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OUT-OF-CLASSROOM LANGUAGE LEARNING

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INTRODUCTION:

PERSPECTIVES ON OUT-OF-CLASSROOM LEARNING

A high level and wide range of languages and communication skills are needed in the modern academic world where students live and in the professional world that awaits them. Globalization, the Internet and various new forms of information technology and social media have dramatically changed our students' linguistic environment in recent decades. Language use, functions, situations and contexts extend outside the classroom more than ever before. Language and communication skills have therefore become an essential personal, social and professional survival skill. Furthermore, while language skills may be developed in language courses led by professional language teachers, this learning activity extends to a variety of academic and everyday activities. This collection of articles discusses various ways of recognizing and supporting this type of out-of-classroom language learning.

This is the second volume in the Helsinki University Language Centre ¹ Publication Series, the first being Leena Karlsson's (2008) doctoral dissertation *Turning the Kaleidoscope: (E)FL Educational Experience and Inquiry as Auto/biography*. The current volume has emerged from a range of activities in the Language Centre that maintain and develop our expertise in teaching and research through in-house pedagogical training, research seminars and reading groups. This book is also an excellent example of the functional collaboration between teachers and administrative staff that happily exists in our language centre.

The articles in the book itself are based on various types of research, including small-scale action-research projects. The starting point is practical and pragmatic. However, many of our courses promote learner-centredness, and it is also part of the official strategy of the Language Centre to emphasize it in its pedagogical approaches. This has led us to become aware of the importance of out-of-classroom learning. In this context, both our role as teacher-researchers and teacher research itself have become essential. As language centre teachers, we integrate teaching,

¹ For detailed information about Helsinki University Language Centre, see our homepage: <http://www.helsinki.fi/kksc/english/index.html>

research and professional development. This ensures professional growth, encourages innovation in pedagogical practice and helps produce teacher-generated educational knowledge. Our strength is in pedagogical research skills and collaboration, and this is demonstrated by the very existence of this book.

The book is arranged around three core themes, which emerged from the drafts sent to the editors. The writers had complete freedom in choosing a topic they themselves considered relevant and pertinent in their own teaching. These themes could be categorized as the out-of-classroom learning experiences in student exchange programmes, the accreditation of out-of-classroom learning, and the independent learning that takes place outside the classroom. Some of the articles are based on a detailed discussion of individual case studies; others are based on an analysis of larger groups of students. Thus, the articles published here represent a wide variety of approaches and topics connected to the wider context of higher education and will hopefully provide a significant contribution to the current discussion.

The first theme, out-of-classroom experiences in student exchange programmes, consists of articles that focus on the language and learning experiences of Finnish university exchange students in Spanish-speaking countries (Matilainen), then English by alternative means in the Faculty of Medicine (Siddall & Pitkänen), and finally the Language Centre ALICE courses (Academic Language and Intercultural Exchange) in which the students maintain and develop their language skills and intercultural awareness by working in (Tandem) pairs (Kuokkanen-Kekki & Niedling).

The second main theme focuses on the accreditation of out-of-classroom learning. Under this theme, we discuss APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning) and ways of making out-of-classroom language learning visible in language centre(s) (Karjalainen & Laulajainen), then Master of Laws students demonstrating their out-of-classroom learning (Lehtonen), and finally the concepts of lifewide and lifedeep learning within the context of learner autonomy (Karlsson & Kjisik).

The third main theme could be called independent learning outside the classroom. Here, the focus is on activities which extend the classroom activities. We discuss our advanced-level English Academic and Professional Skills (EAPS) courses (Moncrief), then listening activities outside the classroom without teacher supervision (Broemer & Virkkunen-Fullenwider). We follow this with a study of the use of podcasts in language learning (Auvinen & Peltonen) and finally we consider

the case of a student who has experienced learning difficulties in her language education (Ervola).

The book also invites the reader to consider learner autonomy, a theme currently relevant in the wider education sector. At our language centre, discussing all of these themes, writing the articles and putting the book together have also fulfilled the original idea of increasing in-house collaboration and discussion on interesting, pedagogically-oriented topics, and we hope you will find it as important and engaging as we have.

Kari K. Pitkänen and the editors
University of Helsinki Language Centre
Helsinki, January 2011.

ESPANJANKIELISESSÄ MAASSA VAIHDOS- OLLEIDEN KORKEAKOULUOPISKELIJOIDEN KIELI- JA OPPIMISKOKEMUKSIA

Mirjami Matilainen

Student exchange is an excellent and effective way to improve one's linguistic skills and familiarise oneself with the local culture. Eighteen university students responded to my questionnaire about their experiences as exchange students in Spanish-speaking countries. They all claimed that their language skills had developed tremendously, even in cases in which the student only had elementary studies of Spanish before the exchange. In particular, their oral communication and listening skills improved. According to my findings, it is worth spending at least half a year on an exchange, because the learning process is at its best after three to four months in the foreign country. After seven months the learning speed slows down a little. The students were surprised to see that their Spanish became more fluent without their noticing. After two months most of the students realized that they suddenly understood almost everything they heard, although listening comprehension had been particularly difficult in the beginning, even in cases in which the student had studied Spanish in Finland for many years before the exchange. This quick learning can be partly explained by the fact that the locals do not generally speak English and therefore the students were forced to communicate with them in Spanish. The decision not to use English with the other students was also essential in the learning process. All the students who replied to my email questionnaire thought that an exchange was the most effective way to learn to speak and understand a foreign language.

JOHDANTO

”Ennen kuin vastaan kyselyyn voin jo sanoa, etten olisi ikinä uskonut miten paljon kieltä vaihdossa oppii”. Näin kommentoi 10 kuukautta Madridissa vaihdossa ollut opiskelija. Samaa mieltä ovat olleet muutkin tutkimukseeni osallistuneet opiskelijat.

Suomen korkeakouluopiskelijoilla on useita eri mahdollisuuksia lähteä vaihtoon espanjankielisiin maihin. Espanja on mukana vuonna 1987 perustetussa EU:n ERASMUS-ohjelmassa (The European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) ja suomalaiset opiskelijat ovat voineet osallistua tähän ohjelmaan lukuvuodesta 1991-1992 lähtien. On myös korkeakoulujen omat sopimukset ja opiskelijoiden itsensä hankkimat free-mover-paikat. Latinalaisen Amerikan maihin, erityisesti Chileen, Argentiinaan ja Meksikoon, voi mennä vaihtoon esimerkiksi CIMOn hallinnoimien maaohjelmien kautta. Peruun on

mahdollista hakea vaihtoon NSS-ohjelman (North-South-South) kautta. Noin puolet Suomesta lähtevistä korkeakouluopiskelijoista liikkuu ERASMUS-ohjelman kautta. Opiskelijoiden liikkuvuuden merkitys on huomioitu vuonna 1999 alkunsa saaneessa korkeakoulutuksen Bolognan prosessissa, jossa on asetettu yhdeksi keskeiseksi tavoitteeksi opiskelijoiden liikkuvuuden lisääminen ja helpottaminen. Kansallisella tasolla Opetusministeriö on asettanut korkeakoulujen kansainvälistymisstrategiassa (2009-2015) tavoitteeksi saada vuoteen 2015 mennessä kuusi prosenttia opiskelijoista vuosittain opiskelemaan tai harjoittelemaan ulkomaille vähintään viikoksi. Tämä on 2,2 prosenttiyksikköä enemmän vuoteen 2007 verrattuna. (Korkeakoulujen kansainvälistymisstrategia 2009-2015, 30.)

Kansainvälisen liikkuvuuden ja yhteistyön keskus CIMO on kerännyt ja julkaissut vuosittaisia tilastoja kansainvälisestä liikkuvuudesta korkeakouluissa vuodesta 1998 lähtien. Vuotta 2008 käsittelevän raportin mukaan Euroopan merkitys korkeakoulujen vaihto-opiskelijoiden kohdemaana on viime vuosina hieman vähentynyt, kun taas Aasian osuus on vuorostaan kasvanut. Euroopan kolme suosituinta kohdemaata olivat vuonna 2008 Espanja, Saksa ja Britannia. Vuosina 2006 ja 2007 asetelma oli vielä toisin: suosituin oli Saksa, sitten Britannia ja Espanja tuolloin vasta kolmantena. Espanjaan lähti vuonna 2008 ammatti-korkeakouluista ja yliopistoista yhteensä 760 opiskelijaa, mikä on noin yhdeksän prosenttia kaikista kyseisenä vuonna ulkomaille lähteneistä korkeakouluopiskelijoista. Saksaan lähti 754 ja Britanniaan 634. Kyseisenä vuonna Suomen korkeakouluista lähti noin 240 henkilöä vaihtoon Latinalaiseen Amerikkaan ja Karibian alueelle. Suosituimmiksi maiksi nousivat Meksiko, Argentiina ja Chile.

TUTKIMUS JA AINEISTO

Kiinnostuin tutkimaan opiskelijoitteni kielen oppimista vaihdossa erityisesti sen jälkeen, kun huomasin, kuinka valtavasti joidenkin kielitaito oli kehittynyt lyhyenkin vaihdon aikana. Halusin myös selvittää, miten aivan alkeistason opiskelijat pärjäsivät vaihdossa. Siksi syksyllä 2009 kyselin opiskelijoiltani Helsingin Yliopiston Kielikeskuksessa oppituntieni yhteydessä, kuka oli ollut vaihdossa espanjankielisessä maassa, ja tunsivatko opiskelijat vaihdossa olevia tai olleita. He auttoivat erittäin mielellään, ja sain kokoon noin kolmenkymmenen vaihdossa olleen yhteystiedot.

Lähestyin vaihdossa olleita opiskelijoita sähköpostitse. 18 opiskelijaa vastasi kahden sivun mittaiseen avokysymyksistä koostuvaan kyselyyni. Tiedustelin heiltä, mitä ja kuinka kauan he opiskelivat vaihtopaikassa, millaiset espanjan kielen taidot heillä oli ennen vaihtoa, miten tämä vaikutti kohdemaassa, miten paljon he käyttivät espanjaa vaihdossa ja miten kielitaito edistyi vaihdon aikana. Kysyin myös, mitkä asiat tai tilanteet he olivat kokeneet vaikeiksi kohdemaassa ja millä tavoin he olivat kokeneet vaihdon hyödyllisenä. Lopussa pyysin kutakin opiskelijaa kertomaan vapaasti vaihtoajan kieli- ja oppimiskokemuksistaan. Osalta vastaajista sain myös spontaania palautetta kotimaan kielikursseista ja niiden merkityksestä.

Kaikki kyselyyn vastanneet ovat korkeakouluopiskelijoita Helsingin yliopiston eri tiedekunnista, ja heistä suurin osa oli vaihdossa opiskelijana, eikä esimerkiksi työharjoittelijana. Ainoastaan yhden opiskelijan pääaineena on espanjalainen filologia. Ennen vaihtoa hankittu kielitaito oli kolmen kohdalla peräisin lukiosta ja muilla Kielikeskuksen kursseilta. Moni oli ollut vaihdossa joitain vuosia aiemmin, muutama oli kyselyyn vastatessaan parasta aikaa vaihdossa.

Kielen oppimista vaihdossa ovat tutkineet mm. Friedhelm Maiworm ja Ulrich Teichler. Heidän tutkimuksensa (1991, 1994, 1997) perustuvat vuosina 1988-89 ERASMUS-vaihdossa olleille opiskelijoille tehtyyn laajan kyselyyn, jossa opiskelijat vastasivat erityisesti kohdemaassa opiskeluun, asumiseen, elämiseen, kulttuuriin ja kielen oppimiseen liittyviin kysymyksiin. Tutustuin kyseiseen tutkimukseen, kun olin jo läpikäynyt oman tutkimusmateriaalini. Tulokset kielen oppimisen suhteen osoittautuivat yllättävän samanlaisiksi.

OPPIMISTA HELPOTTAVAT TEKIJÄT

Opiskelijoiden vastauksista hahmottui erityisesti kolme eri tekijää, jotka helpottivat espanjan kielen oppimista kohdemaassa: 1) kielen kanssa oli jatkuvasti tekemisissä ja sitä oli yksinkertaisesti pakko alkaa ymmärtää ja puhua pärjätäkseen, 2) aiemmat espanjan opinnot auttoivat merkittävästi vaihdon alussa ja nopeuttivat oppimista jatkossa sekä 3) oma motivaatio oppia kieltä lisäsi rohkeutta muun muassa puheen tuottamisessa.

JATKUVA KIELEN LÄSNÄOLO

Vaihdossa ollessa kielen oppiminen tapahtuu monille ikään kuin huomaamatta. Kyselyyn vastanneet ovat lähes yksimielisiä siitä, että on lähdeittävä vaihtoon, jotta oppisi kieltä hyvin. Arkinen asiointi on usein pakko osata hoitaa espanjan kielellä, sillä paikalliset eivät yleensä puhu englantia. Asunnon hankinta ja opintojen aloittaminen vievät opiskelijan heti kieli-aidon kannalta haastaviin tilanteisiin. Oma rohkeus kielen käyttöön löytyy yllättävän nopeasti, eikä virheiden tekemistä enää pelkää. Moni yllättyy omasta rohkeudestaan ja huomaa yhtäkkiä uskaltavansa puhua. Aluksi ymmärtäminen tuntuu monelle ylipääse-mättömältä, varsinkin jos puherytmi on nopeaa tai kielessä esiintyy nuorisoslangille tyypillisiä ilmauksia. Alueen murre ja aksentti hankaloittavat luonnollisesti alkua. Kuitenkin tilanteissa, joissa opiskelija ei ole aluksi ymmärtänyt omasta mielestään oikein mitään, on vastaajien oman näkemyksen mukaan aina tapahtunut iso kehitys vähintään kahden kuukauden oleskelun jälkeen. Lukiossa kuusi kurssia ennen Meksikossa tapahtunutta 10 kuukauden vaihtoa lukenut kertoo:

Noin kahden kuukauden jälkeen ymmärsi suurimman osan, kolmen kuukauden jälkeen puhui ok:sti, noin viiden jälkeen sujuvasti, n. seitsemän kuukauden jälkeen todella sujuvasti, voi esim. lukea romaaneja.

Eräs Perussa viisi kuukautta vaihdossa ollut opiskelija, joka oli opiskellut espanjaa useamman vuoden ennen vaihtoa, kuvaa tilannetta puolestaan näin:

Alussa tuntuikin, etten ymmärtänyt ketään enkä mitään. Varsinkin vuokraemäntäni puheesta oli todella vaikea saada selvää ja monesti hänen täytyi vaihtaa englantiin tärkeistä asioista puhuttaessa, mikä oli toki aika masentavaa. Varsinkin ymmärtäminen kehittyi nopeasti. Jo vähän ajan päästä huomasin ymmärtäväni perulaisia opiskelutovereitani sekä vuokraemäntäänikin täysin ongelmitta.

Toinen opiskelija, jolla oli ennen vaihtoon lähtöä vain aivan alkeet suoritettuna, kertoi hyvin samankaltaisesta kokemuksesta. Hänen espanjantaitonsa kehittyi vaihdossa Salamancassa viiden kuukauden aikana huomattavasti kuullun- ja luetunymmärtämisessä. Myös muut taidot kehittyivät. Hän toteaaakin näin:

Puheessa pääsin hyvin luontevalle tasolle, kirjoittaminenkin oli ymmärrettävää, joskaan ei toki täydellistä. Vaihto on ollut minulle kaikkein tehokkain tapa oppia kieltä koskaan. Kieltä on pakko käyttää, jotta selviää ja toki omasta motivaatiosta on kiinni paljon. Itse

kuitenkin koin, että kehittymiseni oli huimaa ja paljon juuri vaihdon vuoksi.

Vastausten mukaan kahden ensimmäisen kuukauden jälkeen tapahtui huomattava kehitys erityisesti puheen ymmärtämisessä. Myös varmuus oman puheen tuottamisessa lisääntyy kahden kuukauden jälkeen. Maiworm, Steube ja Teichler (1991, 149) ovat todenneet, että kielenoppimisen kehityksessä toteutuu jonkinlainen huippu neljännen kuukauden kohdalla, mutta puhe- ja kirjoitustaidon kehityksessä tulee ”muuri vastaan” seitsemännen kuukauden jälkeen. Juuri neljä kuukautta Madridissa ollut kuvaakin kuinka ”lähdön aika tuli juuri silloin kun kieli alkoi todella sujua”. Tutkimukseni tukeekin Maiwormin, Steuben ja Teichlerin tutkimustuloksia, joiden mukaan kielenoppimisen hedelmällisin jakso on vaihdon neljäs, viides ja kuudes kuukausi.

