input elicitation strategies, rehearsal strategies and planning strategies" (Jiménez Catalán 2003: 54). She points out that these results are similar to those obtained by Oxford and Nyikos (1989: 295, cited in Jiménez Catalán 2003: 65). In addition, Jiménez Catalán (2003: 66) found that males used more image vocabulary learning strategies (such as connecting words to images) and females more auditory vocabulary learning strategies (such as saying the word aloud).

4 RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter, I present the aim of this study and my research questions. In addition, I discuss participants, data collection, the questionnaire, and methodology.

4.1 Research questions

The aim of this study is to research what the most popular vocabulary learning strategies for adult learners of English studying in liberal adult education are. This study will increase knowledge about adults' language learning to support learning and teaching languages. Life-long learning is a growing trend and there is a need to learn more about adults' learning processes. Especially little is known about language learning strategies of third-age learners (Pawlak et al. 2018: 76). In addition, while there is a great deal of research on VLS worldwide, the topic is less researched in Finland. I will explore this topic by means of the following research questions:

1. What kinds of vocabulary learning strategies do adult learners of English use most?
2. How do the learner's age, gender, reasons for studying English, and level of language skills affect the use of strategies?
3. What do adult learners of English see as the most effective strategies for learning?

The first research question will be studied with the help of question 1 in the questionnaire. This question includes 28 statements about vocabulary learning strategies for respondents to rate. The issues of the second research question will be clarified by means of the background questions that concern the respondents' age, gender, self-assessed skills in English, study years, and reasons for studying English. The third research question will be explored with question 2 in the questionnaire. In this question, the respondents are asked to choose five strategies that they find most useful for themselves.

4.2 Adult education centre as a learning environment

I targeted my study at the Jyväskylä Adult Education Centre because it was a suitable environment to reach adult learners. The Jyväskylä Adult Education Centre is a liberal adult education institution that offers a wide range of courses including foreign languages, basic computer skills, art, and fitness training. Education is aimed at everyone (Jyväskylä Adult Education Centre 2021), and the course fees are low. A lot of senior citizens attend the courses.

Foreign language courses are offered for learners with all competence levels, from beginners to advanced learners. Lessons are held once a week. Oral language skills are emphasised and practised during lessons with peers, and the curriculum is based on *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (*Jyväskylä Adult

Education Centre 2021). The CEFR organises language proficiency in six skill levels: basic user (A1-A2), independent user (B1-B2), and proficient user (C1-C2) (Council of Europe 2020).

Manninen (2018: 11, 56-57, 80) has studied the characteristics of the students of adult education centres. He found that the interest to study languages usually came about through travelling or the need to use foreign languages at work or free time. The benefits of studying were related mainly to better language skills. He perceived that other possible reasons to study, such as social interaction or a sensible use of time, were not relevant for language learners at adult education centres.

4.3 Participants

I conducted a survey of the students of six English classes at the Jyväskylä Adult Education Centre. These six groups included two groups of beginners (level 1 in the Jyväskylä Adult Education Centre), two groups studying at the CEFR level A2 (level 4 in the Jyväskylä Adult Education Centre), and two groups studying at the CEFR level B1 (level 6 in the Jyväskylä Adult Education Centre).

The target group of my study included:

- 57 students studying at level 1;
- 59 students studying at level 4; and
- 35 students studying at level 6.

The beginners studying at level 1 had a little previous knowledge of English. The goal for these groups was to achieve the CEFR level A1. The goal for group four was the CEFR level A2. Group six was for intermediate level learners or independent users in CEFR terms (Council of Europe 2020). The goal for group six was to achieve the CEFR level B1 and after that gradually B2 (Jyväskylä Adult Education Centre 2021), which refers to the level of professional working proficiency.

4.4 Data collection and methodology

In this section, I deal with the questions of my questionnaire form, data collection process, and methodology. The whole questionnaire is attached in Appendix 1 in Finnish and Appendix 2 in English.

In my survey, I utilised the category system and *Vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire* (VOLSQES) by Pavičić Takač (2008: 100, 157-158). I chose a questionnaire for data collection instead of interviews because a questionnaire was an effective method to reach a larger number of learners even in a small-scale study. VOLSQES is a compact yet diverse set of 27 strategies created for pupils of elementary school. It uses a three-point Likert scale (1 = never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = always). For my survey, I translated the questionnaire from English to Finnish. I also modified it a bit for adult learners and left out some strategies because they

were not so relevant for adults. I also added a few strategies from Pavičić Takač's (2008: 152-156) pilot questionnaire and one strategy from Schmitt's (1997: 207-208) taxonomy. In addition, I combined or left out some strategies because of similarities between questions.

The aforementioned taxonomy by Schmitt (1997: 207-208), which also deals with vocabulary learning strategies, could have been another model for my survey. However, I chose Pavičić Takač's (2008: 157-158) VOLSQES over Schmitt because the former is a newer, updated inventory that contains a smaller range of strategies, which simplifies responding. I did not want the questionnaire to take longer than 10-20 minutes to fill in because too long a questionnaire may lower the response rate.

Before finalising the questionnaire, I asked a few other people to pretest and comment the questionnaire to make sure it was clear and understandable. I made a few modifications based on the comments. To urge students into responding, I included a prize draw in the questionnaire for the students who responded.

The first question in my questionnaire was a vocabulary learning strategy table that included 28 statements about strategies. 22 of 28 strategy statements in my survey were the same (or almost the same) than in VOLSQES. As for the rest of the statements, strategies 6, 14, 22, 25 and 26 in my questionnaire were from Pavičić Takač's (2008: 152-156) pilot questionnaire. In addition, the last strategy statement, 28, in my questionnaire was based on Schmitt's (1997: 207) taxonomy.

Following Pavičić Takač's (2008: 100) classification, the strategy statements in my questionnaire can be categorised as follows (the strategy numbers below refer to the questionnaire, which is included in Appendix 1 and 2):

1) Strategies of formal vocabulary learning and practising: strategies 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 15, 19, and 21
2) Self-initiated independent vocabulary learning: 7, 11, 13, 16, 18, and 20
3) Spontaneous (incidental) vocabulary learning (acquisition): 4, 5, 12, 17, 23, 24, 25, 27, and 28

In addition, four strategies were only included in Pavičić Takač's (2008: 152-156) pilot questionnaire, not in the main questionnaire VOLSQES (Pavičić Takač 2008: 157-158), and thus these strategies were not a part of the VOLSQES classification. Those strategies were the following: 6 (analysing word parts), 14 (asking for help), 22 (guessing by context), and 26 (ignoring unknown words).

The following strategies involved deep processing or studying words in context:
4: picking up words from films and TV programmes
6: analysing word parts to guess the meaning
7: writing down words while reading books and magazines in a foreign language
12: associating new words with familiar ones
13: writing down words while watching films and TV programmes in a foreign language
18: imagining a sentence or context in which a new word could be used
20: grouping words together
22: trying to guess the meaning from the context
23: listening to songs in a foreign language and trying to understand the words

24: picking up words while reading books and magazines in a foreign language
25: picking up words from computer games
27: picking up words from the Internet
28: picking up words while interacting with native speakers

Decontextualised strategies in this questionnaire were the following:
1: making lists of words in a foreign language and writing their translations
2: revising words regularly not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom
3: testing oneself, for example, with word lists
10: repeating words aloud
11: connecting words to images or other physical objects
15: writing down words repeatedly
19: translating words into one's mother tongue
21: repeating a word mentally

Strategy 16, *read and leaf through a dictionary to learn some new words*, could be either a contextualised or decontextualised strategy. In addition, a few strategies in the questionnaire did not clearly belong to either group presented above. Among them were strategy 8, *I plan for vocabulary learning in advance*, which was a metacognitive strategy (Oxford 1990: 295-296); strategy 9, *I remember a word better if I see it written down*, which was a memory strategy (Schmitt 1997: 207-208), and strategy 14, *if I do not understand a word, I ask for help*, which was a social strategy (Schmitt 1997: 207). In addition, three strategies could be defined as compensation strategies (Oxford 1990: 295): strategy 5, *if I cannot remember a word, I use another one with a similar meaning*; 17, *if I cannot remember a word, I describe it in my own words*, and 26, *I ignore an unknown word in the text*. These strategies do not exactly relate to learning new words; instead, they help learners to use the language despite their limited skills (Oxford 1990: 37, 295).

The second question of my questionnaire concerned the most effective strategies for learning. Respondents were asked to choose five strategies they found the most useful for themselves from the strategy list presented in the first question. I adapted this question from the survey that Schmitt (1997: 221) conducted among Japanese students.

Questions 3-7 in the questionnaire were background questions. The third question concerned respondents' gender and the fourth question their age. In the fifth question, learners were asked to evaluate their skills in English. This question was originally published in the study by Leppänen et al. (2009a: Appendix 2, p. 8; Leppänen et al. 2009b: Appendix 2, p. 7). Question six was about the duration of English language studies in different educational institutions. This question was also published in the study by Leppänen et al. (2009a: Appendix 2, p. 8; Leppänen et al. 2009b: Appendix 2, p. 3), and I modified the question for the present study. Finally, the seventh question concerned respondents' reasons to study English at the Jyväskylä Adult Education Centre.

The data collection took place in November 2019, and the staff of the Jyväskylä Adult Education Centre kindly assisted me in the process. First, I delivered the printed questionnaire forms to the language coordinator of the Jyväskylä Adult Education Centre, who distributed them to the teachers of six different classes. Next, the teachers handed out the questionnaires to

students and later collected the completed forms back from the students. Students were given three weeks to complete the questionnaire.

This study was quantitative, and I analysed the data with an SPSS programme. With the SPSS I conducted an independent-samples t-test and one-way ANOVA test with post hoc comparison to compare mean values and examine the statistical significance of differences. The significance level is expressed with a p value. According to Heikkilä (2004: 195), its limits are defined as follows:

$p \leq 0.001$ statistically highly significant
$0.001 < p \leq 0.01$ statistically significant
$0.01 < p \leq 0.05$ statistically almost significant
$0.05 < p \leq 0.1$ statistically indicative

I also used Pearson's correlation coefficient to analyse correlations between variables. The value of the correlation coefficient varies between +1 and -1. The closer the value is to +1 or -1, the stronger the positive or negative correlation, and if the correlation coefficient is less than 0.3, it usually indicates a non-existent correlation regardless of a p value (Heikkilä 2004: 91, 206).

5 RESULTS

In this chapter, I will report the results of my study. Section 5.1 presents the background information of the respondents. Section 5.2 covers the results concerning the frequency of strategy use. In addition, section 5.2 deals with the effects of the learner's age, gender, reasons for studying English, and level of language skills on the use of strategies. Finally, section 5.3 lists the strategies that were rated the most useful.

94 students studying at level 1, 4, or 6 responded to the questionnaire, and thus the response rate was 62.3%. More specifically, the response rate was 59.6% (34 students) at level 1; 64.4% (38 students) at level 4, and 62.9% (22 students) at level 6. As described in the previous chapter, group 1 was for beginners, group 4 for learners studying for the A2 level, and group 6 for learners studying for the B1 level.

5.1 Background information of the respondents

This section shows the results concerning the background information of the respondents. Background questions related to respondents' gender, age, skills in English, study years, and reasons for studying English.

63 (67%) of the respondents were women and 29 (31%) men. Two of the respondents did not answer the question about gender.

The respondents represented six age groups as follows:

- 25-34 years: 1 % (1 persons)
- 35-44 years: 3 % (3 persons)
- 45-54 years: 4 % (4 persons)
- 55-64 years: 32 % (30 persons)
- 65-74 years: 54 % (51 persons)
- 75 and above: 3 % (3 persons)

Most respondents belonged either to the age group of 55-64-year-olds or 65-74-year-olds. Two of the respondents did not answer this question.

Question five in the questionnaire concerned respondents' self-evaluated skills in English. Learners were asked to evaluate their skills in speaking, writing, reading, and understanding spoken English. Response options ranged from 1 *Fluently* to 6 *Not at all*. For the SPSS analysis, I recoded values so that higher scores corresponded to better skills (5 = Fluently, 4 = Fairly fluently, 3 = Moderately, 2 = With difficulty, 1 = Only a few words, and 0 = Not at all). The mean values of the skills were:

- speaking: 2.33
- writing: 2.37
- reading: 2.74
- understanding spoken English: 2.62

The mean values varied between *moderately* and *with difficulty*. The receptive skills, reading and understanding spoken English, were evaluated to be better than the productive skills, speaking and writing. The mode and median values of their productive skills were 2 and of their receptive skills were 3. I also formed a sum variable from the individual skill variables to ease further SPSS analyses. The mean of the sum variable was 2.51 and the mode and median 2.5. The standard deviation was 0.55.

The language courses at the Jyväskylä Adult Education Centre are organised according to different proficiency levels, and learners choose their courses based on their skills and previous learning experience. Thus, the group selection is another indicator of a learner's proficiency level. To ensure this, I tested the differences between the groups studying at different levels. As predictable, learners studying for the level A2 (group four) or B1 (group six) evaluated their English skills higher than those studying at the beginning level (group one). The mean values of the skills were as follows: 2.26 in group one, 2.61 in group four, and 2.75 in group six. There was a statistically significant difference between the means of groups one and six ($p = 0.003$) and statistically almost significant difference between the means of groups one and four ($p = 0.024$).

There was a statistically almost significant difference ($p = 0.02$) in self-evaluated English skills between women and men. Women's mean was 2.60, with a standard deviation of 0.53, and men's mean was 2.31, with a standard deviation of 0.55.

There appeared no correlation between the age groups and respondents' skills in English. However, the other age groups were so small that a meaningful comparison was possible only between the two largest groups, 55-64-year-olds and 65-74-year-olds. The mean value of both groups was the same, 2.48.

Respondents were also asked how many years they had studied English in different settings. Different schools and other learning institutions were listed in the question, and the respondents were asked to mark the duration of studies on the lines after each study place. However, to ease the data processing and reporting, I counted the total duration for each respondent and organised the total numbers the same way the duration of studies had been organised in Leppänen et al. (2009a, Appendix 2, p. 8; Leppänen et al. 2009b, Appendix 2, p. 3), who had used a similar question in their survey. The learners gave the following answers:

- 1-2 years: 5.3 % (n = 5)
- 3-5 years: 16.0 % (n = 15)
- 6-10 years: 46.8 % (n = 44)
- 11-15 years: 21.3 % (n = 20)
- more than 15 years: 9.6 % (n = 9).

The mean duration was 4 years 2 months, and both the mode and median were in the category 6-10 years. One respondent did not answer this question, but all the others had studied at least 1-2 years. I also tested how the duration of studies affected learners' skills in English. The mean value of the skills improved gradually from 1.85 to 2.89 when the duration of studies increased five steps from 1-2 years to more than 15 years. However, most year groups were too small to compare the statistical significance of the differences.