Oppimista helpotti erityisesti asuminen espanjankielisten kanssa, jolloin arkinen asiointi alkoi sujua vaivatta espanjaksi viimeistään kahden kuukauden jälkeen. Espanjankielisen opetuksen kuuntelu, haastavien esseiden kirjoittaminen ja kursseilla työskentely tukivat luonnollisesti jatkuvaa oppimista. Kaksi vastanneista mainitsi oman nuoren iän varmaankin vaikuttaneen nopeaan oppimiseen. Elokuvien ja television rooli oli suurelle osalle keskeinen. Paikallisten huono tai olematon englanninkielentaito takasi nopean oppimisen.

ESPANJAN OPINNOT ENNEN VAIHTOA

Vaihto-opiskelun aloitus käynnistyi yleisesti sitä helpommin mitä enemmän pohjaa opiskelijalla oli espanjan opinnoissa. Moni oli suorittanut alkeistason peruskurssit (CEFR A1-A2) sekä ehkä muutaman käytännönkurssin (CEFR A2-B1), joissa tutustutaan mm. puhekielille ominaisiin fraaseihin ja sanontoihin sekä tehdään runsaasti keskusteluharjoituksia. Jo yhdenkin käytännönkurssin suorittaminen Suomessa koettiin erinomaisen tärkeäksi pohjaksi kohdemaassa. Perusteiden hallinta auttoi erityisesti lukemisessa. Kuitenkin useammasta vastauksesta kävi ilmi, miten rajallisesti aiemmin opittu kielitaito auttoi vaihdon alussa paikallisen puheen ymmärtämisessä. Vaikka yhdellä opiskelijalla oli omasta mielestään ”perusteet hallussa” ennen kuuden kuukauden vaihtoa Madridissa, hän kertoo saaneensa ”huomata paikan päällä, että perusteiden hallinta ei ollut lainkaan riittävää”. Alussa hänestä oli tuntunut, ettei hän ”ole koskaan opiskellutkaan koko kieltä.” Useita

kursseja Suomessa suorittaneet ymmärsivät yleensä heti paikan päällä, ettei varsinkaan puhumista pysty luonnollisesti harjoittelemaan kielikursseilla, vaikka kuinka yritettäisiin. Vastanneiden mukaan ainoa keino sujuvan puheen ja hyvän ymmärtämisen hankkimiseksi on lähteä vaihtoon ja oppia ns. kantapään kautta.

Opiskelijoiden mielestä kielikursseilla ei pystytä luomaan sellaisia spontaaneja tilanteita, joihin vaihdossa välittömästi törmää. Vastaushetkellä Meksikossa 10 kuukauden vaihdossa oleva kokee vaihdon ehdottoman tärkeäksi. Hänellä oli hyvä pohja ennen vaihtoa, useita kursseja Kielikeskuksessa, mutta silti vielä heikko käytännön kielitaito. Hänen mukaansa

aluksi puhuminen oli todella hankalaa, koska kaikki asiat piti ikään kuin mieltää suomeksi ja kääntää espanjaksi, mikä oli todella hidasta. Pikkuhiljaa oppii ajattelemaan espanjaksi ja kielenkäyttö nopeutuu. Myös oma toleranssi virheille on kasvanut. Pääasia, että yrittää sanoa edes jotain. Vaihdoissa oppii käytännön kielitaitoa ja sanastoa, jota ei kursseilla Suomessa niin paljon opeteta. Lisäksi kulttuurisen kielen hallinta kasvaa: aina ei ole tärkeää se mitä sanotaan vaan miten.

Opiskelija, joka oli käynyt ALICE¹-kurssin (Academic Language and Intercultural Exchange) ennen vaihtoa totesi tästä kurssista seuraavaa:

Käytännössä parhaat oppimiskokemukset tulivat ALICE-nimisestä ohjelmasta. Uskaltaisin melkein väittää, että opin enemmän espanjaa näiden sessioiden aikana kuin kaikkien käymieni kurssien aikana - varsinkin puhuttu kieli kehittyi paljon.

Vuoden Meksikossa viettänyt, lähes neljä vuotta espanjaa aiemmin opiskellut, kertoo oppimiskokemuksistaan seuraavasti: ”Itse opin ns. teorian Kielikeskuksessa, mutta käytännön taitoja (puhetaidot) on lähes mahdoton saada tunneilla”. Kuvaava on myös Madridissa noin kolme kuukautta opiskelleen, Kielikeskuksessa kuusi kurssia suorittaneen opiskelijan kommentti:

Vaihdoissa oppii sellaisia asioita, joita on oikeastaan mahdotonta luokkahuoneessa oppia, esim. reagoimaan espanjaksi yllättäen, kun joku tulee juttelemaan tai kysymään jotain.

¹ ALICE-kurssilla kaksi erikielistä opiskelijaa tapaavat keskenään, ja keskustelevat puolet tapaamisajasta esim. espanjaksi ja puolet suomeksi tai englanniksi. (Ks. Kuokkanen-Kekki ja Niedling 2011).

Osalle aloitus oli huomattavasti helpompaa, kuten esimerkiksi opiskelijalle, joka vietti viisi kuukautta Madridissa opiskeltuaan kaksi vuotta espanjaa Kielikeskuksessa. Ennen vaihtoa hän osasi ”kirjoittaa jotenkuten ja käydä lyhyitä keskusteluja”. Paikan päällä hän ymmärsi melko hyvin mitä hänelle puhuttiin ja hän muisti yllättävän paljon sanastoa. Hänen ”oli myös helpompi lähteä puhumaan, kun oli jotakin pohjaa”.

OMA MOTIVAATIO

Moni opiskelija oli päättänyt käyttää kohdemaassa heti ainoastaan espanjaa kaikissa mahdollisissa kommunikaatiotilanteissa. He hakeutuivat sellaisten vaihtoopiskelijoiden pariin, jotka olivat tehneet saman päätöksen. Heidän kielitaitonsa saavutti huomattavasti paremman tason kuin sellaisten, jotka käyttivät myös englantia. Osa niin sanotusti luovutti huomattuaan kommunikoinnin vaikeuden ja käytti myös englantia. Silti englantiakin käyttäneiden espanjan kielen taito kehittyi heidän mielestään hyvin, ja he kokivat vaihdon ehdottoman hyödylliseksi espanjan oppimisen kannalta.

Jotkut välttivät tiivistä yhteydenpitoa Suomeen päästäkseen mahdollisimman syvälle espanjankieliseen kulttuuriin. Kieltä aktiivisimmin käyttäneet (noin 70 % vastanneista) tekivät jatkuvasti töitä oppimisen eteen. He kertoivat opiskelleensa itsenäisesti sanastoa ja kielioppia, kommunikoineensa päivittäin espanjaksi erilaisissa tilanteissa ja kysyneensä ahkerasti tutuiltaan mm. sanontojen merkityksiä. He kokivat myös oppineensa paljon tekemistään virheistä ja niiden korjaamisesta. Alussa virheiden tekemisen pelko oli aiheuttanut osalle arkuutta, mutta arkuus oli unohtunut pian. Kun vaihdossa oli kulunut enemmän aikaa, alkoi omia virheitään huomata paremmin kielitaidon kasvaessa. Lisääntyvä tietoisuus virheiden tekemisestä oli ärsyttänyt vastaajista kahta, mutta silti he kuvasivat uskaltaneensa käyttää kieltä vapautuneesti. Kaikkien mielestä puhumista oppi parhaiten yksinkertaisesti puhumalla ja olemalla itse aktiivinen. Kuullun- ja luetunymmärtäminen tuli vaivattomammin - kuin itsestään - mikä olikin monelle täysi yllätys. Oma rohkeus oli erittäin palkitsevaa.

OPPIMISTA VAIKEUTTAVAT TEKIJÄT

Opiskelijat kertoivat vastauksissaan vapaasti kielen oppimiseen liittyvistä ongelmista kohdemaassa. Vastausten perusteella oppimista kohdemaassa vaikeuttivat ensisijaisesti opiskelijan vähäiset espanjan kielen taidot ennen vaihtoa. Vaihdon aikainen sosiaalinen elämä saattoi myös vaikeuttaa tai hidastaa oppimista, jos opiskelija esimerkiksi kommunikoi ystäviensä kanssa arkitilanteissa jatkuvasti englanniksi.

KIELITAIDON HEIKKO POHJA

Arkisen asioinnin onnistumiseen kohdemaassa espanjan kielellä vaikuttaa tietenkin ennen vaihtoa suoritettujen kieliopintojen määrä. Ne opiskelijat (6), jotka olivat suorittaneet vain joitakin espanjan kursseja ennen vaihtoa, kokivat yleensä kaiken alussa hankalaksi. Moni koki luentojen seuraamisen tuskallisen vaikeaksi, muutama lähes mahdottomaksi. Suomalaiset vaihto-opiskelijat huomasivat myös, että osa ulkomaalaisista vaihto-opiskelijoista ei ollut aiemmin opiskellut lainkaan espanjaa. Mutta alku saattoi olla haastava myös monille edistyneemmille opiskelijoille. Opiskelija, joka oli ennen vaihtoa ollut yhteensä kuusi kuukautta Etelä-Amerikassa mm. vapaaehtoistöissä ja lisäksi opiskellut Kielikeskuksessa useita kursseja, kertoi kuinka vuoden kestävä vaihdon alussa Meksikossa hän joutui ”keskittymään luennoilla ´ääripisteeseen´ saakka”, jotta hän olisi ymmärtänyt, mistä puhuttiin. Madridissa yhdeksän kuukautta vaihdossa ollut, viisi Kielikeskuksen kurssia käynyt, kuvaa vaihdon ensimmäisiä kuukausia seuraavasti:

Alussa kuullunymmärtäminen oli monille liki mahdotonta paikallisen puhutavan johdosta. Moni lopettaa kielen käytön liki heti saavuttuaan, todettuaan haasteen itselleen liian suureksi.

SOSIAALINEN ELÄMÄ

Kielitaidon kehittyminen riippuu myös pitkälle siitä, minkälaista sosiaalista elämää opiskelija vaihdossa viettää. Tähän ei aina voi itse vaikuttaa. Esimerkiksi Salamancassa paikallisiin oli vastaajien mukaan vaikea luoda kontaktia, sillä nämä eivät olleet kiinnostuneita vaihto-opiskelijoista, joita kaupunki oli tulvillaan. Jos ystäväpiiri koostui lähes ainoastaan muista vaihto-opiskelijoista, oli joillekin (5) suuri houkutus vaihtaa välillä ellei joskus kokonaankin Englantiin. Madridissa 10

kuukautta viettänyt on sitä mieltä, että ”valitettavasti suurin osa vaihtareista halusi puhua englantia”. Espanjaa keskenään puhuvat vaihto-opiskelijat jatkoivat kommunikaatiota sinnikkäästi espanjaksi. Jos paikallinen yliopisto järjesti vaihto-opiskelijoille tarkoitetun kielikurssin, kannatti sille ilman muuta osallistua. Kielikeskuksessa kolme kurssia ennen kuuden kuukauden Salamancassa tapahtunutta vaihtoa suorittanut opiskelija kertoo, että kyseinen kurssi ”motivoi jaksamaan ´taistelua´ espanjan oppimisen kanssa, kun muutkin kamppailivat samojen ongelmien parissa”.

Vastaaajista kahdelle sosiaalisen elämän aloittaminen kohdemaassa oli lähtenyt huonosti käyntiin, koska opinnohjausta ei ollut lainkaan. Heille ei ollut selvitetty, mitä he saisivat tai voisivat opiskella. Näin ollen he joutuivat useasti vaihtamaan kurssia, eivätkä ehtineet tutustua kunnolla keneenkään. Yksi vastaaja koki osittain tästä syystä itsensä yksinäiseksi opinnoissaan koko vuoden kestäneen vaihdon aikana Madridissa. Kuitenkin jokainen vastanneista oli löytänyt vaihdon aikana yliopiston ulkopuolista sosiaalista elämää ja koki siksi vaihtoajan kielenoppimisen kannalta erinomaiseksi.

Opiskelijan persoonalla on luonnollisesti suuri vaikutus kielen oppimiseen. Luonteeltaan hiljainen ihminen ei muutu välttämättä vaihdossa ollessaan vierasta kieltä sujuvasti puhuvaksi ja sosiaaliseksi, vaikka viettäisi kohdemaassa pitkänkin ajan. Kuitenkin hänen kuullun- ja luetunymmärtämisen taitonsa kehittyvät valtavasti. Moni koki silti oman rohkeutensa kielen käytön suhteen itselleenkin yllätykseksi.

Kulttuurierot saattoivat kuitenkin vaikeuttaa kielen tuottamista ja oppimista siksi, että paikallinen, nopeatempoinen keskustelukulttuuri osoittautui haasteelliseksi – hitaampi ulkomaalainen ei useinkaan ehdi reagoida nopeasti etenevään keskusteluun. Niinpä hyvin moni, jolla oli hyvätkin taidot, koki luentojen keskustelut ja väittelytilanteet mahdottomiksi.

Jos opiskelija asui yksin tai englantia puhuvien opiskelijoiden kanssa, jäi tavallinen arkinen keskustelu espanjan kielellä luonnollisesti paljon vähäisemmäksi kuin sellaisella opiskelijalla, joka jakoi asunnon espanjankielisten tai espanjaa käyttävien kanssa.

KOKOAVIA HAVAINTOJA

Tutkimusmateriaalini osoittaa, että vaihto on erinomainen tapa oppia kieltä. Muutamankin kuukauden opiskelijavaihto edistää kielitaitoa merkittävästi. Vastausten pohjalta voi myös todeta, että hyvinkin alkeellisilla espanjan kielen taidoilla pärjää suhteellisen hyvin.

Useat, kaikkiaan kahdeksan kyselyyn vastanneista, mainitsivat tarkkailleensa omaa oppimistaan vaihdossa. En kysynyt tätä heiltä erikseen, vaan asia tuli esiin kyselyssä spontaanisti. Puhumisen ja ymmärtämisen koettiin kehittyneen eniten. Myös luetunymmärtämisen katsottiin helpottuneen. Sen sijaan kieliopin tuntemus ei opiskelijoiden omasta mielestä kehittynyt mitenkään erityisesti. Myös Maiworm, Steube ja Teichler (1991) ovat saaneet tutkimuksessaan vastaavia tuloksia. Tutkimani opiskelijat kokivat kieliopin hallintansa kehittyneen passiivisemmin, tai ainakin opiskelijan oli itse vaikea huomata kieliopin hallinnassa tapahtunutta kehitystä. Jotkut espanjan opinnoissa edistyneemmät opiskelijat kertoivat kuitenkin huomaneensa, että osasivat yhtäkkiä käyttää esimerkiksi subjunktiivia, ja alkaneensa paremmin hahmottaa sen käyttöä arkisissa kommunikaatiotilanteissa.

Espanjan kielitaidon kehittyminen opiskelijavaihdossa oli suurimmalle osalle tärkeämpää kuin eteneminen oman alan opinnoissa. Yhdeksän vastaajan mukaan pääaineopinnot olivat tosin edenneet vaihdossa hyvin tai erittäin hyvin. Kaksi on suorittanut espanjasta sivuainekokonaisuuden, ja yksi hakee espanjalaisen filologian sivuaineoikeutta. Vastaajista viisi kommentoi pääaineopintojensa edenneen heikosti osittain siksi, että vaihdossa suoritettut kurssit hyväksyttiin Suomessa vain valinnaisiin opintoihin. Kolme kertoi, etteivät pääaineopinnot edistyneet lainkaan. Yleisimpänä syynä tähän pidettiin vaihtoyliopiston huonoa tasoa.

Yhtä lukuun ottamatta kaikki vastaajat olivat jatkaneet tai aikoivat jatkaa espanjan opintoja vaihdon jälkeen. Useimmille tämä tarkoitti Kielikeskuksen kursseja, mutta myös monesta muunlaisesta kielitaidon säilyttämisestä ja kehittämisestä raportoitiin: yhteydenpitoa kohdemaan ystäviin, tutustumista espanjankielisiin vaihto-opiskelijoihin, matkustamista ja työntekoa lähitulevaisuudessa espanjankielisissä maissa sekä televisiosarjojen seuraamista. Yksi hakee sivuaineoikeutta filologian laitokselta. Opiskelija, joka ei ollut pystynyt jatkamaan espanjan opintojaan kertoi, että hän oli jo suorittanut kaikki tarjolla olevat kurssit.