Respondents reported they had studied English in the following settings (the percentages and other figures below show the number of mentions, not duration in years):

- before school: 0 %
- compulsory education (7–16 yrs.): 60.6% (57 mentions)
- upper secondary school: 36.2% (34 mentions)
- vocational education: 38.3% (36 mentions)
- university of applied sciences: 10.6% (10 mentions)
- university: 6.4% (6 mentions)
- adult education centre: 88.3% (83 mentions)
- folk high school: 9.6% (9 mentions)
- courses provided by one's employer: 16.0% (15 mentions)
- language courses abroad: 7.4% (7 mentions)
- self-study: 29.8% (28 mentions)

Both formal and informal schooling were almost equally represented in the answers. The adult education centre was the most frequently mentioned study place. Since all the respondents were learners at the adult education centre, the number could have been 100%, however some respondents did not choose this option. This is probably because they had just started their studies in the autumn. The second most common choice was compulsory education, which was mentioned by sixty per cent of the respondents. More than a third mentioned upper secondary education and, likewise, more than a third vocational education. Thirty per cent also reported self-studying. No respondent had studied English before school age.

In question seven, the respondents were asked why they studied English at the Jyväskylä Adult Education Centre. They could choose several options from the list. They responded as follows (the figures below show the number of mentions):

- for working life: 15 mentions
- for other studies: 1 mention
- for travelling: 89 mentions
- foreign acquaintances: 37 mentions
- to get to know new people at the adult education centre: 32 mentions
- mental well-being: 72 mentions
- other reason: 21 mentions

Travelling was the most popular reason to study English, and mental well-being the second popular. Social interaction – abroad or at the adult education centre – was also mentioned quite often. Many of the respondents belonged to age groups that were retired or soon-to-be-retired, which explains why *for working life* and *for other studies* were mentioned only a few times.

I tested whether there were any correlations between learners' skills and reasons for studying English. There was a positive, weak correlation between the reason *foreign acquaintances* and learners' skills. The result means that the respondents who mentioned *foreign acquaintances* as their reason for studying English evaluated their English skills higher on average than the others.

The respondents were also asked to describe in their own words their reasons to study English at the Jyväskylä Adult Education Centre, if they had something to add on the list given in question seven. 21 respondents replied to this open question. Several of them described that English is needed more and more in everyday life. As the goal of their studies, they mentioned

understanding written and spoken language on the media and communication with foreigners. For example, two respondents had relatives in English-speaking countries. In addition, a couple of the respondents reported about shortcomings in their educational backgrounds. One of them wrote that foreign language teaching was not provided in his or her youth. Another one described the need to improve one's self-perception as a learner: “Haluan “kasvaa ulos” uskomuksistani, että en osaa enkä opi englantia” (“I want ‘to grow out’ of my beliefs that I do not speak English or cannot learn it”). One respondent also mentioned the need to brush up one’s English and learn new, modern words. In addition, several respondents mentioned reasons that were related to mental well-being. Four of them stated that studying supports memory functions and is good mental exercise. Respondents also described that studying is fun and refreshing. "Opiskella iloksi, ilman mitään painetta ja pakollista tavoitetta" (“To study for joy, without any pressure or mandatory goal”), as one of them put it.

5.2 The frequency of strategy use

In the first question in the questionnaire, learners were asked to choose the response that best described how often they used each of the strategies in the table to learn words in a foreign language. Response options were 1 = *Never*, 2 = *Sometimes*, and 3 = *Often*. *Remembering a word better if it is written down, translating, repeating aloud, repeating mentally,* and *asking for help* were ranked as the five most used strategies. Almost all the respondents used these five strategies *often* or *sometimes*, and the option *never* was chosen only twice with these strategies. The mode was 3 for the first four strategies and 2 for strategy 14 (*asking for help*).

At the other end, the five least used strategies were *writing down words while watching films, picking up words from computer games, writing down words while reading, planning for vocabulary learning,* and *grouping words together*. The most common answer to these strategy questions was never (mode 1) except for strategy 20 (grouping words together) which had two modes, 1 = never and 2 = sometimes.

In the whole strategy list, *sometimes* (mode 2) was the most common answer. All the results are shown in Table 2 in the descending order by the mean value scores, and the modes and medians are included in the table. The statement number from the questionnaire is included with each strategy. Table 2 is split over two pages.

Table 2. The results of strategy use

	Mean	Median	Mode
9. I remember a word better if I see it written down.	2.86	3.00	3
19. I translate the words into my mother tongue to understand them.	2.70	3.00	3
10. I say a word aloud repeatedly in order to remember it.	2.67	3.00	3
21. I repeat the word mentally in order to remember it.	2.62	3.00	3
14. If I do not understand a word, I ask for help.	2.46	2.00	2

5. If I cannot remember a word in a conversation, I use another one with a similar meaning.	2.44	2.50	3
22. I try to guess the meaning of a new word from the context.	2.40	2.00	3
2. I revise words regularly not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom.	2.32	2.00	2
4. I pick up words from films and TV programmes I watch.	2.28	2.00	2
26. If I encounter an unknown word, I ignore it if I understand what the text is about.	2.26	2.00	2
17. If I cannot remember a word in a conversation, I describe it in my own words in the foreign language.	2.12	2.00	2
11. I connect words to images or other physical objects in order to remember them.	2.11	2.00	2
23. I listen to songs in the foreign language and try to understand the words.	2.04	2.00	2
12. I associate new words with the ones I already know.	2.03	2.00	2
27. I pick up words from the Internet.	2.03	2.00	2
16. I read and leaf through a dictionary to learn some new words.	1.96	2.00	2
28. I pick up words while interacting with native speakers.	1.90	2.00	2
18. I imagine a sentence or context in which a new word could be used in order to remember it better.	1.87	2.00	2
24. I pick up words while reading books and magazines in the foreign language.	1.84	2.00	2
6. I analyse word parts in order to guess the meaning of a word.	1.84	2.00	1
3. I test myself, for example, with word lists to check if I remember the words.	1.77	2.00	2
15. I write down words repeatedly to remember them.	1.77	2.00	2
1. I make lists of words in a foreign language and write their translations in my mother tongue.	1.74	2.00	2
20. I group words together in order to remember them.	1.61	2.00	1 and 2
8. I plan for vocabulary learning in advance.	1.60	2.00	1
7. I write down words while I read books and magazines in a foreign language for pleasure.	1.41	1.00	1
25. I pick up words from computer games.	1.33	1.00	1
13. I write down words when I watch films and TV programmes in a foreign language.	1.30	1.00	1

The total number of responses for each strategy statement otherwise varied between 90-92 except for one strategy it was 87 (strategy 10: *I say a word aloud repeatedly in order to remember it*). The total number of respondents being 94, the number of missing data varied between 2-4 except for strategy 10 there were 7 missing cases.

5.2.1 Effects of gender and age on strategy use

The differences in strategy preferences between men and women were small. The most used strategies were mainly the same even though the order varied slightly. However, there was one exception as strategy 11 (*I connect words to images or other physical objects in order to remember them)* appeared in the top ten only in men's results. A t-test showed a statistically almost significant difference ($p = 0.046$). The t-test showed also slight differences with three other strategies that women used more than men. A statistically almost significant difference ($p = 0.045$) appeared with strategy 22 (*I try to guess the meaning of a new word from the context*). The difference was statistically indicative with strategy 1 (*I make lists of words in a foreign language and write their translations in my mother tongue*) ($p = 0.059$) and strategy 10 (*I say a word aloud repeatedly in order to remember it*) ($p = 0.091$). Standard deviation of these results varied between 0.437-0.718.

There were also slight differences in strategy use between age groups. I compared only the results of the two largest groups, the 55-64-year-olds and 65-74-year-olds, since the other age groups were too small for comparison. The four most frequent strategies for both groups were the same as the most frequent strategies for the whole cohort of respondents: *remembering a word better if it is written down, translating the words into the mother tongue, saying a word aloud repeatedly,* and *repeating the word mentally*. After these four strategies, there were slight differences in the order of strategies between the two age groups. In addition, there appeared statistically almost significant differences concerning strategies 13 (*writing down words while watching films*) and 17 (*using circumlocution*) and statistically indicative differences concerning strategies 6 (*analysing word parts*), 12 (*associating new words with familiar words*), 24 (*picking up words while reading*) and 27 (*picking up words from the Internet*). All these six strategies were used more by the 65-74-year-olds.

5.2.2 English skills and the choice of strategies

Learner's English skills correlated positively with the use of some of the strategies. A moderate correlation appeared with strategy 5 (*If I cannot remember a word in a conversation, I use another one with a similar meaning*). This relation was statistically highly significant ($p = 0.000$). There was also a weak positive correlation between skills and strategies 4, 17, 24, and 28 (4: *I pick up words from films and TV programmes I watch*; 17: *If I cannot remember a word in a conversation, I describe it in my own words in the foreign language*; 24: *I pick up words while reading books and magazines in the foreign language*, and 28: *I pick up words while interacting with native speakers)*.

The results concerning strategies 5 and 17 indicate that learners who evaluated their skills higher appeared to use more synonyms, near-synonyms and circumlocution in conversations, when they did not remember a word. Better skills seem to enable also more efficient learning through English language media and conversations with native speakers, as the results concerning strategies 4, 24, and 28 suggest.

As stated above, learners' group selection was based on skills. Thus, I also studied the connection between skills and strategies by testing whether the learners studying in different

groups favoured different strategies. A one-way ANOVA and post hoc comparison test yielded the following, statistically almost significant results:

- Group four (learners studying for the A2 level) used strategy 6 (*analysing word parts to guess the meaning*) more often than beginners in group one.
- Group one used strategy 11 (*connecting words to images or other physical objects*) more often than intermediate learners in group six (learners studying for the B1 level).

In addition, there were statistically indicative differences between the groups as follows:

- Groups four and six used strategy 5 (*using synonyms*) more than beginners' group one.
- Group four used strategy 17 (*using circumlocutions*) more than the beginners' group.

The length of study time affects learners' English skills, and thus I also tested the correlation between study years and strategies. There appeared only a very weak positive correlation between the number of study years and strategies 5, 17, and 24 (these strategies are described in the preceding paragraphs). Even though these correlations were very weak, these results were parallel with the results I got above in my correlation analysis between the learner's English skills and the use of strategies. These results may indicate that more experienced learners use these strategies more than beginners. In addition, there appeared a very weak negative correlation between the number of study years and strategies 10 (*say a word aloud repeatedly*) and 11 (*connect words to images or other physical objects*). These results may suggest that the use of these strategies decreases as the learner becomes more experienced.

5.2.3 Correlation between the use of different strategies

I tested whether there was any correlation between the use of different strategies – that is to say, whether the users of a particular strategy tended to favour some other strategies. None of the five most used strategies correlated with any other strategies. However, there appeared a statistically highly significant, moderate positive correlation between some other strategies that intermediate learners used more than beginners.

Strategy 5 (*If I cannot remember a word in a conversation, I use another one with a similar meaning*) correlated positively with strategy 17 (*If I cannot remember a word in a conversation, I describe it in my own words in the foreign language*). Both these strategies are among those that intermediate learners used more than beginners in this study. This result points to the fact that intermediate learners have larger vocabulary than beginners and are thus better equipped to hold a conversation and find alternative expressions.

Intermediate learners also used strategies 4 (*learning from films*) and 24 (*learning from books and magazines*) more than beginners, as described in the preceding subsection. Strategy 4 correlated with strategy 28, which concerns *interaction with native speakers*. Strategy 24, on the other hand, correlated with strategy 27, which dealt with *learning from the Internet*.

5.2.4 Reasons for studying English and strategy use

I also studied the correlations between the learners' strategy preferences and their reasons to study English at the Jyväskylä Adult Education Centre. The analysis showed that learners with different reasons for studying English partly preferred different vocabulary learning strategies, although the correlations were mainly weak. However, three groups with their own features can be distinguished by the correlations between reasons and strategies. I named these groups as *foreign acquaintances group, working life group,* and *mental well-being group* by the chosen reason. This group division is nonetheless not exclusive as the respondents were allowed to tick several reasons.

The first group includes those who replied that they needed English skills to communicate with their foreign acquaintances. There appeared a moderate positive correlation with the same themed strategy statement 28 (*I pick up words while interacting with native speakers*). There was also a weak positive correlation with strategies 4, 5, 17, 22, 24, and 27 (*using synonyms and circumlocutions, guessing the meanings from the contexts,* and *picking up words from the Internet, films, and printed media*). These correlations were unique to this group except for strategy 5 which correlated also with the reason *working life*.

Working life group refers to the learners who reported that they wanted to improve their English skills for working life. The average age of this group was younger than the overall average age of the respondents. Working life related reason correlated weakly positively with strategies 5 (*using synonyms*), 11 (*connecting words to physical objects*), and 25 (*picking up words from computer games*) and weakly negatively with strategies 9 (*remembering a word better if it is written down*), 19 (*translating words into mother tongue*), and 26 (*ignoring unknown words*). Four of six of these strategies correlated only with this reason.

Mental well-being group involves those who stated that studying supports their mental well-being. There was a weak positive correlation with strategies 2 (*revising words regularly at home*), 15 (*writing down words repeatedly*), and 20 (*grouping words together*). These strategies correlated only with this reason.

5.3 The most useful strategies

The second question in the questionnaire concerned the strategies that the learners found the most useful for themselves. The respondents were asked to choose the five most useful strategies in the table that was presented in the first question and fill in the numbers of those strategies in the blank spaces. The five most useful strategies were *remembering the word better if it is in written form*; *saying the word aloud repeatedly*; *revising words regularly*; *translating words into the mother tongue*, and *repeating the word mentally*. A full list is presented in Table 3 in the descending order by the sum values. The statement number of the questionnaire is included with each strategy. 90 percent of respondents answered this question (n=85).

Table 3. The most useful strategies

	Sum
9. I remember a word better if I see it written down.	57
10. I say a word aloud repeatedly in order to remember it.	42
2. I revise words regularly not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom.	41
19. I translate the words into my mother tongue to understand them.	37
21. I repeat the word mentally in order to remember it.	35
4. I pick up words from films and TV programmes I watch.	23
16. I read and leaf through a dictionary to learn some new words.	20
3. I test myself, for example, with word lists to check if I remember the words.	17
11. I connect words to images or other physical objects in order to remember them.	17
1. I make lists of words in a foreign language and write their translations in my mother tongue.	13
23. I listen to songs in the foreign language and try to understand the words.	13
27. I pick up words from the Internet.	13
5. If I cannot remember a word in a conversation, I use another one with a similar meaning.	11
12. I associate new words with the ones I already know.	11
22. I try to guess the meaning of a new word from the context.	11
28. I pick up words while interacting with native speakers.	10
15. I write down words repeatedly to remember them.	9
14. If I do not understand a word, I ask for help.	8
24. I pick up words while reading books and magazines in the foreign language.	8
17. If I cannot remember a word in a conversation, I describe it in my own words in the foreign language.	6
18. I imagine a sentence or context in which a new word could be used in order to remember it better.	6
7. I write down words while I read books and magazines in a foreign language for pleasure.	4
6. I analyse word parts in order to guess the meaning of a word.	3
26. If I encounter an unknown word, I ignore it if I understand what the text is about.	3
8. I plan for vocabulary learning in advance.	2
13. I write down words when I watch films and TV programmes in a foreign language.	2
25. I pick up words from computer games.	2
20. I group words together in order to remember them.	1

Table 4 below presents the comparison between the ten strategies that the respondents reported using most frequently (the first column) and the twelve strategies that they found the most useful for learning (the second column). The numbers differ from each other because there

are three equal scores in the tenth spot of the second column. The statements are in the order of frequency in the table. The statement number of the questionnaire is in brackets.