Kyselyyni vastanneiden mielestä Suomessa opitaan kielen teoreettinen pohja. Jos opiskelija oli suorittanut keskustelukursseja tai käytännön kielitaitoon ja

kulttuurituntemukseen keskittyviä kursseja ennen vaihtoa, hän sai niistä omasta mielestään erittäin paljon apua kohdemaassa. Siksi muutama opiskelija toivoi eritasoisten keskustelu- ja kulttuuripainotteisten kurssien lisäämistä Kielikeskusten opetusohjelmaan, tai kurssisisältöjen muokkaamista käytännönläheisemmiksi kielioppipainotteisuuden sijaan. Moni oli lähtenyt kuitenkin vaihtoon opintojen alkuvaiheessa, eikä ollut ehtinyt suorittaa useita tarjolla olleita keskustelu- ja käytännönkursseja.

LOPUKSI

On suositeltavaa ja opiskelijan oma etu, että hän on opiskellut kieltä hyvin ennen vaihtoa, vaikka – kuten edellä on todettu – alkeellisillakin espanjan kielen taidoilla pärjää suhteellisen hyvin. Alku on haastavaa, mutta tilanne helpottuu yleensä ensimmäisten kuukausien jälkeen. Mielestäni opettajan tulisi kertoa opiskelijoille kielen oppimisesta vaihdossa jo opintojen alkuvaiheessa ja kannustaa heitä vaihtoon esimerkiksi kertomalla, että oppiminen tapahtuu kohdemaassa nopeasti. Oppitunteja voisi elävöittää kutsumalla silloin tällöin paikalle jo vaihdossa olleen opiskelijan kertomaan kieleen ja kulttuuriin liittyvistä asioista. Vaihdossa olleiden kokemuksista oppivat niin opettajat kuin opiskelijatkin.

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ENGLISH BY ALTERNATIVE MEANS IN THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE

Roy Siddall & Kari K. Pitkänen

Out-of-classroom (OOC) activities provide a means to gain English language credits in the Faculty of Medicine, University of Helsinki. This qualitative study based on student-completed language reports examined 1) how the students perceived their language skills to develop during an international student exchange or 2) participation in a problem-based learning (PBL) course taught through English, and 3) what they considered their future language development needs to be. In both activities, the students focused on oral skills development. Conversely, reading of English texts was not perceived as problematic, as medical course texts are almost exclusively in English. The emphasis of the students was on the development of fluency and confidence rather than accuracy and precision. PBL students generally noted an expansion of their lexicon, but rarely mentioned their ability to correctly pronounce the terms. Surprisingly, international student exchange did not appear to raise awareness of intercultural issues in doctor-patient encounters. Moreover, the essay writing component of the PBL course was mentioned as an activity, but students did not generally perceive writing skills to be developed or in need of development. Most students were aware of their strengths and weaknesses as users of English and more than half were motivated to maintain or continue developing their English skills. In conclusion, student exchange and PBL can play an important role in developing English language fluency, confidence and the range of vocabulary. However, due to the lack of language teacher input, the precision and accuracy of language use cannot be developed in the same way as in traditional language courses. There is a need to raise awareness of potential language development in out-of-classroom activities before participation in them. OOC learning and language courses also need to be developed side-by-side so that they complement one another.

INTRODUCTION

In the medical profession, good doctor-patient communication is of fundamental importance, and can even be a question of life and death (e.g. Laurance 2010, Salusbury 2010). Oral skills in face-to-face interaction are extremely important in building trust and appropriately treating patients. Examples have been presented in the literature of misunderstandings between native English-speaking doctors and patients with poor language skills in the US (Flores et al. 2003, Chandrika et al. 2007) and UK (Roberts et al. 2005), and between medical students from non-English speaking backgrounds and native English speaking patients in Australia (Chur-Hansen and Barrett 1996). Such language problems are quite common and

appear to increase the risks to patient safety (Flores et al. 2003, Chandrika et al. 2007).

English is the lingua franca of medicine, and communication barriers are potentially exaggerated when neither the doctor nor the patient are native English speakers. Therefore, for non-native speaking (NNS) medical students, especially those potentially treating NNS patients, there is a clear need to develop communication skills in English alongside skills and knowledge in medicine. Chur-Hansen et al. (1997), in a study in Australia on medical students who were NNS of English, suggested that oral fluency and medical communication skills are linked, and Chur-Hansen and Barrett (1996) provided justification for exposure to doctor-patient language in natural settings.

Moreover, in non-English speaking countries, the majority of medical course text books may be in English, and language skills are correlated with academic performance and the ability to acquire medical knowledge (Lucas et al. 1997, Chur-Hansen 1997). Lucas et al. (1997) reported that medical students in Hong Kong with weak English language skills are less able to assimilate complex medical terminology.

At the University of Helsinki in Finland, students majoring in medicine or dentistry are required to demonstrate their skills in the native languages (Finnish and Swedish) as well as completing 3 ECTS credits of language studies in at least one foreign language (typically English). English courses (1 credit each) are spread throughout the medical programme to support specific phases of the medical studies: general academic study skills are covered in the first year, followed by writing and listening comprehension in the second year, and doctor-patient language in later study years. According to the faculty wishes, exemption testing is only available later in the syllabus. Students are therefore encouraged to complete their language requirements relatively early and by taking language courses.

According to CEFR self-assessments¹ by first-year students taking a course on academic study skills in English in 2007, spoken skills were considered to be weakest. However, another group taking the same course two years later was more balanced, assessing all four skill areas (reading, writing, listening, speaking) to be on the B2 level of the CEFR. Based on these self-assessments, the general starting

¹ The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/Framework_EN.pdf

level for the courses (B2) appears to match the self-assessment of the students, and the students appear to be slightly less prepared for actively using spoken English before they take the first-year language course.

Whilst the English courses provide a means for students to develop their medical terminology, pronunciation, writing and general communication skills in English, the focus is on communication with English speakers. The courses lack the authenticity of active oral skills development, and do not prepare the students for real lingua franca encounters. Moreover, the number of contact hours is extremely limited (typically 14 hrs for a 1-credit course).

As part of a restructuring of English language studies in the Faculty of Medicine in 2005, students were provided an opportunity to gain some of their language credits through participation in out-of-classroom activities that involve the active use of medical English. These include international student exchange, presentation at an international conference and participation in a block of medical studies taught through English (problem-based learning (PBL) course). Such out-of-classroom activities could support the development and maintenance of medical English skills, and they focus on practical language use related to professional skills and content.

There is evidence that English language development, as well as the motivation for further language learning, can be enhanced by study abroad (SA). Students participating in SA are mainly motivated by the wish to develop oral fluency (Allen 2010, Davidson 2010, Wang 2010). While the rate of speech has been reported to improve, SA does not necessarily develop accuracy in language use, and needs to be sufficiently long to have a measurable effect on language skills (Wang 2010).

Through the Finnish Medical Students' International Committee (FiMSIC), Finnish students can participate in 1-month exchange programmes with destinations in over 40 countries. Depending on their year of study and clinical experience, students may opt for a research exchange or a clinical clerkship. In the former, they typically assist in a research project, performing laboratory analysis among other tasks. A clinical clerkship might involve following doctors on rounds, examining patients, performing small procedures and even assisting in surgery. In several non-English speaking countries, English is a typical lingua franca, and students are required to actively and intensively use the language throughout their exchange. Moreover, FiMSIC exchanges provide an opportunity to learn something about intercultural

differences in doctor-patient interaction and patient care, which are important in medical communication (Skelton et al. 2001).

Even in the native setting, English-medium instruction can support language skills development. According to Van Cauteran and Vleminckx (2008), language learners benefit most from activities related to discussing, role-playing and explaining things to others. Students participating in the PBL course at the University of Helsinki are required to read medical texts in English, discuss them in the classroom and write an essay in English on a related medical topic. According to Mpofu et al. (1998), active student participation in PBL discussions helps medical students to ‘mobilize’ their prior knowledge. However, the level of participation may be influenced not only by English language proficiency but also by cultural issues (id).

AIM OF THE STUDY

Although the recognition of out-of-classroom language-related activities by the Faculty of Medicine provides a flexible means of completing English language requirements, little is known about how well it functions and how it relates to classroom language learning. In this paper, we focus on students who have partially completed their English language requirements by either taking the problem-based learning course or participating in an international student exchange. Based on reports completed by the students, our study generally aimed to examine how they perceived their English language skills to develop while participating in OOC activities, and what their future needs were. In addition, we aimed to consider how the reported development and needs relate to what we currently teach in faculty-specific language courses in the Faculty of Medicine. The specific questions we addressed were as follows:

1. Does English-medium instruction or participation in an international exchange activate all areas of English, or are specific skills emphasized in the student reports?
2. What do the students perceive as their main areas of English language development and future needs?
3. How do the language activities mentioned in the reports relate to the specific skills developed and future needs of the students? For example, do they pay attention to productive skills (e.g. discussing, writing) or receptive skills (e.g. listening, reading)?

4. Do the students emphasize improvements in active language use (fluency, confidence), comprehension (e.g. understanding of foreign accents and dialects, extended vocabulary) or precision and ‘correctness’-related issues (e.g. pronunciation, accurate and appropriate use of terminology)?
5. Does student exchange involving observation of doctor-patient encounters in foreign hospitals raise cultural awareness?
6. How does student awareness of language development through OOC activities correlate with their perceived future language needs?

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This qualitative study focused on the attitudes students have of the development of their language skills acquired through alternative means to traditional language courses. The participants in this study comprised 41 students (25 female) of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Helsinki, who partially fulfilled their compulsory English language studies in one of two ways: completion of a problem-based learning module (33 students) or participation in an international exchange programme (8 students; 5 clinical and 3 research-oriented exchanges).

In the sample, there were at least three separate categories in relation to discourse: FiMSIC students working in a lab, FiMSIC students who interact with patients and other medics (clinical work), and PBL students who mainly interact with Finns and foreign students in Finland. All deal with non-native *lingua franca* discourse situations, but the nature of the discourse differs in that during an exchange the students use English or other local languages for everything, while taking the PBL package means they merely study in English.

In order to gain the language credits, the students were required to complete a report form in which they provided background information and answered the following three questions in a free form:

1. How would you evaluate your general ability to communicate in English before and after the exchange, conference or course/seminar attendance?

2. In what ways have your professional English skills (e.g. knowledge of medical terminology) developed as a result of the exchange, conference or course/seminar attendance?

3. How do you consider that your English skills (both general and professional) need to be developed now and in the future?

All the answers were in English. The form was submitted electronically to an English teacher and to two faculty representatives.

Since the PBL course is taken in the first year of medical studies, when students are beginning to fulfil their language requirements, the majority of PBL students applied for the language credits by completing the report form. However, participation in exchange programmes such as FiMSIC usually take place in the 3rd and later years, when many students have already completed their English language requirements. Hence, far fewer exchange students submit the report form.

The reports students submitted after the PBL courses or exchange programme were systematically analysed in relation to a set of parameters listed below to profile the groups in relation to what they considered as benefits, or as strengths and weaknesses in their own language development.

A. SKILLS DEVELOPED/ACQUIRED:

A1: Main areas of development emphasized: ((T) terminology/ (U) understanding/ (FLU) fluency/ (C) confidence/ (FLE) flexibility / (O) oral skills (incl. pronunciation))

A2: Activation of terminology: yes/no

A3: Development of: (R) range (lex size) / (A) accuracy (pronunciation etc.) / (P) precision (right term in right context) in terminology

A4: Activation of (G) general language skills – ability to cope in more (DD) demanding discourse situations – (VA) communicative fluency / verbal acrobatics

A5: Cultural knowledge: yes/no

A6: Lessened interference of other languages when using English: yes/no

A7: Understanding medical texts more easily: yes/no

A8: Awareness of own language proficiency – strengths and weaknesses; need for further development: yes/no

A9: Development of writing skills: yes/no

B. ORIENTATION OF FURTHER DEVELOPMENT:

B1: Academic language needs: (G) grammar, (T) terminology, (P) pronunciation, (O) oral skills (incl. speaking), (W) writing, (R) reading.

B2: Pragmatic language needs (ability to freely express ideas): (C) confidence, (F) fluency, (M) maintenance of language skills (active use)

B3: Continued active use of language: yes/no

B4: Orientation in relation to own proficiency/ need to develop noted: yes/no

C: GENERAL POINTS:

C1: Focus on the (S) skills themselves or their (A) active use

C2: Motivation (e.g. enjoyment of language use mentioned): yes/no

Additional comments / quotes

Activities mentioned: (R) reading, (W) writing, (L) listening, (S) speaking

All the responses were assessed in relation to the parameters presented above. In some cases, the assessment was based on interpretation of the responses rather than on explicit statements. For this reason, the data were not statistically compared, as the emphasis was on more general tendencies. However, both authors reviewed the reports and agreed on the interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Does student exchange (FiMSIC) or instruction in English (PBL course) activate all areas of English, or are specific skills emphasized in the student reports?

Speaking, writing, listening and reading were all mentioned as linguistic activities in the reports, in this order of frequency. The main emphasis in the activities noted was in production skills. In the past, the students have typically listened to English so

much that they probably no longer register it as a special activity. For example, most of the movies, television series and popular music students listen to in their everyday life are in English. In addition, quite many of the medical course books are in English. Therefore, just like listening, reading is perhaps no longer considered as a special skill or activity and thus is not commented on in the reports unless there was something marked related to this.

However, occasional issues were raised in the reports concerning language variants. For example, one of the students mentioned that during an exchange to an African country, it became easier to understand the local accent, which differed from more standard varieties.

All reports referred to speaking and the majority (approximately 75%) mentioned writing-related activities. However, and against our expectations, writing was not seen as a skill that developed. Writing was either taken for granted or not supported, even though it was a component of the PBL course.

What do students see as their main areas of language development and future needs?

The reports were clearly production-oriented, especially focusing on oral skills. Another common area of development mentioned by the students was terminology. In medicine, the students need to cope with a massive number of new words and they often learn these from course books and journals, which more and more often are in English. However, they do not necessarily realize that their terminology only develops in very few restricted domains (especially embryonic cells and molecular biology). In 15 reports, activation of terminology (A2: yes) could be seen, and in additional two, it was implied. Further needs for terminology development (B1:T) were detected in 17 papers. Interestingly, only six of these were in the same report. In other words, the students who felt that their terminology had been activated did not see any need to develop it further. Nevertheless, the majority of students felt that the range (A3:R), i.e. size of their vocabulary, had developed. This was noted in 29 reports, while accuracy (A3:A; 6 reports) and precision (A3: P; 1 report) were not noted. Thus, the students focused on extending their lexicons rather than improving the exact use or pronunciation. In this sense, they seem to focus more on understanding.

How do the language activities mentioned in the reports relate to the specific skills developed and the future needs?

In Table 1 below, the relationship between the skills mentioned as activities are contrasted with both (A) skills that developed/were acquired and (B) needs for further development:

Table 1 The correlation between the language-related activities mentioned by medical students in connection with their skills developed and needing further development.

Activities mentioned:	Correlation with other related parameters:
R/Reading: 18	A7: understanding texts developed: 4
W/Writing: 30	A9: development of writing skills: 4 B2: further needs: none
S/Speaking: 41 (All students)	Development: A1: Oral skills: 26 A1: Fluency: 16 A4: Demanding Discourse: 20 Further needs: B1: Oral skills: 28 B2: Fluency: 17 A4: Verbal acrobatics: 15
L/Listening: 25	

Based on this, the main areas of real development in language skills the students noticed were related to oral skills. As already noted, even though the students were required to write essays as a part of the PBL course, they did not see their writing skills as having developed. Only 4 reports mentioned improvement in writing, while 30/41 mentioned that they had to write something. However, both the report forms and the essays submitted together with their report form to claim the language credits reveal a clear need for developing writing skills. The essays, in particular, provide evidence of surface-text problems (e.g. grammar, punctuation) and discourse-related problems (e.g. incomplete essay structure, lack of reference to sources). The problem might be in the lack of language feedback. The course teachers read the essays written by the students for the content but did not revise the language. It seems to be enough if the text is readable and understandable.

Did the students emphasize improvements in active language use, comprehension, precision or 'correctness'?

The reports emphasized increased fluency and confidence, but not accuracy nor precision. The main benefit seems to be in not being afraid of expressing one's ideas. Thus, even though there were lexical, grammatical and stylistic problems, the students often felt that their overall language performance improved. What this means is that even though this type of out-of-classroom language development improves confidence and fluency, and extends the lexicon, it does not necessarily improve the accuracy or precision of language use: stylistic and grammatical issues still need further development.