Table 4. The most used strategies and the most useful strategies

The most used strategies	The most useful strategies
I remember a word better if I see it written down. (9)	I remember a word better if I see it written down. (9)
I translate the words into my mother tongue to understand them. (19)	I say a word out loud repeatedly in order to remember it. (10)
I say a word out loud repeatedly in order to remember it. (10)	I revise words regularly not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom. (2)
I repeat the word mentally in order to remember it. (21)	I translate the words into my mother tongue to understand them. (19)
If I do not understand a word, I ask for help. (14)	I repeat the word mentally in order to remember it. (21)
If I cannot remember a word in a conversation, I use another one with a similar meaning. (5)	I pick up words from films and TV programmes I watch. (4)
I try to guess the meaning of a new word from the context. (22)	I read and leaf through a dictionary to learn some new words. (16) (*)
I revise words regularly not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom. (2)	I test myself, for example, with word lists to check if I remember the words. (3) (*)
I pick up words from films and TV programmes I watch. (4)	I connect words to images or other physical objects in order to remember them. (11) (*)
If I encounter an unknown word, I ignore it if I understand what the text is about. (26)	I make lists of words in a foreign language and write their translations in my mother tongue. (1) (*)
	I listen to songs in the foreign language and try to understand the words. (23) (*)
	I pick up words from the Internet. (27) (*)

The comparison shows that the first six strategies that the respondents estimated the most useful (the second column) were also among the ten most used strategies. However, rows 7-12 of the second column (marked with an asterisk *) list strategies that were not mentioned among the ten most used strategies. This indicates that the respondents, on average, did not use these strategies so frequently even though they saw them as advantageous for learning.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was to examine what were the most popular vocabulary learning strategies for adult learners of English studying in liberal adult education. I explored this topic by means of the following research questions:

1. What kinds of vocabulary learning strategies do adult learners of English use most?
2. How do the learner's age, gender, reasons for studying English, and level of language skills affect the use of strategies?
3. What do adult learners of English see as the most effective strategies for learning?

According to the results, the ten most frequent strategies for the respondents were respectively: *remembering a word better if it is written down, translating the words, repeating aloud, repeating mentally, asking for help, using synonyms in a conversation, guessing the meaning from the context, revising words regularly, picking up words from films and TV,* and *ignoring unknown words in a text*. There are both contextualised and decontextualised strategies among the ten most frequent strategies. The contextualised strategies were *using synonyms in a conversation, guessing from the context, picking up words from films and TV,* and *ignoring unknown words in a text*, and the decontextualised strategies were *repeating aloud, repeating mentally,* and *revising words regularly*. The remaining three of the top ten strategies, *remembering a word better if it is written down, translating the words,* and *asking for help*, may belong to both categories.

In the present study, many of the top ten strategies represent formal learning according to Pavičić Takač's (2008: 100) VLS taxonomy, and only two of the most frequent strategies belong to the class of spontaneous learning. The emphasis on formal learning may reflect the stage of learning of the respondents as they were studying English at the beginning or intermediate level. There was no self-initiated independent vocabulary learning strategies among the most frequent strategies. To advance in their skills, it would be beneficial for the respondents to increase the use of such self-initiated strategies. To become proficient, it is imperative to practise and use the language also outside of formal studies (Oxford 1990: 160). However, it is worth noting that studying at an adult education centre is voluntary, which blurs the classification between formal learning strategies and self-initiated independent vocabulary learning strategies in the present study.

The findings of the present study on the most frequent vocabulary learning strategies resemble the findings of several previous VLS studies. For example, translating and repeating are found to be among the most frequently used strategies in many VLS studies (e.g., Schmitt 1997: 215; Lawson and Hogben 1998: 190-191; Pavičić Takač 2008: 108, 111; Rogulj and Čizmić 2018: 44, 52, 54; Marttinen 2008: 81). This implies that some strategies may be universal core VLS since they are commonly used in various learning contexts (Pavičić Takač 2008: 144). As examples of such strategies, she mentions remembering words if they are written down, translating words into L1, and testing oneself using word lists, of which the former two are among the most used strategies of the present study.

There were also differences between my findings and the findings of some other studies. First, among the formal learning strategies, *the use of word lists* was not as popular a strategy in the present study as it has been in some previous studies (Schmitt 1997: 219; Rogulj and Čizmić 2018: 52; Kovanen 2014: the abstract). Second, in the category of spontaneous learning, *English language books and magazines* were used less, and *computer games* were used for learning only by few in the present study, whereas in Rogulj and Čizmić's (2018: 52) findings those strategies were among the most frequent. These findings most likely reflect the differences in proficiency and age distribution between the participants of the two studies, since the participants in Rogulj and Čizmić's (2018: 49, 53) study were advanced English learners and younger than the participants in the present study. In addition, some differences in findings originated from different questionnaires between the present study and previous studies. For example, my questionnaire did not include the strategy taking notes in class, which has been among the most frequent strategies in some previous studies (Schmitt 1997: 219; Jiménez Catalán 2003: 63).

The second research question dealt with the effects of learners' age, gender, reasons to study English, and level of language skills on their strategy use. I will discuss these factors in the following sections.

Most respondents belonged either to the age group of 55-64-year-olds (32 %) or 65-74-year-olds (54 %). The 65-74-year-olds used some strategies slightly more than the 55-64-year-olds. Different circumstances in life may partly explain the results: most 55-64-year-olds are in working age while 65-74-year-olds are of retirement age and may thus have more free time for studies in liberal adult education. According to the results of the present study and previous studies (e.g., Pawlak et al. 2018: 82, 86, 88; Ohly 2007: 101, cited in Pawlak et al. 2018: 80), learners of different ages may use similar vocabulary learning strategies, and age does not significantly affect strategy choices. However, there is only little research on language learning strategies of mature learners (Pawlak et al. 2018: 79-80). One of the few is Pawlak and others' (2018: 82, 86, 88) study on LLS of senior language learners of English in Poland. In the comparison between the findings of the present study and their study, I found the following similarities. *Translating words*, *oral repetition,* and *associations* were used by many respondents in both these studies. On the other hand, *planning for vocabulary learning in advance* was not a common strategy in either of these studies. There appeared also one difference: *asking for help* was one of the most used strategies in the present study but not a common strategy in their findings. Nonetheless, data collection methods differ between the two studies, and thus the results are not fully comparable.

Nevertheless, the age factor has relevance to learning as it is linked to the amount of language exposure a person has experienced during lifetime as well as experiences on language learning and knowledge on different strategies. Senior citizens may have had less English language studies in their formal education than other age groups do on average in Finland. At present, almost all the pupils in Finnish-speaking basic education study English (Hämäläinen et al. 2007: 59), whereas in the present study, 60% of the respondents had studied English in their compulsory education. Another factor related to ageing is that older learners may have low expectations of their own capability to learn a foreign language (Singleton 2018: 22; Kliesch et al. 2018: 50), which may negatively affect their efforts to learn. Ageing also affects memory, but changes are individual and normal age-related memory loss is very mild (Kuikka and

Pulliainen 1995: 429-430, 439). In addition, age-related hearing loss may impede language learning in late adulthood (Kliesch et al. 2018: 53; Singleton 2018: 19).

The present study did not show much correlation between the gender and VLS choices since men and women used VLS just as frequently, and the differences in strategy preferences were small. The most used strategies were mainly the same even though the order varied a little. The results of the present study differ from some previous studies (Jiménez Catalán 2003: 54; Oxford and Nyikos 1989: 295; Willing 1988, cited in Oxford 1994: 146) that have found that women use strategies more frequently. Nonetheless, there were minor differences in strategy preferences between men and women in the present study. Men used slightly more the strategy *connecting words to images or other physical objects*, and women used slightly more the following three strategies: *guessing from the context, making lists of words in a foreign language and writing the translations,* and *saying a word aloud repeatedly*. These results are partly similar with the previous findings that males use more image vocabulary learning strategies than females (Jiménez Catalán 2003: 66) and that a visual learning style may be slightly more common for men and an auditory style for women (Oxford 1994: 143). The implication of the findings for teaching is that VLS training should be diverse in order to cater for the needs of different students.

The present study also yielded information about varying reasons to study English at leisure classes. The two most popular reasons for the respondents to study English were *travelling* and *mental well-being*. Many also mentioned *foreign acquaintances* or the wish *to get to know new people at the adult education centre* as their reasons to study English. *Working life* was also a reason for some respondents. In the open-ended responses, the respondents also described that they study English because it is needed more and more in everyday life. Other reasons mentioned were mental exercise and supporting effect on memory functions. Some also described that studying is fun and refreshing. Previous studies have found correspondingly that the third-age learners study a foreign language to keep themselves mentally active, socialise with other people, travel abroad, or feel satisfaction for learning (Pawlak et al. 2018: 85; Viktorova et al. 2018: 25, 27).

My analysis showed there were correlations between the learners' reasons to study English and their vocabulary learning strategies. Some strategies clustered in relation to different reasons to study, and I identified three distinct groups by these correlations: *foreign acquaintances group, working life group,* and *mental well-being group*. Correspondingly, Gu and Johnson (1996, cited in Nation 2001: 225-226) have distinguished VLS clusters and different learner types based on these clusters. In the present study, six of seven of the strategies that correlated positively with the reason *foreign acquaintances* represent category spontaneous vocabulary learning in Pavičić Takač's (2008: 100) classification model. This category refers to naturalistic learning situations and communication strategies. The respondents who reported *foreign acquaintances* as their reason for studying English came across as learners who used English in diverse ways outside the classroom and used authentic language materials. They also evaluated their English skills higher on average than the other respondents. These findings indicate that there is a connection between diverse, naturalistic learning strategies and better language skills, which is also confirmed in previous studies (e.g., Oxford 1990: 10; Kojic-Sabo and Lightbown 1999: 189-190). A few strategies also correlated either weakly positively or

weakly negatively with the reason *working life*. The respondents, who studied English for *working life*, slightly favoured spontaneous vocabulary learning and avoided formal vocabulary learning. The learners in this group were younger on average than the other respondents, and thus their different education history may explain this variation in the strategy choices. As for *mental well-being*, three strategies correlated weakly positively with that reason: *revising words regularly at home, writing down words repeatedly,* and *grouping words together*. These three strategies may relate to the course material, but it is not clear what their connection to the reason *mental well-being* is. One possible explanation may be found in the open-ended responses where some participants stated that taking English courses itself was fun and supported memory functions. Thus, the participation itself was perceived as important, which perhaps highlighted the relevance of the course material and formal vocabulary learning.

The respondents were studying English at the beginning or intermediate level. There appeared some correlations between the learners' English skills and their choices of vocabulary learning strategies. The learners, who evaluated their skills higher, reported more frequent use of some contextualised, naturalistic VLS. These learners *used more often synonyms in conversations* if they did not remember the right word. They may also *use more circumlocution in conversations, communicate more with native speakers,* and *learn words more frequently from English language books, magazines, films, and TV programmes*. On the other hand, the results also showed that a couple of decontextualised strategies - *repeating words aloud* and *connecting words to images or other physical objects* - were more frequent strategies for the beginners than for the more experienced learners.

Previous studies have yielded similar results: more proficient learners employ VLS more often (Pavičić 1999, 2000 in Pavičić Takač 2008: 73) and may have a wider repertoire of VLS (Gu and Johnson 1996, cited in Nation 2001: 219; Oxford and Nyikos 1989: 291). As in the present study, previous studies (O'Malley et al. 1985: 565-567, 575; Gu and Johnson 1996, cited in Nation 2001: 225-226; Schmitt 1997: 224) have also found that beginning learners use more decontextualised strategies, while more proficient learners prefer the strategies that involve contextualisation and deeper processing. On the other hand, translation was the second most common strategy in the present study, and its use did not correlate with skill levels. This result differs from O'Malley and others' (1985: 565-567, 575) finding that beginning students used more translation.

The third research question concerned the usefulness of different vocabulary learning strategies. The learners already used frequently the following strategies they found the most useful: *remembering the word better if it is in written form, repeating aloud, revising words regularly, translating the words, repeating mentally,* and *picking up words from films and TV*. However, some of the strategies that were evaluated the most useful were not in frequent use: *read and leaf through a dictionary to learn some new words; test myself (for example, with word lists),* and *connect words to images or other physical objects*. The strategies the respondents found the most useful are mainly decontextualised, shallow processing strategies. This finding indicates that the learners could benefit from strategy training on contextualised, deeper processing strategies.

Many of the strategies the respondents found useful in the present study are mentioned as useful also in previous VLS studies. Inter alia the following strategies are described as useful for vocabulary learning: dictionary use (Gu 1994: 3, 13-14; Schmitt 1997: 219, 221), translation

(Oxford 1990: 84-85; Prince 1996: 478, 488), inference followed by dictionary use (Hardi 2010: 115, 118, 123-124), repetition (Gu and Johnson 1996, cited in Oxford 2011: 255; Schmitt 1997: 215), analysis (Schmitt 1997: 223-225; Craik and Tulving 1975: 282-283, 291), association (Schmitt 1997: 223-225), connecting words with synonyms and antonyms (Schmitt 1997: 223-225), length and complexity of the sentences (Kristiansen 1998: 53, 63; Craik and Tulving 1975: 282-283, 291), learning in context (Gu and Johnson 1996, cited in Nation 2001: 225-226), relating new vocabulary to prior knowledge and to learners' own experiences (Sökmen 1997: 242; Craik and Lockhart 1972: 675, 677; Schmitt 1997: 223-225), learning through natural exposure (Gu and Johnson 1996, cited in Nation 2001: 225-226), selective attention (Gu and Johnson 1996, cited in Nation 2001: 225-226), guessing from the context (Rubin 1975: 45-47; Gu 1994: 3, 13-14; Nation and Waring 1997: 11; Schmitt and McCarthy 1997: 3; Schmitt 1997: 223-225; Nation 2001: 16, 20), reading extensively (Nation 2001: 16; Nation and Waring 1997: 11; Schmitt and McCarthy 1997: 3); combining learning from word lists and learning from context (Prince 1996: 478, 488), and combining a metacognitive and a specific vocabulary learning strategy (Nyikos and Fan 2007: 273, cited in Oxford 2011: 256).