Fluency stands out when the different oral skills-related parameters are considered. Almost half of the students noted this. And naturally, more active use of the language should activate dormant language skills. Confidence, shame and courage in using a language are important professional issues vital for the role doctors have when they guide their patients and give them recommendations. The patients should trust them and this trust is partly based on how reliable and knowledgeable they appear to be based on the short discussion they have with the patients. The patient should not detect any uncertainty in communication, because this might be misinterpreted as a lack of expertise.

Another indicator of linguistic confidence is reliance on one's own vernacular, i.e., to what extent the student feels he or she can process the information in another language directly rather than processing it in his or her own native language. With English, this appears to be relatively rare. Either the students write notes in their own languages or they do not feel it complicated to process the information in English. Only one of the students noted a decreased need to translate following the PBL course. Another related issue is the interference caused by other strong foreign languages. However, only two of the students noted lessened interference of other languages (A6), indicating that for most, English is their strongest foreign language.

Based on the student reports, while their fluency and ease in language use improved and they learned new words, their accuracy and precision did not appear to develop. For example, only three mention improved pronunciation. In a lingua franca learning environment, this is understandable, because the focus is on the content. Especially with PBL, the students are also used to the Finnish accent, which presumably dominates in the discussions.

Does student exchange involving observation of doctor-patient encounters in foreign hospitals raise cultural awareness?

Based on discussions and interviews before the exchange (this is not evident from report forms), the FiMSIC students quite often prepare themselves to use the native language or select a country where they have some knowledge of the local language – and probably also of the culture. In this way, they are then able to get much more out of the exchange.

In the ideal world, the exchange students would learn about the culture and how things are done in foreign hospitals, what is similar and what is done differently. They might also have the possibility to observe doctor-patient interaction and potential cultural differences. In this context, it is interesting to find that very few students mentioned cultural issues. Three students out of eight participating in exchange programmes noted this, and none of the PBL students (for obvious reasons).

In practice, however, very few exchange students participated in clinical work. Either they worked in a lab or completed the PBL course. Thus, the exchange programmes and PBL prepared the students more for general academic professional skills than for patient interaction. Very few of the students had experienced doctor-patient interaction in English, and thus they had no direct access to medicine-related cultural issues. Clearly, the English language course offered on multicultural patient-interaction is needed. Often, students in these programmes work in a lab, and even though the world outside the hospital or university is culturally different, it is taken for granted, as happens when one is a tourist. The lack of cultural issues in the reports could partially be explained by the fact that the students who were in this phase had also probably completed their language requirements and thus had no need to fill in the forms. Another reason might be that the students focused on linguistic rather than cultural aspects and kept these two apart. However, the Anglo-American culture is viewed positively in relation to the English language. For example, one of the students wanted to learn to give presentations “in the British way”. Here, the British way of giving a presentation was clearly seen as a model to be imitated.

In the current exchange system, the students are more likely to use English with other non-native speakers, i.e. English as a lingua franca. For the Finnish students in the PBL course, additional content-related support is available in the form of

guidance and courses offered in Finnish. The situation might be different in an English-speaking country, where students must cope with the colloquial language used by real patients. In the PBL modules, even though teaching and activities were taught in English, some of the students had the additional possibility to rely on Finnish or Swedish as a way, and the local cultural context was Finnish. The active use of English was restricted to the educational setting – unlike in the exchange programmes where the use of English and other non-native languages was a more dominating and continuous feature of language immersion.

Another interesting feature we have observed is the clustering effect based on shared language and culture, meaning that, for example, Finns would mainly interact with other Finns and thus depend less on language in the content-oriented tasks, since they would have the easier option of using their own language as long as the group consisted of others who share the same linguistic and cultural background. This, however, was not mentioned in the reports.

How does awareness of language development through OOC activities correlate with perceived language needs?

Practically all students were aware of their strengths and weaknesses in language skills, as well as their needs for further development (A8). Motivation for English language studies also appears to have been high. Since students of medicine do not have languages as their major, quite many are pragmatically oriented. Altogether, 16 out of 41 students were skills-oriented (C1: S). However, the majority (33 students) could be interpreted to focus on the active use of English language (C1: A), often as a combination of skills (C1:S) and active use (C1:A). Motivation and/or enjoyment of language use could be detected in 24 answers. The maintenance of language skills (B2: 17 students) and continued language use (B3: 31 students; implied in 2) was also recognized as a clear future need for the students. In addition, one of the students noted the reactivation of past fluency.

One of the clear problems is the duration of the exchange programmes. They are simply too short for proper language development. Some skills need longer to develop than the four weeks that is the typical duration of the FiMSIC exchanges. However, this, and the active language use in the PBL programmes, makes the students more aware of the need to maintain and develop their language skills. In the reports, 17 students mentioned the need to maintain skills and 31 intended to continue the active use of English. In the language requirements, the maintenance of

language skills is simply not considered once the minimum requirements are completed.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the reports, the students feel they benefit from the PBL course and exchange programmes linguistically, but not culturally. The main areas of development tend to focus on oral skills, confidence and fluency, i.e. activation of existing language skills, and extension of vocabulary in relation to the domains the students have been involved with. Based on these reports, it also appears that the writing skills of the students or more precise and accurate use of language do not seem to develop, or the students did not recognize any development.

The main difference compared to the language courses is in the lack of language support, linguistic feedback on writing and presentations, and the less systematic approach to lexical coverage of varying domains. Cultural issues also depend on the students' interest and activity.

Since in PBL and most exchange programmes the students function in a lingua franca learning environment in a country where English is not the native language of the majority, these cannot be considered as full immersion programmes. English is mainly used as a professional tool with other non-native speakers of English.

FiMSIC and PBL appear to develop different areas of English. However, they often focus on activating oral skills in an academic/professional setting. The component of a normal everyday environment in English is missing. In PBL, this environment is Finnish, while in most exchange programmes students speak either lingua franca English or their own native language. Moreover, there is no language teacher involvement in either PBL or FiMSIC, since the focus is on content and professional skills. Thus, neither of these develops accurate use of language. The size of the lexicon becomes more important than accuracy of use for the students; fluency of communication is clearly emphasized more than pronunciation. The students are happy if they become more confident and fluent language users with an extended vocabulary. They might find it easier to circumlocute the linguistics deficiencies they might have, but accurate use of the terms is important for both patient treatment and academic uses of English.

The contexts of language use also differ. In PBL, English is only used during the class sessions and focuses on content and skills, with language simply being the communicative tool that facilitates this. In the exchange programmes, active language use depends on the students, but they are in a linguistic and cultural environment outside their own language 24 hours a day for the month the programme lasts.

Language support is missing in these alternatives in relation to classroom teaching. Everything relies on the language skills of the teachers who teach the content. Often they are *lingua franca* speakers themselves with varying language skills – and not necessarily always better than the language skills of the students they teach.

Our **recommendation** is that rather than having either courses or the alternative means to fulfil language requirements, it would be better to combine them, i.e. to deepen the language skills acquired during language courses by these alternatives, but also to utilize the experience of PBL and exchange students in the language courses, especially in the course on *Multicultural Patient Interaction for Dentists/ Medics*. These students have real experience of cultural issues – even though they do not mention this in the reports. Also, even though the Faculty of Medicine would like the students to complete the language requirement relatively early, within the first three to four year of the studies, there is a clear realization of the need to develop and maintain language skills in the future. The students have clearly understood the value of language studies – even though they tend to focus on language skills as a professional tool rather than a cultural window to the world outside their own language and culture.

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LEARNER AUTONOMY AND INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE IN LANGUAGE LEARNING: ALICE AS INSTITUTIONAL TANDEM

Marjaana Kuokkanen-Kekki & Christian Niedling

In 2003, the first Tandem courses, later called ALICE, were offered at the Language Centre of the University of Helsinki. Finnish- or Swedish-speaking Finns build a language partnership with an international student from abroad. From the very beginning, the course was remarkably popular among both the Finns and the incoming students. The courses are constantly fully booked and the feedbacks show contentment. The main reasons of the course's popularity refer to learner autonomy and out-of-classroom learning. ALICE offers an authentic approach to the culture of the language partner and is regarded as valuable addition to traditional language courses. At the moment, however, it seems that ALICE is not yet widespread in universities. For this reason the article gives a short overview of general tandem principles, ALICE at the University of Helsinki, the course in practice, the tutoring teacher's role and the student's activities as well as their feedback.

INTRODUCTION

Language tandem is a prime example of out-of-classroom and open learning that allows self-determined, independent, reciprocal and interest-guided learning processes. It can therefore be seen as a complement to foreign language classroom learning. Tandem learning has been used since the late sixties, and it was first developed in Germany (see Vassallo & Telles 2006).

The main aim of tandem for the participants is to improve their language skills and learn more about the partner's culture. Tandem learning takes place through authentic communication with a native speaker.¹ Partners can correct and support each other in speaking a new language.² The native speakers are not in a teacher's role. They will not set learning aims, learning pathways or correct grammar, but one can learn from them (see Brammerts 2006). They suggest themes, speech rates, and

¹ For the topic of student exchange, see also Matilainen (2011) and Siddall & Pitkänen (2011).

² See <http://www.slf.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/learning/idxeng11.html>.

they will answer questions and give information (ibid.). The tandem partners are thus highly free to create their own mode of practice.³

There are three common principles of tandem (see also Vassallo and Telles 2006, 3-5). First, during the tandem sessions the languages should not be mixed, which means the learners speak only one language at a time. The main reason is to encourage the use of the foreign language as well as possible in a “protected area”, where mistakes are allowed⁴ and can be corrected by the partner. The second principle of tandem relates to reciprocity. Partners will use each other’s languages in equal amounts. Both participants must have equal opportunity to benefit from the sessions. The third tandem principle concerns the autonomy of the tandem group, allowing the partners to freely choose where to meet, how long to talk, what topic to choose and how to study. This means the participants are responsible for the progress of the language skills and they therefore have to be aware of the progression.

Schwienhorst (2009, 99) gives the following description of tandem learning:

[T]wo learners with complementary L1/L2 combinations work together, setting learning agendas and defining goals, documenting and reflecting on their learning and outcomes [...] in a stress-reduced environment (both are alternatively learner and expert; contact takes place in private) [...] To increase support, they may also be involved in regular counselling sessions and/or give and receive regular feedback on their progress, discussing learning processes and outcomes.

ALICE (*Academic Language and Intercultural Exchange*) courses at the University of Helsinki Language Centre offer autonomous face-to-face language learning in tandem. The basic idea of our ALICE courses is

to provide two language learners, who speak different native languages (Finnish/Swedish-Finnish/Spanish/Italian/French/Swedish/German/Russian), the opportunity to learn about each other's language and culture in an interactive way. Besides learning each other's language, the two learners get an insight into each other's cultures and

³ For a short discussion of the term, see Benson 2009, 224-228.

⁴ For a conducive “error management culture”, see Schwienhorst 2009, 95-100.

customs and receive information about the practicalities of everyday life.⁵

The ALICE courses correspond highly to “The Language Centre’s pedagogic guidelines” as seen in the Language Centre Curriculum⁶:

The Language Centre encourages students to study and use languages independently, and to continuously evaluate and develop their language skills also after completing their degrees. As well, the recognition, acknowledgement and exploitation of learning that takes place outside formal education in informal, everyday settings is an important part of the Language Centre’s pedagogic and administrative mission. (page 5: Active life-long learning)

In this article we will present an overview of Spanish and German ALICE courses at the University of Helsinki and assume here that the other Language Centre languages courses for tandem work in a similar way.

ALICE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

ALICE AS INSTITUTIONAL TANDEM

The importance of language skills is described in the Language Centre Curriculum for 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 as follows:

Language studies are an essential part of both a student’s growing academic expertise and a degree of high quality. Expertise is demonstrated and relayed through language and communication skills. Studies in language and communication skills also serve to support the development of students’ general academic qualifications and professional skills.

The aim of the Language Centre is thus in all ways possible to advance internationalization, versatile language skills, multiculturalism and intercultural communication among students.

⁵ See <http://www.helsinki.fi/kksc/intstud/alice.html>.

⁶ See http://www.helsinki.fi/kksc/perustiedot/dokumentit/kops%20versio%201.0%2025.11_en.pdf

ALICE learning supports the realization of these goals. Finland's EU membership has also had an impact on the university as an institution; the long-lived ambition of teachers to bring together students of different language backgrounds became a reality as the number of foreign students began to grow. In addition to teachers, students have also emphasized the usefulness of strengthening their skills in spoken and practical language use. A focus on speech is often secondary in basic classroom situations due to the large size of groups, and students are also reluctant to speak in front of a big audience.

ALICE courses help both Finns and foreigners in developing their spoken language skills. They are also a means to introduce students of different cultural backgrounds and language skills to each other; to facilitate the adaptation of foreign students to Finland and to familiarize them with local every-day customs and practices; to speed up the process of language learning and to prepare Finnish students for studying abroad, or to help them to maintain their language skills after an exchange.

All in all, the courses advance internationalization. Erasmus students often remain together in their own "ghettoes", without getting to know Finns. This is how a Spanish exchange student describes her experiences: "Escogí el curso para conocer gente de este país porque al ser estudiante Erasmus conoces gente de muchos países, pero realmente pocos finlandeses."⁷ Naturally, Finns also want to meet foreign students alongside learning the language. An ALICE course may even be the starting point of a life-long friendship and a base for the essential contacts needed in working life.

The first tandem-style courses (called Tandem) in Helsinki were organized in German and French in 2003. A few years later, in 2006, the Spanish courses began. At that time the name changed from Tandem to ALICE.⁸ Today, the Language Centre offers partnerships between a Finn (the mother tongue can be either Finnish or Swedish) and students with French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish⁹ as their mother tongue, i.e., two native speakers work together in pairs. There has been

⁷*"I chose this course to get to know people from this country, because as an Erasmus student you get to know people from many countries, but very few Finns."*

⁸ The only reason for changing the name was that "Tandem" became protected by trademark.

⁹ The ALICE principle is the same for each language, but there are – due to different ways of working that groups have been accustomed to – some slight differences in the implementation. However, requirements for getting the 2 ECTS are the same.

considerable interest in the courses and every academic year the courses are fully booked.

ALICE COURSES IN PRACTICE

This is how the course is described on the Language Centre website:

At the beginning of the course, the partners will draw up an "action plan" and timetable, and can thus choose topics that are of interest to both. The course will continue with informal meetings with the partner. Learners are to keep a personal learning diary, which will serve as a basis for a portfolio-type learning folder that the participants are expected to compile in the target language at the end of the course. In addition to the meetings with the learning partner, the course will include pair or group meetings with the supervising teacher on given dates.¹⁰

The normal way of working is in pairs but if a suitable partner has not been available to all willing participants, it has been possible to create groups of three. In many cases, the partners find each other via personal descriptions of all the participants given previously in Moodle,¹¹ for example. With this method, students can look for a partner with the same field of study, the same interests, or look for specific language levels. At the University of Helsinki, the minimum preconditions for successfully taking part in the course that they meet each other for a total of at least 24 hours, including writing a diary for each meeting as well as a short essay on an intercultural topic that the participants choose for themselves. The main questions to be discussed in the diary should include: Where did they meet and for what period of time? What did they talk about? How much did they use Finnish/Swedish and the other language? Was there any progress? Were there any problems and how did they solve them? Did they request help from the mediator? The essay should have a minimum length of two pages. After completing the course satisfactorily, the students will usually get 2 ECTS, but, depending on the teacher and the workload of the tandem group, it is possible to get considerably more credits (e.g., 1-5 in the French unit).

¹⁰ <http://www.helsinki.fi/kksc/intstud/alice.html>

¹¹ Moodle is the abbreviation for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment, and is a course or learning management system, see <http://moodle.org/>. With Moodle, the supervising teacher can indicate interesting events, websites or online-material. Another way of using the Internet for ALICE is by writing blogs; see <http://blogs.helsinki.fi/alice-project/>.