The trustworthiness of a study can be assessed in terms of validity and reliability. Validity indicates the extent to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure (Heikkilä 2004: 186). Reliability means that the measurements can be repeated and similar results obtained (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009: 231). The validity of the present study can be considered moderate and reliability fairly good. The response rate of this study was good, 62.3%, which supports the validity of the results. As the base of my questionnaire was Pavičić Takač's (2008: 157-158) questionnaire VOLSQES, which has been previously tested, and I modified it only a little to adapt it for the target group of my study. The questions dealt with vocabulary learning strategies in various ways, which improves validity. The questionnaire and the analysis of the results yielded the answers to the research questions on the respondents' preferences about VLS. In addition, I asked a few people to pretest the questionnaire to make sure that the questions were clear and understandable. On the other hand, the validity of the present study is affected negatively by the fact that Pavičić Takač's (2008: 157-158) questionnaire VOLSQES was aimed at pupils in basic education, and the pilot testing with a more extensive questionnaire concerned that age group. Thus, for further study, validity could be enhanced by conducting a similar pilot testing for adults, too. In addition, I estimate that the reliability of the present study is fairly good since the findings are in line with previous studies. Reliability could be ensured best by repeating the survey. Another limitation in the present study was that learners' proficiency levels were based on their own evaluations, and thus more research is needed to clarify the link between proficiency and strategy use.

Research has shown that LLS training enhances learning and language proficiency (Oxford 1990: 201, 236) and may significantly improve the learner's vocabulary performance (Nyikos and Fan 2007: 273, cited in Oxford 2011: 256). The questionnaire of the present study did not deal with teaching, and thus I do not know what kind of strategy training the respondents have received. However, based on the results, more strategy training could be useful for them in order to help them to diversify their strategy repertoires.

The present study confirmed the findings of many earlier studies of frequency of VLS use and increased knowledge of the ways how adults learn language. This knowledge can be utilised

in teaching and supporting independent vocabulary learning. In addition, this study increased knowledge of the reasons why adults study language in liberal adult education.

For further study, the survey could be developed by adding an open-ended question where respondents would be asked to mention strategies not included in the questionnaire. In addition, the questionnaire could contain more examples of deep processing strategies. Besides a questionnaire, an interview would be a useful method to learn more about the VLS of respondents.

The concept of vocabulary learning strategies may be criticised for an oversimplified representation of language learning that does not capture the overall learning process. In addition, VLS taxonomies may be fuzzy and different strategy groups overlapping with each other (Oxford 1990: 16-17, 22). However, the models of VLS may be used as one approach to explore the ways how students learn and what learning methods good learners use.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Questionnaire in Finnish

Millä tavoilla sinä opit vieraan kielen sanoja?

Virpi Pietiläisen pro gradu -tutkimuksen kysely

Hyvä Jyväskylän kansalaisopiston englannin opiskelija!

Olen Jyväskylän yliopiston englannin opiskelija ja selvitän pro gradu -tutkimuksessani sitä, millaisia menetelmiä Jyväskylän kansalaisopiston englanninopiskelijat käyttävät oppiakseen vieraan kielen sanoja.

Pyydän, että vastaisit tähän kyselyyn ja palauttaisit kyselyn kansalaisopiston englannin opettajallesi viimeistään marraskuun 2019 viimeisellä oppitunnilla. Kyselyyn vastaaminen vie noin 10–20 minuuttia. Saamani vastaukset käsittelen luottamuksellisesti ja käytän niitä ainoastaan tämän tutkimuksen aineistona. Tutkimuksessa ei kerätä mitään henkilötietoja.

Ystävällisin terveisin

Virpi Pietiläinen

Kysymykset

1. Seuraavan sivun taulukossa on esitetty väitteitä vieraan kielen sanojen oppimisesta. Merkitse taulukkoon jokaisen väitteen kohdalle, miten usein sinä käytät kyseistä menetelmää sanojen oppimiseen.

Ohje vastaamiseen: Vastaa taulukon jokaiseen kohtaan 1–28. Valitse jokaisen väitteen kohdalla yksi seuraavista vaihtoehdoista: **1 = ei koskaan, 2 = joskus ja 3 = usein**. Vastaa ympyröimällä sopiva vaihtoehto tai merkitsemällä rasti ruutuun sopivan vaihtoehdon kohdalla.

Vieraita kieliä voi oppia monin tavoin, eikä taulukon väitteisiin ole oikeita tai vääriä vastauksia. Vastaa siis sillä perusteella, **miten sinä todella toimit**. Älä mieti, mitä menetelmiä sinun pitäisi käyttää tai mitä menetelmiä joku toinen käyttää kielen oppimiseen.

		Ei koskaan	Joskus	Usein
1	Teen sanalistoja vieraan kielen sanoista ja kirjoitan sanojen käännökset äidinkielelläni.	1	2	3
2	Kertaan sanoja säännöllisesti muulloinkin kuin oppitunneilla.	1	2	3
3	Testaan osaamistani esimerkiksi sanalistoilla tarkistaakseni, muistanko sanat.	1	2	3
4	Opin sanoja elokuvista ja tv-ohjelmista.	1	2	3
5	Jos en keskustelussa muista jotain sanaa, käytän toista, samanmerkityksistä sanaa.	1	2	3
6	Analysoin sanan osia, jotta arvaisin sanan merkityksen.	1	2	3
7	Kirjoitan sanoja muistiin vieraskielisistä kirjoista ja lehdistä, joita luen vapaa-ajallani.	1	2	3
8	Suunnittelen sanaston opettelua etukäteen.	1	2	3
9	Muistan sanan paremmin, jos näen sen kirjoitettuna.	1	2	3
10	Toistan sanaa ääneen muistaakseni sen.	1	2	3
11	Painan sanat mieleeni yhdistämällä ne kuviin tai muihin fyysisiin kohteisiin.	1	2	3
12	Yhdistän mielessäni uudet sanat entuudestaan tuttuihin sanoihin.	1	2	3
13	Kirjoitan sanoja muistiin vieraskielisistä elokuvista ja tv-ohjelmista.	1	2	3
14	Jos en ymmärrä jotain sanaa, kysyn neuvoa.	1	2	3
15	Kirjoitan sanoja muistiin monta kertaa, jotta oppisin ne.	1	2	3
16	Luen ja selaan sanakirjaa oppiakseni uusia sanoja.	1	2	3
17	Jos en muista keskustelussa jotain vieraskielistä sanaa, kuvailen sitä kyseisen kielen muilla sanoilla.	1	2	3
18	Kuvittelen, millaisissa lauseissa tai asiayhteyksissä uutta sanaa voisi käyttää, jotta muistaisin sen paremmin.	1	2	3
19	Käännän sanat äidinkielelleni ymmärtääkseni ne.	1	2	3
20	Ryhmittelen sanoja muistaakseni ne.	1	2	3
21	Toistan sanaa mielessäni muistaakseni sen.	1	2	3
22	Yritän arvata uuden sanan merkityksen asiayhteydestä.	1	2	3
23	Kuuntelen vieraskielistä musiikkia ja yritän ymmärtää sanat.	1	2	3
24	Opin sanoja vieraskielisistä kirjoista ja lehdistä.	1	2	3
25	Opin sanoja tietokonepeleistä.	1	2	3
26	Jätän vieraan sanan tekstissä huomiotta, jos muuten ymmärrän tekstin.	1	2	3
27	Opin sanoja internetistä.	1	2	3
28	Opin sanoja keskustellessani vieraskielisten kanssa.	1	2	3

2. Mitkä edellisen sivun taulukossa luetelluista menetelmistä auttavat sinua parhaiten oppimaan vieraan kielen sanoja? Valitse viisi (5) menetelmää, jotka sinä olet kokenut itsellesi hyödyllisimmäksi ja merkitse niiden numerot alla oleville viivoille a–e.