The tandem learning between the Finnish participants and those from abroad can generally be described as asymmetric. Most of the foreign students, regardless of their mother tongue, had very limited possibilities in their home country to learn Finnish or Swedish (knowing that they will study in English at the University of Helsinki).¹² On the other hand most of the Finns, be their mother tongue Finnish or Swedish, know the language of the partner quite well. The required minimum knowledge of the foreign language is CEFR A2. Finns have usually learnt the chosen language in school, or they are preparing themselves for an exchange program in the country of the partner. It is also quite common that the Finns have already taken part in an exchange program or worked in another country and they are using the tandem to refresh their skills in Finland. The basic situation is thus a foreign student with rather poor language skills meeting a Finn who is able to converse in the partner's language on a significant level. This means that the above-mentioned principle of reciprocity can hardly be considered.¹³ This not-applicable principle has been replaced by the agreement that English will not be used during a tandem session.¹⁴

Nevertheless, even under these preconditions, the course is also useful for the foreign students. The vast majority of them will only stay for one term or one academic year in Finland and the foreigners are aware that there is minimal opportunity to use, e.g., Finnish after that time. But many exchange students want contact with "real Finns" and "real Finnish culture". As they are studying mostly in English, the tandem partner may be, if not the only, at least one of the most important persons who represent in an authentic way the local culture and language

¹² Exceptions are students who study Finnish (or Swedish) language at their home university.

¹³ Concerning the question of notably different language levels in tandem see also Brammerts 2006, 4.

¹⁴ English is accepted as a language of exchange on the Spanish ALICE course. This decision was made because most Spanish students want to improve their English skills (which are often quite poor) and wish to have it as the language of exchange. Finnish students are always asked whether they are willing to participate in such exchange. The situation is understandable, because Finnish is studied little, if at all, in Spanish-speaking countries, and non-existent language skills do not seem to serve the purpose in tandem learning. (A few Spanish students have chosen that option, but it has often proven to be a poor choice. "Finnish skills should be much better to really communicate with the partner.") But the rules are the same: one hour Spanish/one hour English, and in practice many groups use more Spanish or even end up choosing only Spanish as their language of communication. All foreign students have, however, been interested in learning at least some Finnish.

during the short period of stay.¹⁵ The foreigner can rely on the Finn to explain the behavior of other Finns, he can ask for help with the Finnish/Swedish grammar he has learned in a course at the Language Centre and, alongside the conversation, the tandem group will do a lot of things together. This combination of ALICE and a language course is a good example of the “combination of instruction and exposure” (see Benson 2009, 217). The tandem is a good way of getting help in mastering everyday situations with a sense of achievement. This refers to Benson’s statement (2009, 219): “The need to integrate learning with the experience of everyday life is also a key idea within the notions of autonomy and self-directed learning.” Sport, politics and culture are very popular topics in addition to the field of study. The foreigner primarily experiences the tandem not as an opportunity to improve their Finnish/Swedish language considerably, even if he is very curious about such an exotic language. Tandem for him is a chance to embrace Finland and gain experiences he will remember with pleasure.

Although ALICE is primarily tailored for the respective tandem partners, some activities are also rewarding for bigger groups, i.e., combinations of several tandem groups. Some examples of such activities include cooking the food of the respective country, watching movies in the respective language, exploring Helsinki and nearby places together or just having fun with Finns and students from the respective language group. Cultural institutions in Helsinki such as the Goethe-Institut Finnland, Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Centre culturel français, Российский Центр Науки и Культуры (РЦНК) all offer ALICE students interesting events or materials, which can also make the foreigner’s culture somewhat familiar in Finland. In addition to these institutions, the respective embassies also offer events and materials that may be useful in the sessions of the partners.

THE TEACHER’S ROLE

The teacher’s function in mediating a tandem course obviously differs from that of an instructor inside a classroom. The teacher has to feel able to trust the information

¹⁵ It should be pointed out that the tutoring system offered by Finnish universities for all visiting students or Erasmus scholars is excellent. Each student gets, e.g., a personal student tutor at the beginning, and there are orientation courses, trips and cultural events. Although most students do appreciate it very much, the tutoring system is of a more institutional nature and does not have the same character of authenticity.

participants give about their activities, and a lot of responsibility has to be handed over to the students. To offer an insight into the unique role of the teacher in this context, we here describe our own activity as facilitators.

The facilitators are always available for various matters. The partners design their own course program according to their particular needs or wishes. However, the pairs will meet their facilitator at least three times during the course (at the beginning, to write the contract, find the partner, and get introduced; in the middle, for a first evaluation and possible feedback, and at the end) and they always have the additional possibility of making contact with the teacher whenever they like or feel the need. As mentioned earlier, the facilitating teacher's role on ALICE courses means that the students' way of learning is self-directed. She brings the partners together and offers tools, e.g., via Moodle. Although ALICE is an institutional tandem with the above-mentioned preconditions for successfully taking part, the framework still permits a high degree of flexibility for each partner group. Both students have the opportunity of learning for their own needs, and their learning is more successful because their approach is self-directed – a skill that will also be important in their future, in the sense of lifelong learning (see Brammerts 2006, 1 and Benson 2009, 218). The teacher is particularly needed as a motivator if the pair has trouble getting started (as rare a situation as this is). The teacher's task is also to help the tandem partners evaluate their progress and assess whether they have achieved the aims they set at the beginning.

STUDENT EXPERIENCES OF GERMAN AND SPANISH ALICE GROUPS

THE MATERIAL

As facilitating teachers of Spanish and German ALICE courses we have been collecting student comments and feedback on the success of the courses for a number of years. We will first present a brief overview of the students' main motives and reasons for joining the course, of their modes of practice, results and perceived

benefits. The student comments¹⁶, which mainly come from the past couple of years, align with our own view as supervising teachers. We have taken the comments from the students' course diaries and their intercultural essays, and sometimes also from the face-to-face meetings. These are all part of the portfolio the students produce during their ALICE course. The comments show that the participants reflected on their expectations, their self-set aims and the results of taking part in ALICE.

REASONS FOR TAKING PART IN AN ALICE COURSE

Students seem to choose the course primarily to learn to use the language more fluently, but many foreign students also want to learn more about Finnish society and culture. The reciprocity in taking part in the course was expressed in a German-Finnish diary as follows:

*Mein Fazit des ALICE-Projekts ist sehr positiv. Unser Sprachtandem hat mir sehr viel Freude bereitet und viel Neues über Finnland und die Finnen vermittelt. Ich hoffe, dass ich A. auch ein wenig, ihr vorher nicht bekanntes, über Deutschland vermitteln konnte. Allen zukünftigen Austauschstudenten sei dieser Kurs wärmstens ans Herz gelegt.*¹⁷

From another course diary, which was jointly written by the participants we can see the motives for taking part:

K. wollte mit diesem Kurs vor allem die finnische Kultur und Sprache näher kennenlernen und auch Kontakt zu Finnen bekommen, da sie vorher noch nie in dem Land war und auch nicht immer nur mit Erasmusstudenten zusammen sein wollte. S. wollte ihre Deutschkenntnisse auffrischen und weiterhin aufrechterhalten, da sie für ihren Erasmus in Göttingen war. Wir sind froh, dass es dieses

¹⁶ All quotes in English, Spanish and German are given in their original form as written in the texts of the participants.

¹⁷ [This and the following translations of the statements are only rough and intend to give the reader who is not familiar with Spanish or German an idea of the citation.] “*My conclusion of the ALICE project is very positive. Our language tandem was a lot of fun for and provided much new about Finland and Finns. I hope I could provide A. sth. new about Germany, as well. I strongly recommend the course for all future exchange students.*” It seems remarkable that in many papers students recommend participation to students who will come after them as exchange students. It indicates, e.g., that they recommend ALICE in their home universities.

*Alice-Programm gibt und sehen es als sehr gute Möglichkeit an neue Leute aus einer anderen Kultur kennenzulernen.*¹⁸

A Spanish student gives a very similar statement using different wording:

To me the basic idea of this course is to speak and improve different languages, besides, it is a very good opportunity to learn about other cultures, customs and traditions. I hope I will be able to speak some words in Finnish. Also I want to help my partner with his Spanish. In conclusion I would like to be able to connect two different cultures with the purpose of learning how they can live together.

Some students indicate their desire to gain confidence in speaking skills as their main reason for joining the course: "Me considero una persona vergonzosa y creo que este curso me ayudaría a soltarme más con el inglés."¹⁹ Others want to make new friends by learning the language. "Me ha tocado un buen compañero; hemos podido entablar amistad que puede continuar."²⁰

Many Finnish students take the course after having spent an exchange year abroad, in order not to forget what they have learned, and some also consider applying to study at the Department of Modern Languages of Helsinki University. Others use the course as preparation for going abroad. A Finnish participant reflected on her participation in this way:

*Ich finde, dass ich nach dem Alice-Kurs besser Deutsch sprechen kann. Früher war es ganz schwierig für mich, Deutsch zu sprechen. Ich bin sicher, dass wenn ich als Austauschstudentin in Deutschland oder in der Schweiz studiere, ist die Sprache kein Problem für mich. [...] Ich habe ganz viele von Deutschlands Kultur gelernt.*²¹

¹⁸ "K. joined the course in order to get a deeper insight view of Finnish culture and language and also to get contact with Finns, as she previously has not been to the country and did not only want to spend her time with other Erasmus students. S. wanted to brush up and continue her German language obtained during her stay as an Erasmus student in Göttingen. We are glad that that this ALICE program is offered and we regard it as a very good way to meet people from another culture."

¹⁹ "I'm quite shy, but I think this course helped me to speak English more freely."

²⁰ "I happened to get a great partner; we have been able to establish a relationship that may continue."

²¹ "I think that my skills in German language improved after taking part in the Alice course. Earlier it was quite difficult for me to speak German. I am sure that if I study as exchange student in Germany or in Switzerland, the language will be no problem for me. [...] I've learned quite a lot about German culture."

MODES OF PRACTICE

The student is the driving force on an ALICE course: the participants decide on their schedule, meeting place and activities based on their own interests. This self-directed learning is something that students often mention as a factor enhancing their learning:

The great thing about the course was the freedom.

It feels good to be able to use the language in a real, authentic situation, where there's no need to demonstrate your skills.

The successful completion of the course requires commitment and taking responsibility for one's learning. The students have the responsibility not only for their own but also for their partners' successful learning experience.

The sign-up form asks the students about their hobbies and interests, and ALICE partnerships are formed on that basis, which normally makes it easy to find discussion topics or select places to visit. The diaries demonstrate that students of the same age often have very similar interests, such as cinema, music, sports, and cooking. Foreign students are also interested in exploring the countryside, as well as visiting museums and art galleries. Skating and cross-country skiing are examples of exotic winter activities.

We were talking about our places, about the weather in Finland, about our hobbies and taking notes about grammatical and difficult words. I couldn't understand why the Finns want to keep the timetable so strictly programmed--.

We talked about the school system in Spain: visited the Helsinki city museum; it was really interesting that Finland has been under different control over years and has had conflicts with the neighboring countries. Now the statue of the Russian tsar in the middle of Senate square makes more sense. I found it interesting that Finland has had a dividing civil war in the 20th century like Spain did. Sometimes the history hides sad events.

Some meetings focused solely on learning the language:

Every day my tandem partner starts the meetings asking me the numbers, verbs and possessive pronouns in Finnish.

*Hemos mirado fotos; hemos utilizado el mismo sistema de antes y él me explicaba cosas y si no entendía, tenía que decírselo y él me lo repetía.*²²

Dropping the course is very rare, and is usually the result of changes in study timetables, although occasionally participation has ceased due to the incompatibility of the partners:

*El compañero es esencial.*²³

Nevertheless, enjoying each other's company and even life-long friendships are much more common than dropping out of the course.

*Ninguno de los cuatro esperaba que el curso tándem resultase tan divertido e interesante. Además de aprender un poco de inglés y español, nos hemos hecho muy buenos amigos. Hemos realizado más horas de las necesarias. También quedaremos después de finalizar el Erasmus: en España o en Finlandia.*²⁴

*--- cabe recalcar que la amistad que se va forjando en las citas, reuniones y hasta en las pláticas día con día en los sistemas de mensajería, como messenger o facebook, perdurará para el resto de los años.*²⁵

RESULTS AND BENEFITS

The students have been extremely content. They have felt that they learned more about the language and culture than they expected. Very rarely has a student expressed dissatisfaction with the course (the only memorable instance of this being one in which a Spanish student was disappointed with the difficulty of the Finnish language). In fact, students have generally felt that the only drawback of the course

²² "We looked at photos; we used the same system as before, and he explained things and if I didn't understand, I had to say so and he repeated."

²³ "The partner is essential."

²⁴ "None of us expected the tandem course to be such fun and interesting. In addition to learning some English and Spanish, we have made good friends. We have spent more hours together than was required and we also plan to continue after the Erasmus year, either in Spain or in Finland."

²⁵ "--- the friendship continues in reunions and day-to-day talks in messaging systems, like Messenger and Facebook."

is the difficulty of fitting schedules together for meetings. Some students have also wished for more meetings with the entire ALICE group. Students have always responded positively when asked whether they would recommend the course to a friend:

Definitely.

Es el mejor método para conocer costumbres y lugares que no son tan turísticos.²⁶

Mi objetivo era sólo hablar español pero ahora me parece que en este curso he aprendido más de la cultura latinoamericana. Espero que sigamos en contacto con mi tándem y quizás algún día tengo la oportunidad de visitarla.²⁷

This course has been a really pleasant experience because I have learnt more about Finns and Finland than other Erasmus students do, as well as making new good friends.

Tandem is an experience I recommend to all the foreign people, because it helps you to understand Finland and the country's culture. It has been a good experience for personal development. The feeling of teaching something useful for someone is also gratifying.

Without this course my time in Finland would have been different. It was really great cultural and language exchange in which one learned a lot of things. Now I have a friend here and I'm very glad for that.

Esto es la primera vez que soy capaz de hablar más libremente en español. Es natural que esté más segura después de algunas citas. Hablar español con fluidez es un objetivo. Cenamos en compañía de Erasmus españoles; aprendí a hacer tortilla de patatas y además vocabulario de la cocina española. Durante la cena me explicaron las diferencias entre diferentes regiones españolas y las identidades distintas.²⁸

²⁶ "It's the best method for learning about customs and places that are not so touristy."

²⁷ "My objective was just to speak Spanish, but now I think that on this course I have learned more about the Latin American culture. I expect to keep in touch with my tandem partner, and perhaps I will have the opportunity to visit her some day."

²⁸ "This was the first time that I was able to speak Spanish more freely. It is natural that I became more confident after a few meetings. Speaking Spanish fluently is one of my goals. We had dinner with Spanish Erasmus students; I learned to make a tortilla de patatas as well as some cooking-related vocabulary in Spanish. During the dinner, the differences between the various Spanish regions were explained to me, and the distinct identities of those regions."

One German student pointed out the complementary character of ALICE to other language courses:

*Ein solcher Tandemkurs ist die beste Ergänzung zu einem Sprachkurs. Gleichzeitig findet man als Ausländer auf diese Weise einen Kontakt zu Einheimischen; findet eine Bezugsperson, die einem den Zugang zu Land und Kultur erleichtert.*²⁹

For some, the course is a road to a longer-term relationship and a boost for life-long learning.

The main objective of this course was the intercultural exchange and also improve our language knowledge. ... thanks to this course and my time in Finland I improved a lot my English and it also awoke the sense to learn more and the conscience to never leave it.

Here, two partners reflect on improving their own abilities in intercultural awareness:

*[U]ns [ist] nun die Bedeutung interkultureller Kompetenz und Kommunikation im Zeitalter der Globalisierung bewusster als vorher. Aber erst das Zusammentreffen unterschiedlicher Kulturen ermöglichte uns die Bedeutung kultureller Unterschiede auch praktisch zu erfahren.*³⁰

Or, as formulated by another group:

*Interkulturelles Lernen hat in unserem Fall die interkulturelle Kommunikation und die dafür entscheidende interkulturelle Kompetenz beider Teilnehmer vorausgesetzt.*³¹

²⁹ "A tandem course like this is the best complement to a language course. As a foreigner, at the same time you find a way to make contact with locals, and you have a caregiver who provides access to land and culture."

³⁰ "We are now more aware of the importance of intercultural competence and communication in the era of globalization than before. But only the "clash" of different cultures allowed us to experience the importance of cultural differences to practically."

³¹ "Intercultural learning presupposed in our case intercultural communication and intercultural skills essential for both participants."

CONCLUSIONS

In this article we have presented a short overview of tandem partnerships and the experiences of tandem participants at the University of Helsinki. We have mainly focused on tandems between Finns and German or Spanish speakers.

Our conclusion is that ALICE is regarded by the participants as an important supplement to classroom language courses. Autonomous language learning in a tandem helps the foreign students to enjoy and survive everyday life in Finland and the Finnish tandem partner is seen as a caregiver and mediator to Finnish culture. The Finns consistently emphasize the improvement and consolidation of their language skills. The participants in ALICE courses internalize the concepts of autonomous and lifelong learning, which correspond to the strategy of the University of Helsinki and its Language Centre.