Menetelmien numerot löytyvät edellisen sivun taulukon ensimmäisestä sarakkeesta. Menetelmiä ei tarvitse merkitä tärkeysjärjestykseen.

Opin vieraan kielen sanoja parhaiten seuraavilla menetelmillä:

a) _____ b) _____ c) _____

d) _____ e) _____

Taustatietoja

3. Mikä on sukupuolesi?

a) ☐ Nainen

b) ☐ Mies

4. Mihin ikäryhmään kuulut?

a) ☐ alle 25-vuotias

b) ☐ 25–34 vuotta

c) ☐ 35–44 vuotta

d) ☐ 45–54 vuotta

e) ☐ 55–64 vuotta

f) ☐ 65–74 vuotta

g) ☐ 75-vuotias tai yli

5. Kuinka arvioit englannin taitoasi seuraavien vaihtoehtojen valossa?
Vastaa kaikkiin kohtiin a-d.

	1 Vaivatto-masti	2 Suhteellisen sujuvasti	3 Kohtalai-sesti	4 Vaivalloi-sesti	5 Vain yksittäisiä sanoja	6 En lainkaan
a) Puhun englantia	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) Kirjoitan englantia	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) Luen englantia	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) Ymmärrän puhuttua englantia	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6. Merkitse viivoille, montako vuotta tai kuukautta olet opiskellut englantia eri paikoissa tai vaiheissa.

a) Ennen kouluikää _____ vuotta _____ kuukautta

b) Oppivelvollisuusiässä (7–16 v.) _____ vuotta _____ kuukautta

c) Lukiossa _____ vuotta _____kuukautta

d) Ammatillisessa koulutuksessa _____ vuotta _____ kuukautta

e) Ammattikorkeakoulussa _____ vuotta _____ kuukautta

f) Yliopistossa _____ vuotta_____ kuukautta

g) Kansalais- ja työväenopistossa _____ vuotta _____ kuukautta

h) Kansanopistossa _____ vuotta _____ kuukautta

i) Työnantajan järjestämillä kursseilla _____ vuotta_____ kuukautta

j) Kielikursseilla ulkomailla _____ vuotta _____ kuukautta

k) Itseopiskeluna _____ vuotta _____ kuukautta

7. Miksi opiskelet englantia Jyväskylän kansalaisopistossa? Voit valita useamman vaihtoehdon.

a) ☐ Haluan parantaa englannin kielen taitoani työelämää varten.

b) ☐ Haluan parantaa englannin kielen taitoani muita opintojani varten.

c) ☐ Haluan parantaa englannin kielen taitoani matkailua varten.

d) ☐ Tarvitsen englannin kielen taitoa kommunikoidakseni vieraskielisten tuttavieni kanssa.

e) ☐ Haluan tutustua uusiin ihmisiin kansalaisopiston ryhmässä.

f) ☐ Opiskelu tukee henkistä hyvinvointiani.

g) ☐ Muu syy, mikä?

_____

_____

Kiitos vastauksista!

Appendix 2. Questionnaire in English

The questionnaire adapted from the Vocabulary learning strategy questionnaire (VOLSQES) by Pavičić Takač.

Pavičić Takač, V. 2008. Vocabulary learning strategies and foreign language acquisition. Multilingual Matters.

Questions

1. In the following table, there are statements about learning words in a foreign language. For each of these statements, please choose the response that best describes how often you use the method to learn words in a foreign language.

Instructions: For each statement 1–28 in the table, choose between the three options: **1 = never, 2 = sometimes, or 3 = often**. Please provide your response by circling or ticking the appropriate number.

Foreign languages can be learnt in various ways, and there are no right or wrong answers to these statements. Please indicate how you act in reality, rather than how you think you should act or how somebody else acts.

		Never	Sometimes	Often
1	I make lists of words in a foreign language and write their translations in my mother tongue.	1	2	3
2	I revise words regularly not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom.	1	2	3
3	I test myself, for example, with word lists to check if I remember the words.	1	2	3
4	I pick up words from films and TV programmes I watch.	1	2	3
5	If I cannot remember a word in a conversation, I use another one with a similar meaning.	1	2	3
6	I analyse word parts in order to guess the meaning of a word.	1	2	3
7	I write down words while I read books and magazines in a foreign language for pleasure.	1	2	3
8	I plan for vocabulary learning in advance.	1	2	3
9	I remember a word better if I see it written down.	1	2	3
10	I say a word aloud repeatedly in order to remember it.	1	2	3
11	I connect words to images or other physical objects in order to remember them.	1	2	3
12	I associate new words with the ones I already know.	1	2	3
13	I write down words when I watch films and TV programmes in a foreign language.	1	2	3
14	If I do not understand a word, I ask for help.	1	2	3
15	I write down words repeatedly to remember them.	1	2	3
16	I read and leaf through a dictionary to learn some new words.	1	2	3
17	If I cannot remember a word in a conversation, I describe it in my own words in the foreign language.	1	2	3
18	I imagine a sentence or context in which a new word could be used in order to remember it better.	1	2	3
19	I translate words into my mother tongue to understand them.	1	2	3
20	I group words together in order to remember them.	1	2	3
21	I repeat the word mentally in order to remember it.	1	2	3
22	I try to guess the meaning of a new word from the context.	1	2	3
23	I listen to songs in the foreign language and try to understand the words.	1	2	3
24	I pick up words while reading books and magazines in the foreign language.	1	2	3
25	I pick up words from computer games.	1	2	3
26	If I encounter an unknown word, I ignore it if I understand what the text is about.	1	2	3
27	I pick up words from the Internet.	1	2	3
28	I pick up words while interacting with native speakers.	1	2	3

2. Which of the methods listed above help you best to learn words in a foreign language? Please choose five (5) methods that you find the most useful for yourself and fill in the numbers of those methods in the blank spaces (a–e) below.

You can find the numbers of the methods in the first column of the table. You do not have to sort the methods into an order of importance.

I learn words in a foreign language best by using following methods:

a) _____ b) _____ c) _____

d) _____ e) _____

Background questions

3. What is your gender?

a) ☐ Female

b) ☐ Male

4. What is your age range?

a) ☐ under 25 years

b) ☐ 25–34 years

c) ☐ 35–44 years

d) ☐ 45–54 years

e) ☐ 55–64 years

f) ☐ 65–74 years

g) ☐ 75 and above

5. How do you evaluate your skills in English according to the options below? Please answer all items a–d.

	1 Fluently	2 Fairly fluently	3 Moderately	4 With difficulty	5 Only a few words	6 Not at all
a) I speak English	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) I write English	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) I read English	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) I understand spoken English	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6. Please mark on the lines below how many years or months you have studied English in different settings.

a) Before school _____ years _____ months

b) Compulsory education (7–16 yrs.) _____ years _____ months

c) Upper secondary school _____ years _____months

d) Vocational education _____ years _____ months

e) University of applied sciences _____ years _____ months

f) University _____ years_____ months

g) Adult education centre _____ years _____ months

h) Folk high school _____ years _____ months

i) Courses provided by your employer _____ years_____ months

j) Language courses abroad _____ years _____ months

k) Self-study _____ years _____ months

7. For which of the following reasons do you study English at the Jyväskylä Adult Education Centre? You can choose several options.

a) ☐ I want to improve my skills in English for working life.

b) ☐ I want to improve my skills in English for my other studies.

c) ☐ I want to improve my skills in English for travelling abroad.

d) ☐ I need English skills to communicate with my foreign acquaintances.

e) ☐ I want to get to know new people at the adult education centre.

f) ☐ Studying supports my mental well-being.

g) ☐ Other reason (what?)

_____

_____

Thank you for your answers!