Almost all students evaluate the course – in which they themselves assume a central role – as very useful and personally profitable. In addition to the cultural orientation, the improvement of language skills and the experience of a highly independent way of self-directed learning, the tandem partnership is likely to endure once the course is over. The friendship between the Finn and the foreigner remains. ALICE is thus an important part of both intercultural communication and awareness and the ability to self-reflect.

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APEL IN LANGUAGE CENTRE(S) - MAKING OUT-OF-CLASSROOM LANGUAGE LEARNING VISIBLE

Sinikka Karjalainen and Tiina Laulajainen

Current pedagogical research and thinking emphasises flexible and personalised learning. It takes place in various environments, the classroom being just one of them. Many aspects of modern life, such as international mobility of students and workforce have brought different ways and contexts of learning to the fore. Consequently, higher education institutions (HEIs) are expected to provide procedures for recognising different kinds of prior learning in their degrees. Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) is one way of making out-of-classroom language learning visible. In this article, we will consider APEL in Finnish language centres, using the University of Helsinki Language Centre (LC) as an example. We will present the current LC accreditation system with an emphasis on the accreditation of informal learning. Then we will discuss some of the pedagogical and administrative issues connected with APEL in language centres.

INTRODUCTION

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is strongly promoted by European Union educational policies. It is one of the aims of the Bologna Process and an essential component of lifelong and lifewide learning (Karlsson & Kjisik 2011). According to the European Universities' Charter on Lifelong Learning (2008) universities commit to recognising all forms of prior learning. In their Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve communiqué (2009, 3) European ministers responsible for higher education state: "Successful policies of lifelong learning will include basic principles and procedures for recognition of prior learning on the basis of learning outcomes regardless of whether the knowledge, skills and competences were acquired through formal, non-formal, or informal learning paths." In Finland, the development of RPL in higher education is actively promoted by the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education 2007, 2009) and by HEIs themselves (Universities Finland 2009).

Language study requirements in Finnish university degrees have a long history. From the beginning of the 20th century until the 1960s students had to pass one or two pro exercitio exams, i.e. translate a text from a foreign language into Finnish/

Swedish (the official national languages). A university degree structure reform in the early 1980s made Finnish/Swedish and one or more foreign languages compulsory in all degrees.

As a result of the Bologna process, Finnish universities adopted the two-cycle degree system in 2005. Language studies are part of the Bachelor's degree (180 credits, ECTS) (Government Decree on University Degrees 794/2004, section 6). The minimum requirement for language studies at the University of Helsinki is 10 credits. Each of the 11 faculties decides on the division of these credits between Finnish, Swedish and foreign language(s) as well as the possible inclusion of additional language requirements beyond the minimum of 10 credits. At present, the language requirements in different faculties vary between 10 and 27 credits.

Most Finnish university language centres (names vary; 'language centre' is used as a generic term here) were established at the end of the 1970s along with the degree reform of the early 1980s, and there are 15 of them at the moment. Their mission is to provide language courses designed to meet the faculty-specific language requirement for the completion of degrees granted by universities. Most of them also offer a variety of optional courses including languages that are less frequently studied in Finland, such as Chinese, Japanese and Portuguese.

At the University of Helsinki Language Centre (LC), teaching is offered in 16 languages and it takes place on all of the four University campuses. Faculty-specific language courses (Swedish and English) form the core of the teaching. The LC also offers elementary, intermediate and specialized courses in several languages including Spanish, Italian, German, Russian, French, Arabic, Chinese, Danish, Dutch, Estonian, Hungarian, Japanese and Portuguese. Elementary courses are not offered in Swedish and English, which most students have already studied at school. Students may also accomplish a wider module of 15-25 credits in English, French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish and Swedish. About 14,000 students participate in the total of 550 LC courses and exemption tests annually. The LC has a full-time teaching staff of about 60, but also employs some 50 to 60 part-time teachers yearly. The administrative staff numbers 11.

Modern language centre teaching and learning is based on meeting the needs of university students in various sciences. Authentic learning materials, co-planning of courses with students (and faculties in some cases) and flexible study paths are essential components of the learning process. It is evident that traditional classroom

learning alone is no longer enough. Modern students are active, international and used to immediate information from several sources, many of which are very informal, e.g. social media. Thus their potential language learning environments are often non-traditional, which challenges language centres to exploit these new learning possibilities. Recognising and accrediting prior language learning is an opportunity for students to benefit from these language and communication skills that they have acquired outside the classroom.

TERMINOLOGY

Terminology in the area of RPL is "like the Tower of Babel" (Conrad 2010). There are several terms and definitions used differently by different authors and in different countries. An overview of the terms and abbreviations relating to this type of learning is presented for example in Joosten-Ten Brinke et al. (2008). In our article, we will use the term '**Recognition of Prior Learning**' (**RPL**) as an umbrella term, meaning all the processes and procedures of assessing and accrediting learning, whether obtained in formal, non-formal or informal learning contexts. '**Accreditation of Prior Learning**' (**APL**) refers to the recognition of formal learning (learning formally assessed by an institute or other official body) (Adam 2007a). '**Accreditation of Prior Experiential learning**' (**APEL**) refers to the process whereby the individual's competences gained in non-formal (e.g. work) and informal (e.g. life experience) learning environments are assessed and accredited (Adam 2007b).

APEL IN LANGUAGE CENTRES

Recognition of prior learning in university language centres is not new. Exemption tests have been long used in most language centres, at least concerning courses required for degrees. Students who have acquired - in one way or another - the required language skills for a particular course, can come to an exemption test and, if successful, get credits for the course. What is new, however, is the need to create coherent systems for RPL both within and between language centres, particularly concerning APEL. Recognition principles and practices may vary greatly, even between individual teachers within a single language centre.

In 2006, the Council of University Language Centre Directors in Finland gave some recommendations for RPL guidelines, mainly on the accreditation of formal learning. These guidelines are now being revised by the network of language centres to cover the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as well. A national project launched at the end of 2009 aims at creating nationwide guidelines for recognising prior language learning (excluding philology majors) in language centres and polytechnics (AHOT korkeakouluissa 2009-2011). In the following, we will look at some aspects of recognising prior learning using the University of Helsinki Language Centre (LC) as an example.

ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING (APL)

Since the 1980s, students have been exempted from compulsory language courses if they have been able to show valid documentation of having completed corresponding language studies in another faculty, another Finnish university or, from the mid-1990s onwards, in a polytechnic. In the academic year 2000-01, the APL principles were published in the LC study guide for the first time. This made it more transparent and easier for students to apply for a credit transfer than before. In 2006, the principles were updated according to the guidelines of the Council of University Language Centre Directors, and the RPL application procedures and the form were simplified. The LC is responsible for credit transfer concerning the language studies (required for degrees, not language majors) of students in all of the faculties except two, the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Social Sciences, which do it themselves. Table 1 shows the volume of APL at the LC in 2008-09.

Table 1. Credit transfer by HEIs in the academic year 2008-2009

Higher education institute:	ECTS credits:
Finnish university	1 879
International university	1 645
Finnish polytechnic	1 149
Other institutions	99
TOTAL	4 772

Credit transfer, i.e. credits gained from prior formal and informal learning, totals approx. 15% of the annual 33,935 credits awarded at the LC. Prior formal learning has most often taken place in another Finnish or international university or in a Finnish polytechnic. Language studies most often accredited through RPL are in Swedish (1, 507 credits), English (1, 343 credits) and German (558 credits). So far, RPL at the LC has been mainly credit transfer based on formal studies. The situation is similar in all Finnish language centres.

ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (APEL)

Prior experiential learning refers to competences - knowledge, skills, attitudes, abilities - acquired in a variety of settings, at work, in community, voluntary or leisure activities or in family life. Exchange periods and travelling are examples of such language learning contexts. The history of APEL goes back to the early 1970s in the USA, where several new colleges were created to serve students who wanted to return to study and already had versatile life and working experience. Other pioneering countries are the United Kingdom, France and Canada. A good overview of the development of APEL is presented by Evans (2007). Practical language centre experience suggests that APEL is underused and rather in its infancy. This is also shown in the literature worldwide: very little is published on RPL in language learning, and even less on APEL. Now, we shall present some ways of accrediting prior experiential learning at the LC.

EXEMPTION TESTS

At the University of Helsinki, students can fulfill their compulsory foreign language requirements in English, French, German, Italian, Russian or Spanish by demonstrating their skills in an exemption test, instead of participating in a course. The tests are usually arranged twice in an academic year. An exemption test typically consists of a written assignment (e.g. portfolio, summary, essay) and an oral part (e.g. interview, pair discussion). In the academic year 2008-09, approximately 1, 320 (4%) out of the total 33, 935 were credits completed at the Language Centre by taking an exemption test in the above languages. There are also exemption tests in the national languages, Finnish and Swedish. In Swedish, the test consists of three parts: grammar & vocabulary, a writing assignment and an interview.

ENGLISH FOR LAW STUDENTS

Since the academic year 2008-09, it has been possible for those law students who have extensive work experience and are working on their Master's degree to fulfill their Master's degree language requirement (5 credits) in English by creating a portfolio and by taking part in an interview (Lehtonen 2011).

FACULTY OF MEDICINE AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDIES IN ENGLISH

The compulsory foreign language requirement at the Faculty of Medicine is 3 credits. Besides LC courses and exemption tests, the students have a variety of other options to acquire these credits if they choose English as the foreign language. They can participate in medical courses taught in English, including both practical clinical and theoretical teaching. They can participate in student exchange programmes or international seminars held at the faculty. They can also attend international medical conferences. The students choosing these options are required to write a report (using a specific form) about what they have done and what they have learnt from the language point of view. The LC teacher(s) responsible for teaching English at the Faculty of Medicine will then assess the students' APEL claims and award the credits (Siddall & Pitkänen 2011).

LEARNING ITALIAN IN ITALY

The Italian module Italianistica consists of a minimum of 20 credits, and it is possible to include some informal learning in it. For example, if a student has stayed in Italy for over two months studying or taking part in some practical training, it is possible to get 3 credits based on experiential language learning during the stay. For APEL purposes the student is asked to submit a reflective written report of his/her learning to the Italian teacher responsible for the module.

PERSPECTIVES ON APEL AT LANGUAGE CENTRES

There are several questions that need to be considered in the practical application of APEL. Here, we focus on some pedagogical, quality and administrative issues.

PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are many pedagogical considerations connected with APEL. It challenges traditional views about knowledge, learning and pedagogy (Adam 2007b, Armsby et al. 2006, Harju 2010). Traditionally, universities have been 'gatekeepers to knowledge' and concentrated on theorised knowledge, while APEL deals with reflective and unstructured learning (Armsby et al. 2006, Costley 2007). The division between theoretical and practical knowledge may not be so clearly visible in language centre teaching as it is in subject disciplines, but it is not unknown in language learning either. A major issue is what counts as 'proper' learning. There are doubts among some of the staff in language centres about the quality of language learning in less organised contexts such as student exchange. This brings us to issues such as attitudes, trust and ethics, which are essentially involved in APEL. Higher education institutes or individual teachers do not always trust each other's quality of teaching. Traditional pedagogical thinking also emphasises the importance of an individual teacher's teaching in the learning process. On the other hand, a growing number of language centre teachers utilize a large range of learning possibilities in their teaching, as exemplified by the articles in this volume.

A major pedagogical issue in the recognition of prior learning is the necessity of thinking in terms of learning outcomes. This means a change of perspective from teaching to learning. This seems easy and simple, but in practice it may be surprisingly difficult. In 2009, the LC rewrote its course descriptions to be based on learning outcomes, preceded by staff training and workshops on the subject. The resulting new descriptions varied: many were carefully considered and truly outcome-based, while some seemed more or less to have undergone 'cosmetic surgery'. This is a natural phase in the adoption of outcome-based thinking. In many language units, the process raised issues concerning curriculum design, including basic questions on what kinds of courses should be offered in different languages. In fact, the recognition of prior learning should be an essential component of curriculum design (Pouget 2007).

Assessment plays an important role in APEL. It is particularly relevant for both non-formal and informal learning. Both are areas in which language centres do not have much experience. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (2001) provides general guidelines for assessing the level of language skills, but there is a need for more specific common principles and guidelines concerning different forms and practices of APEL assessment. Teachers may also need training and benchmarking for these. If the numbers of APEL claims considerably increase, so does the need for teacher resources, which may be a serious obstacle to the development of APEL in language centres.

The principles of entrance to the APEL process often involve complicated issues. At present, APEL in Finnish language centres is mostly applied to compulsory language requirements only. Should it be available for most or all language centre studies, and if so, on what conditions? Is it pedagogically suitable for elementary courses? Could students who have bi-/multilingual family backgrounds enter the APEL process for elementary courses in their family languages? Can students seriously misuse the APEL system? These are just some of the pedagogical and practical questions currently being asked in the language centres.

QUALITY ISSUES

Quality in APEL refers to the quality of processes, centrally including the assessment of learning, and to the quality of learning itself (Pyykkö 2010, Walsh 2008, Scheys 2008). APEL procedures must be clear, transparent and fair, but they should also meet several other criteria such as fitness for purpose, acceptability, comparability and costs vs. efficiency (Joosten-Ten Brinke et al. 2009). Assessment procedures must be valid and reliable. Until now, quality criteria have focused on the processes. However, this is not sufficient from the point of view of the quality, and we need to develop criteria concerning pedagogical aspects such as the potential of APEL to help students reflect on and further develop their language skills and ways of language learning. The connection of APEL with curriculum planning and course development is clearly a quality issue.

University language centres co-operate with faculties, which are important stakeholders in APEL processes. At the University of Helsinki, faculties are responsible for the quality of their degrees, including the quality of learning acquired through RPL. The LC is responsible for the quality of its teaching as part of

these degrees. In this context, recognition of prior learning is sometimes problematic. The LC has clear and up-to-date RPL processes, and they are described in the LC study guide. However, all faculty study advisors are not sufficiently familiar with them or the potential of RPL in language learning. All students have to make a personal study plan at the beginning of their studies, including language studies, and faculties are responsible for advising and supervision concerning them. Language studies are often dealt with superficially and rather mechanically in these plans. This also means that the students' potential prior learning in languages does not get enough attention. Closer co-operation with faculties in this matter is clearly a development area for the LC.

ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

The promotion of APEL, including the creation of new recognition processes, will affect the prevailing structures and practices and the division of work between the LC teaching staff and academic affairs personnel. The Academic Affairs Unit is responsible for the administrative procedures of RPL. Until now, RPL has mainly consisted of credit transfer based on certain principles concerning formal learning. If the volume of APEL increases, it will also increase the workload of the Academic Affairs Unit and require more expertise in APEL of its personnel. The LC APEL principles need to be updated and new types of information, instructions and guidance be produced and included in student handbooks, internet- and intranet web-pages. The role of the Academic Affairs Unit will increase in coordinating the APEL process within the LC and in cooperation with the faculties. Close cooperation with LC teachers is essential because the assessment of non-formal or informal prior learning is beyond the competence of the Academic Affairs Unit personnel. On the whole, reconsideration of the recognition policies, processes and responsibilities is needed not only within the LC but also in relation to its stakeholders (Murphy 2010).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

APEL in language centres has come to stay. Informal learning, e.g. work experience, is one of the future areas to be taken into consideration in language centre teaching and learning. APEL will require close cooperation between all stakeholders: HEIs,

language centres, faculties and students, working life, even schools. This in turn requires general APEL guidelines and practices within and between language centres.

Learning outcome-based thinking and curriculum design are prerequisites for APEL in language centres. APEL is one way of making out-of-classroom language learning visible and its promotion involves changes both in pedagogical and administrative approaches to recognising prior learning. The key issue that remains is the high quality of language skills in our degrees – even if the means of acquiring these skills may vary.

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LANGUAGE LEARNING AT WORK: MASTER OF LAWS STUDENTS DEMONSTRATING THEIR OUT-OF-CLASSROOM LEARNING

Tuula Lehtonen

This article will look into one particular arrangement at the Language Centre that allows students to be credited for their out-of-classroom, work-based learning. The idea of recognizing and accrediting formal and informal learning while at work has gained ground in European institutions of higher education in the past decade because of a suitable political climate and it continues to be vigorously promoted by the Finnish Ministry of Education. This article is based on my current practice that allows for crediting out-of-classroom learning for Law students who have been employed for at least around two years in law-related positions. My particular aim is to investigate what these students – a sample of eleven in total – reveal about their out-of-classroom language learning as well as their use of language at work. The profiles of the eleven students reveal similarities as well as differences. The data collected using different methods mainly based on self-reporting show similarities in what languages the students claim to use at work, in what types of tasks the students do independent of their job descriptions, in how well they manage at work and in how they see their development curve as users of language at work. I find it necessary that we continue developing these accreditation practices now that the educational and administrative will is here. The students who helped me collect my data were extremely grateful for the opportunity to show what they can do and, as far as I see, deserved the credits they gained through documentation and an interview.

BACKGROUND

Out-of-classroom (language) learning has always existed – long before the first formal classrooms were established. We often read and hear of people who recount instances of language or other types of learning that clearly indicate that certain external or internal circumstances or factors have acted as conducive to informal (out-of-classroom) learning and how that learning took place. An illustrative example comes from Malcolm X's autobiography, which takes the reader en route through the developmental process of this Black Muslim activist's thinking. In the following lengthy extract, Malcolm X reveals what acted as an impetus for his motivation to improve his skills in using formal white man's language while he was serving a prison sentence, and what methods he decided to use:

It was because of my letters [to politicians and other influential people] that I happened to stumble upon starting to acquire some kind of a homemade education.

I became increasingly frustrated at not being able to express what I wanted to convey in letters that I wrote (...) In the street, I had been the most articulate hustler out there – I had commanded attention when I said something. But now, trying to write simple English, I not only wasn't articulate, I wasn't even functional. How would I sound writing in slang, the way I would say it (...)

Many who today hear me somewhere in person, or on television, or those who read something I've said, will think I went to school far beyond the eighth grade. This impression is due entirely to my prison studies.

It had really begun back in the Charlestown Prison, when [a fellow inmate] first made me feel envy of his stock of knowledge. [This fellow inmate] had always taken charge of any conversations he was in, and I had tried to emulate him. But every book I picked up had few sentences which didn't contain anywhere from one to nearly all of the words that might as well have been in Chinese. When I just skipped those words, of course, I really ended up with little idea of what the book said. So I had come to the Norfolk Prison Colony still going through only book-reading motions. Pretty soon, I would have quit even these motions, unless I had received the motivation that I did.

I saw that the best thing I could do was get hold of a dictionary – to study, to learn some words. I was lucky enough to reason also that I should try to improve my penmanship. It was sad. I couldn't even write in a straight line. It was both ideas together that moved me to request a dictionary along with some tablets and pencils from the Norfolk Prison Colony School.

I spent two days just riffing uncertainly through the dictionary's pages. I'd never realized so many words existed! I didn't know which words I needed to learn. Finally, just to start some kind of action, I began copying.

In my slow, painstaking, ragged handwriting, I copied into my tablet everything printed on that first page, down to the punctuation marks.

I believe it took me a day. Then, aloud, I read back, to myself, everything I'd written on the tablet. Over and over, aloud, to myself, I read my own handwriting.

I woke up the next morning, thinking about those words - immensely proud to realize that not only had I written so much at one time, but I'd written words that I never knew were in the world. Moreover, with a little effort, I also could remember what many of these words meant. I reviewed the words whose meaning I didn't remember. (Malcolm X, 265-6)

Malcolm X's story is, in many ways, untypical and extraordinary, but his out-of-classroom learning has elements we are familiar with. In today's world, we continue learning in out-of-classroom settings that, as this volume demonstrates, either complement formal learning in the classroom or take place independent of the formal setting. As our interest in this volume is to somehow connect out-of-classroom learning to something that can be reported on or even credited, this article will look into one particular arrangement at the Language Centre that allows students to learn out of their classrooms and show this learning.

This arrangement involves the possibility of recognizing and accrediting previous learning (aiemmin hankitun osaamisen tunnistaminen ja tunnustaminen, AHOT in Finnish; Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning, APEL in English) and thus promotes the idea that, for example, work-based learning needs to be valued and, when relevant, should form a part of the student's degree (see Karjalainen and Laulajainen 2011). The idea of recognizing and accrediting formal and informal learning while at work has gained ground in European institutions of higher education in the past decade because of a suitable political climate (see e.g. Costley and Abukari 2009, Chisholm et al. 2009) and continues to be vigorously promoted by the Finnish Ministry of Education (see e.g. Opetusministeriö 2007). Although this article shows what we do in accordance with the APEL principles, the practice reported here arose independent of the European education policies and Ministry guidelines and was initially trialled because there was a grassroots call for it: Law students were increasingly in touch with me in the transition period from the old degree system to the new, from 2005 to 2008, i.e. during the latest big reform in the Finnish higher education system. Many of them had combined work and study for years and wanted to see if their experiences and skills could be credited and acknowledged as part of their old degree system degree.

The students this article presents come from the Faculty of Law. This faculty has set its language requirements higher in terms of credits than most other faculties: in order to graduate from the Faculty with a Bachelor's (oikeusnotaari), the students need to study 5 credits worth in one foreign language and 5 credits in Swedish, the

second official language of Finland. The majority of Law students opt for English, but other foreign languages are often studied in addition (see Karjalainen and Lehtonen 2005 for somewhat outdated statistics; Language Centre internal statistics 2009). To get a Master of Laws (oikeustieteen maisteri), the students need to earn an additional 5 credits either in the same foreign language, in a new foreign language or in Swedish. It is these Master's level language studies, or one way of fulfilling this requirement, that are of concern here. Students who opt for what is described here gain between 2 and 5 credits.

MOTIVATION FOR THIS STUDY

As it is not uncommon that, while studying, Law students take employment in jobs that are somehow related to their future jobs in the field of law – often on part-time basis – it is likely that many of these students learn out of the classroom, i.e. at work. Having taught students of law for several years, it is this kind of learning that has intrigued me and made me wonder how to make use of the knowledge of it myself in my own teaching and how to share the information collected with my colleagues teaching Law students.

Coupled with my interest in finding out what students learn at work while still students has been another interest: my desire to continually keep up to date with the linguistic demands of today's workplace in general. Knowing about the workplace and what we prepare our students for is essential. Yet we often base some of our knowledge on hearsay, anecdotal evidence and how we perhaps would like the reality to be, and not on facts. I believe we do so because it is difficult to know what the facts we need to look for are and how to make sense of the information that is available. This article is one effort to add to our common knowledge base. Only by building a broad base will we be able to develop our teaching and meet the workplace-related demands of the Language Centre Curriculum 2009-11. The Curriculum states among its pedagogic guidelines that “[f]unctional language proficiency meeting academic and professional needs” in degree-specific language studies is relevant. In addition, our teaching should adhere to the principles set in the Decree on Higher Education (2004), which refers to life and language use after graduation.

AIM

This article is based on my current practice that allows for crediting out-of-classroom language learning for Law students who have been employed for at least around two years in law-related positions. My particular aim is to investigate what these students – eleven in total – reveal about their out-of-classroom language learning as well as their use of language at work.

When out-of-classroom learning is part of a formal curriculum, there needs to be a way of monitoring / reporting what has taken place. The methods I have chosen in the context of the Master's degree requirement in a foreign language are various, and this article focuses only on some of them: an electronic questionnaire (an e-form) and a document that is supposed to describe the student's job and report on

[His or her] experiences in/observations on language use at work, language needs at work, informal and formal language learning at work, language skills (foreign and mother tongue) needed or lacking, future predictions of workplace language issues (Study guide description).

In addition, this article employs interviews with the eleven students who fulfilled this out-of-classroom APEL type requirement between September 2009 and May 2010. The interviews often clarify some of the issues that arise from the written documents. In the past few years, around twelve students per year have fulfilled the requirement in this way. As the annual number of graduates from the Faculty of Law is in the range of 200 (for example, 195 in 2009, see Helsinki University Statistics 2009), the eleven students in my current sample represent around 5 per cent of that population.

WHAT DID I DISCOVER?

The profiles of the eleven students reveal similarities as well as differences. The differences are apparent in their background: age, number of years of studying as well as the length of work experience. The students also appear to have slightly different kinds of job descriptions (Table 1). All the information in the table was collected during the academic year 2009-2010.

Table 1. Students' background information, verbatim, collected from August 2009 to May 2010

Students in the order of filling in the eform	L1	Age	Beginning of study	Work history briefly	Short description of current work
student 1 (male)	Finnish	26	2003	Insurance 2005->	Head of a team that handles insurance claim matters in an international environment.
student 2 (female)	Swedish	39	2003	Police officer [for over ten years] and before that I studied [a field of study] at Helsinki University [for three years] and before that I worked [in a field unrelated to law]	International exchange of information in police or judicial criminal matters. Forwarding international Rogatory Letters.
student 3 (male)	Finnish	26	2003	sales personnel (several years), legal trainee (one and a half year)	I am working as a legal trainee in a multinational corporation operation in industrial sector
student 4 (male)	Swedish	24	2006	2 years of professional [sports], 2 years at a law office, 0.5 years at a Finnish multinational	I work at the legal department, on various legal tasks, at a Finnish multinational
student 5 (female)	Finnish	27	2003	I have worked as a trainee at [name of the company] Attorneys at Law since 2005.	Assisting the lawyers in their assignments; legal research, writing memos, contacting authorities and translating documents.
student 6 (female)	Finnish	23	2005	I've work in an law firm as a part time junior trainee for three years, and at the legal department of a public listed company as a full time legal trainee for almost a year.	I work as a legal trainee as a part of a Legal Services team. I draft, comment and negotiate agreements and other documents, write memos on different legal questions and assist the legal counsels in various other ways.
student 7 (male)	Swedish	23	2005	I have worked at [name of the company] Attorneys from fall 2008 until present	I work as full-time Trainee.
student 8 (male)	Finnish	27	2004	Legal Traineeships: 2 years in frame of a big Finnish company] legal department, 5 months in (...) Software Procurement, negotiations for my next job are ongoing.	I'm currently studying full-time and not employed
student 9 (female)	Finnish	32	2006	[two unrelated professions 2001-2010], an assistant lawyer, about three years	I am an assistant lawyer in an attorney's office
student 10 (female)	Finnish	26	2006	During my studies at the Faculty of Law, I have worked in three law firms and one summer I spent working in a bank. Before commencing my law studies, I worked in a research group in [natural sciences].	Currently, I work in a law firm where I assist the lawyers of the firm in taking care of the assignments. My main tasks include searching for information, drafting different kinds of documents, and translating texts between Finnish and English.
student 11 (female)	Finnish	26	2005	I have worked as a tax consultant for three years. Before that I have had summer jobs such as tax clerk in the tax office.	My current work of a tax consultant consist mainly of providing tax assistance to employers and their employees in relation to work assignments to/from Finland. In addition, I provide general tax, social security, labour law and immigration consultation.

Table 1 shows that the students ranged from 23 to 39 years of age, the average age being 26. They had started their studies between the years 2003 and 2006, i.e. at the time of filling in the questionnaire they were between their fourth and seventh year of study and soon to graduate. They had gained work experience as legal trainees in large Attorneys at Law offices as well as small law offices, and working for a legal department of an international company, the Police Forces, an international company specializing in taxation advice or an insurance company. The length of their work experience related to their field ranged from around two to over ten years. The data showed some other differences, not reported in the table: three of the eleven students have Swedish as their L1, and two had already gained a Master's and two a Bachelor's Degree in other fields.

However, striking similarities are notable. The data collected using different methods, mainly based on self-reporting, show similarities in the languages the students claim they use at work, in the types of tasks the students do independent of their job descriptions, in how well they manage at work and in how they see their development curve as users of language at work.

These Law students soon to graduate paint a picture of a workplace based in Finland where three languages are used: Finnish, English and Swedish. In fact, eight of them, including the three Swedish as an L1 speakers, claim to use these three languages regularly, i.e. at least once a month:

- four report using each of them daily,
- one claims to use Finnish every day and English and Swedish several times a week,
- two report using Finnish and English daily and Swedish less often, and
- one reports using Finnish daily and Swedish and English around once a month.

Two out of the eleven claim to use Finnish and English daily, but no Swedish, and one claims to use mainly only English. No other foreign languages were mentioned as languages used at work, although all the students had skills in at least one foreign language in addition to English – in most cases German. French, Spanish and Italian were also mentioned as languages some of these students know.

As stated earlier, these students had gained their work experience as employees in various kinds of offices, often in seemingly different contexts. However, the types of task the students report on in the e-form as well as in their job description document display many similarities, exemplified by these three answers (in the original form, as all the other extracts):

[At work] the following applies to [Finnish, Swedish and English]: 1) reading reports, legal texts, legislation and correspondence, 2) writing legal documents & correspondence, internal instructions (in Finnish), 3) phone conversations, watching news, 4) presentations, meetings.
Student 1 in e-form

I give tax briefings (face-to-face and via telephone) to my clients. In addition, I am in contact with the authorities regarding e.g. appeals and tax returns I have prepared. I write memos and e-mails to our clients regarding questions they have raised. Student 11 in e-form

Reading tasks include reading legal literature such as legal books and articles. Writing tasks are composed of drafting different kinds of documents such as memoranda. Listening and speaking tasks relate to various types of communication. Student 10 in e-form

This same student submitted a revealing document illustrating her tasks in her current work; she gives a detailed account of searching for information, drafting documents, preparing translations and various speaking tasks. Searching for information is, in her words, “one [of] the most central tasks in a law firm because many of the other tasks, drafting documents for instance, is based on that information”. Similar tasks have been identified by other students in this group of eleven. Only one of the students does not fall within this pattern: she claims that her main, almost only, foreign language/Swedish-related task is to translate.

The students completing their Master’s-level language requirements in the APEL manner estimate that they manage well in tasks that demand the use of foreign languages and Swedish/Finnish. Their estimates are very positive, apart from one who states she manages “quite well”. They sometimes base their self-evaluations on their superior’s feedback, sometimes on other factors.

When it comes to reflections on the development of language skills at work, it is evident that this group of students, on the whole, has improved. They report development in their English skills, in particular, and in their law-related vocabulary skills. One of the students says she has noticed improvement in “grammar and

structures”. One mentions having gained more self-confidence. What is most noteworthy is the “learning by doing” approach these students describe as having adopted at work, as the following reflections show:

My language skills are improving every day that goes by. I have found out that the most important thing is just to be brave and get involved in lots of different situations, even though they can be challenging languagewise. I still use the dictionary quite a lot while writing. But I am picking up new words every day and hopefully I will not need a dictionary in a couple of years. Mostly the words I am forced to look up are related specifically to our cargo handling business. Therefore, I would say there is a lot of informal learning going on at work. Student 4 in job description

Due to the nature of my work and number of international clients, my primary working language is English. Even though I had always succeeded well with my English studies starting from the elementary school, adapting to the use of professional English at workplace felt intimidating at first. I remember that on my first work day at [my company], I was asked to draft an e-mail in English to an assignee regarding the tax implications of [a sale]. Once I had completed the e-mail – quite happy with the result – I gave the draft to a senior employee for review. When I received the draft back I realized that the original text had been completely changed and overwritten. This was the first lesson I learned regarding the use of English language in the workplace. Even though my English and the legal advice had been correct, the style and language had been changed to a more professional form. By professional form I mean that the vocabulary used was more refined and also the structure of sentences was changed.[...] After the three years that I have now worked at [my company] my drafts usually do not encounter many changes. Student 11 in job description

It is also clear that these students are textbook examples of ongoing out-of-classroom learning:

I intend to make full use of the language skills I've obtained so far. The foundation for my language skills has been laid through (thanks to) the basic language education at school and it has developed later on because of the opportunity to use English and other languages actively in my daily work tasks. Student 2 in job description

When I first started at [company name] my language skills in basic English were ok, but, honestly, I didn't have a clue about legal

English. I passed an interview held in English by a lawyer at our firm. However, he pointed out to me at the interview that fluent skills in English are really essential. I got to discover this for myself after I started to work for [company name]. During 1,5 years at [company name], I have done dozens of translations from both English to Finnish, Finnish to English, Swedish to English and from English to Swedish and written several texts and memos in English.

In the beginning, and even a long time after that, I thought that translating to or from English was really difficult. Translating was really time consuming and very stressful on a personal level. I always want to do a good work and when I was translating, it felt that I wasn't doing so, even if I tried my best. I was translating legal texts on a level that was too difficult compared to my actual skills. For instance, I got to translate share purchase agreements that were up to 20 pages long.

The good thing about doing things that are too difficult compared to your actual skills is that you learn really fast. It's the same thing as playing tennis or chess against a better player. When I look at some texts that I wrote more than a year ago and compare them to texts that I have recently written, I can't help but to notice that my English skills has improved enormously. The best thing is, however, that my improvement in English has given me a spark to further improve my English. I am even willing to practice English grammar on my spare time, which I would never even have considered before. The reason for this is that I know, that in order to be a successful lawyer in transactions (what I am doing now), I simply cannot manage without fluent skills in English. Student 7 in job description

The following extract further reinforces the idea of ongoing learning:

Teaching in Finnish law schools is theoretical with very little concentration on practical skills and issues. Therefore students need to gain practical work experience during their studies, especially if they're willing to work in the corporate world after their graduation. Working in a law firm or corporation's legal department is very helpful and gives students an opportunity to learn skills that they would never learn at the university.

I got my first "real" summer job in 2007. I was both lucky and privileged enough to get a trainee position in [a big IT company's] legal department. It is a big department of almost 200 lawyers and paralegals worldwide. During my, almost two year, period at [the company] I had a unique opportunity to work in several different

teams inside the legal department. All teams I worked in had both Finnish people and native English speakers. English is the corporate language at [the company] and there's no real need to know other languages than that.

I started with fairly simple tasks but advanced quickly to more challenging ones. I did quite a lot contract filing during my first summer. This meant entering contracts into electronic database. It was actually very beneficial task because I had to carefully read every contract and find the relevant information to be added to the database. I was able to extend my professional vocabulary and also strengthen my contract reading skill, which is a very essential skill for every corporate lawyer. All contracts were, of course, in English. My other main task was conducting marketing material legal checks. Basically that meant carefully reviewing marketing materials of [the company's] products and making notes and comments if there were any issues with the wording or images. Notes were then shared with the marketing people and if necessary discussed face to face. This helped me to develop both my written and spoken English. It was really challenging but also very rewarding task for a "1st timer". I also helped team's lawyers with their daily tasks. For example, I reviewed and compared contracts, searched and processed legal information etc. Later I was invited to participate in a contract management tool development project. After the tool was completed I was responsible for the "end-user" support (people in our legal department). I organized virtual training sessions as well as face-to-face classroom sessions. This challenge gave me more confidence as a speaker. During my time in [the company] I also attended several law related internal seminars, training sessions, teleconferences etc. Summer 2008 I worked in the same team at [a subdivision of the above company] legal. Year later, I got a 5 month summer job from [the IT department of a related company] team.

My language learning experience at [the company] was very intense and versatile. I was able to develop all parts of my English skills, especially my written and spoken language. Student 8 in job description

Part of these students' hands-on, learning-by-doing approach is the ability to see what is important and essential in terms of communication and what is appropriate in the context:

Since a vast majority of our claim matters have an international connection, a good command of English is an essential requirement in our working environment. However, even more essential than a good

command of English is the right attitude towards using English or other foreign languages for that matter. In my opinion, the needed vocabulary, skills and fluency in languages come almost by itself in due course if the attitude of using languages is open and the fear of making mistakes can be overcome.

I have used mainly English in work related international contacts. Before joining this team I had not really used English in real life situations, except for vacations etc. When I first started writing emails to recipients abroad, I spent too much time double checking every little thing from someone or from the dictionary before sending any messages. A routine developed rapidly through repetition and after a few months I was much more confident to use English in any given situation. As I now have been in many different social situations where I have had to present my agenda to non-Finnish-speaking audiences, I have learned that delivering the idea of my agenda to the audience is far more important than using the right and sophisticated phrases. Student 1 in job description

I would say that maybe one of the negative sides of the “Consultant English” is that sometimes “over-stylizing” the language to seem more proper and professional can actually make it more difficult to understand than if the same information were expressed in a more simple language. It is a challenge to express yourself in a way that the client understands the issue while at the same time maintaining the professional style of writing. I have noticed that recently in many cases clients have wanted a short “bullet-style” answer in an e-mail instead of a long and detailed memorandum. This is understandable of course from the clients budget point of view but also because sometimes the memorandums written are too long and difficult to understand. I personally feel that it is important to adapt the communication style to the person you are sending the information to. For example, if the client who I am sending the information to is an assignee whose own communication style is much more informal, I will adapt my communication style to match his/her’s to some extent. Also naturally my oral English in meetings with clients is usually much more informal than my written language in general.

Another negative side of the “Consultant English” is that after a while you get stuck into a rut with the way you write in English. By getting stuck into a rut I mean that you become accustomed to writing only in certain way and using certain phrases. It is therefore sometimes refreshing to see texts written by my colleagues because you can get some new ideas to express yourself. Student 11 in job description

SO WHAT?

My aim has been to investigate what law students soon to graduate reveal about their out-of-classroom language learning as well as their use of language at the workplace related to their field of study. Based on these data, it is clear that the types of tasks the eleven students describe are similar to the tasks reported in an earlier study looking into law graduates' use of languages at work (Karjalainen and Lehtonen 2005a, Lehtonen and Karjalainen 2009). In order to successfully carry out such tasks, one needs to have good skills in the appropriate languages. It is reasonable to expect that the skills of the students in this article are good in this sense (see Karjalainen and Lehtonen 2005b, Lehtonen and Karjalainen 2008) and seem to reach the goal set for a Master's degree in the Decree, i.e. they have good communication and language skills (Decree on Higher Education 2004). However, what these student data suggest is that it is Finnish, English and Swedish that play a role at the workplace and no other languages – although the students claimed to know some other languages – are used on a regular basis. This finding differs from the findings of the earlier study (*ibid.*) that focused on Law graduates who earned their degrees five years prior to 2004 when the data were collected: for example, 20 per cent of the students who knew German and 15 per cent of those who knew French used these languages regularly at work. This discrepancy in the findings of this study and the previous one can be explained by assuming that the workplace, in this case predominantly the private sector, has indeed changed in this short span of time, as is often assumed and deplored, and there is less room for languages apart from Finnish, Swedish and English at work. Another way to explain the discrepancy is to recognize the fact that the sample used in this study might be somewhat biased. The students taking part in this study were, after all, completing an English requirement and many of them had chosen the option because of the very fact that they had experience in using English at work. Other explanations might also exist.

Whatever the case, trends in language usage at work are well worth investigating in the future because they form an intrinsic link with what we do at the Language Centre. Maybe data similar to mine could be collected from another group of Law students/graduates to create a clearer picture, and this kind of research should be repeated regularly to obtain a more focused view on language use at work than that offered by larger surveys or studies, such as the recent Elinkeinoelämän keskusliitto

(2010) report on workplace language use and needs. Both the micro and macro levels could be employed to complement one another.

The students in this study foresee no significant changes in their tasks after graduation, at least not immediately. In addition, their tasks carried out in English are very similar to, if not exactly the same as, the tasks they do in Finnish. These two findings are important to remember: that the job-related tasks set high demands on the students' English skills, in particular, and that the tasks in the jobs during the students' studies seem to resemble those they will face after graduation.

In order not to overlook the value of other languages, it is necessary to remember that languages other than English (and Swedish/Finnish) play a role in students' other spheres of life. In this particular sample, however, the students do not claim to use, in their free time, these other languages that they have studied. In addition, only one of the eleven students says German might be useful careerwise in the future, and another states the same about French. This "wasted language potential" again is an issue that needs more research: What does it really signify? Does it really exist or is it an illusion created by the sample size or some other factors?

The value of this research and other research of this type cannot be overestimated. Knowing what we know about the workplace, although it is based on some samples only and makes use of methods that may not detect everything, helps us in many ways. This particular piece of research helps me in planning my teaching in the Law Faculty and hopefully helps my colleagues in the same situation. It is of value to the whole Language Centre when it negotiates with the Faculty and, perhaps most importantly, the value can be seen in the research-based language courses that steer students, taking an English course at the initial stages of their studies, in their language learning that does not separate language and content. In fact, this whole volume on out-of-classroom learning serves similar kinds of beneficial functions.

Turning back to the idea of recognizing and accrediting formal and informal learning, in this case work-based learning, I find it necessary that we allow students these kinds of APEL possibilities and that we continue developing these practices now that the educational and administrative will is here. The students who helped me collect my data were extremely grateful for the opportunity to show what they can do and, as far as I see, deserved the credits they gained through documentation and an interview that verifies the students' identity and checks on their spoken skills.

And what about Malcolm X? Did his society acknowledge and recognize the skills he learnt in prison? Yes and no. Already before his early death, the self-taught Malcolm X, who had the skill to engage his audience, was a controversial character and he remains so, despite or perhaps because of his skills.

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LIFEWIDE AND LIFEDEEP LEARNING AND THE AUTONOMOUS LEARNER

Leena Karlsson & Felicity Kjisik

Lifewide and *lifedeep* learning are new concepts that make it possible to broaden the context of learning beyond the traditional classroom. They address learning and education from the Deweyan perspective (1899) of integrating learning with the everyday life of the student. One way of helping students to recognize and then to believe in the value and validity of their authentic experiences outside the foreign language classroom is through autobiographical writing. Engaging in the writing of experiential narratives can enhance students' autobiographical reflexivity and help them think of and achieve meaningful learning goals. In this paper, we open up the concepts and look for evidence of this kind of experiential learning. Our data consists of language learning portfolio texts which are written by Helsinki University students during their English studies in an autonomous learning environment at the Language Centre. We will explore how learning contexts can be created which enable students to achieve learning goals that are difficult to attain through classroom learning alone.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of *lifelong learning* is now so familiar in the world of education that it has almost become a cliché. In fact, it has sometimes been criticized as having become a tool for capitalizing on human development, instead of following its original goals of personal and social enrichment. The term itself, actually appearing more commonly as *lifelong education*, emerged in the 1970s, with visionary ideals of it being a transformative and emancipatory force.¹ In more pragmatic terms, as the term *lifelong learning* began to be adopted and adapted by governmental educational systems, it was seen in the development of adult education programmes, inservice training programmes, education for the 'Third Age' and various other forms of mainly *formal* education. This emphasis on formal education is perhaps the principle reason why recently the new concept of *lifewide learning* has emerged. It

¹ The Unesco report *Learning to Be* (Faure 1972), known as the *Faure Report*, saw the benefits of lifelong education for society at large, and was seen at the time as Utopian and revolutionary.

is based on the recognition that a learner's life is not solely a question of participation in formal education. As Norman Jackson (2009, 4) puts it,

...while a learner is engaged in higher education, an individual's life contains many parallel and interconnected journeys and experiences and these individually and collectively contribute to the ongoing personal and potentially professional development of the person. By reframing our perception of what counts as learning and recognizing and valuing learning that is not formally assessed within an academic programme we can help learners develop a deeper understanding of how they are learning in the different parts of their lives.

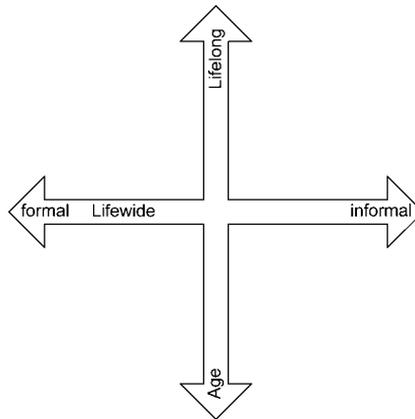
In this paper, we will open up this new concept and look for evidence of it in our own learners. The data we use comes from our students' language learning portfolios. The aim is to consider whether learning contexts can be developed which would allow students to set and attain meaningful learning goals by including experiences and activities outside the traditional classroom environment as part of formal education.

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES AND APPLICATIONS OF LIFEWIDE LEARNING

In Sweden, the National Agency for Education has proposed a framework that combines both dimensions of lifelong and lifewide learning (Skolverket 2000) (see Diagram 1). The lifelong dimension, as we have seen, describes what an individual person learns throughout the entire lifespan. The concept that an individual learns throughout life is relatively unproblematic, although the implementation and access to such formal education may be unequal and limited. The lifewide dimension, on the other hand, represents the fact that learning takes place in a range of environments and contexts, and, importantly, is not limited to formal education. At one end of the dimension of lifewide learning they see formal contexts such as in-service training, adult education and other such courses. Informal learning, on the other hand, is not located in an explicit educational situation. It could, for example, be tasks in a workplace that involve independence and responsibility. Outside the workplace, informal learning can take place in the local community, voluntary work and family life. Another issue they point out concerns the *intentionality* of learning.

Learning may occur as a side effect, with no explicit focus on learning, but can still have an effect on a person’s knowledge, skills and competence.

Diagram 1. The dimensions of lifelong and lifewide learning (Skolverket 2000)



At the university level, there has been a growing level of activity, for example, in the United Kingdom. At the University of Surrey, the Surrey Centre for Excellence in Professional Training and Education (SCEPTre) puts forward the idea of a ‘complete education’ in which all aspects of students’ lives are recognized in their higher education experience. As part of a research project (SCEPTre 2009) to find out what this more complete education actually meant, they invited students to write about learning experiences outside their academic programme. What emerged in their writing was that their *sense of identity* developed through the wide range of experiences they had alongside the academic curriculum. For example, one student wrote that active engagement in a more complete education would “enable us to marry life experience with our pursuit of knowledge, thus providing us with the wisdom to progress to higher things.”

Indeed, more and more British universities are also addressing the issue of recognition and accreditation of life-wide learning experience. Norman Jackson, whose definition of life-wide learning appeared at the beginning of this paper, has been largely instrumental in developing such a programme at the University of Surrey. The university offers a Learning Through Experience Certificate which “is

designed to enable students to integrate and articulate their learning, achievement and experiences from the different aspects of their lives. It provides a framework for encouraging informal learning in areas such as: part-time work, volunteering, mentoring, being enterprising, cultural experiences or active engagement in societies or clubs” (Jackson, 2010). In order to gain this certificate, students attend a preliminary workshop in which they make a plan and consider aspects of understanding experience. They are expected to reflect in various ways on their experience and write a full account of this in one form or another. This example of accreditation of lifewide learning is by no means unusual in British universities today. In Spring 2010, the first major conference in the field was held at the University of Surrey and many of the participating universities reported on awards similar to the one described here.²

Ronald Barnett (2010) has pointed out that, in contrast to the medieval universities which were enclosed and inner-directed, leading to the metaphor of the ‘ivory tower’, modern universities have become institutions that are outer-directed and liquid. Students themselves have become “learning nomads, increasingly inhabiting all kinds of social and economic situations that afford different kinds of learning” (ibid., 2). Whilst *lifelong learning* occurs across time, *lifewide learning* takes place simultaneously in different places, which he calls *learning spaces* (ibid., 2). Indeed, as Barnett points out, the formal course of study may only form a small part of the totality of learning experience undergone during the same time span. He describes lifewide learning as being “personally stretching” and it can include high levels of responsibility and accountability (ibid., 4). Barnett recently interviewed students at the University of Surrey and from this data it emerges that students’ lifewide learning not only includes development of knowledge and skills, but it also develops personal dispositions and qualities:

The totality of the student’s learning experiences, ..., is altering their being-in-the-world. This being is not fixed but is now in a process of perpetually becoming as the students engage in a continuing interplay with their environment, moving this way and that, and so unfolding in often unpredictable ways (ibid., 6).

Barnett’s data also indicated that when students meet outside the course in informal collaborative experiences, it helps them to create more collaborative relationships within the course. Furthermore, students reported that they gained confidence

² Conference website: <http://lifewidelearningconference.pbworks.com/>

through their experiences outside the course, and this was often transferred into the course itself. They also developed a generalized feeling of enthusiasm for learning which was again beneficial to their formal learning contexts. We believe that this is of particular relevance to language learning when it takes place both inside and outside the classroom. Barnett also claims that “lifewide learning can be enhanced through structured reflection” (ibid., 10). Many of his interviewees stated that they grew in confidence when asked to reflect on the value of their various learning experiences. Thus, giving students the opportunity to reflect upon and “draw out of themselves the learning that lies within them as sediment of their wider experiences, and of which they are unaware, itself is a valuable experience” (ibid., 10).

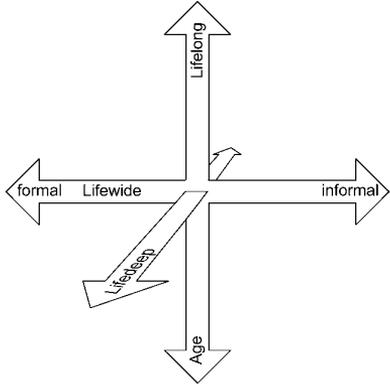
The Learning in Informal and Formal Environments (LIFE) Center and the Center for Multicultural Education at the University of Washington released a report in 2007 that set out to show that “if educators make use of the informal learning that occurs in the homes and communities of students, the achievement gap between marginalized students and mainstream students can be reduced” (Banks et al. 2007, 5). The report came up with four general principles of learning. The first two of these reiterate that learning takes place through the entire cultural context, and not only in formal education. What is interesting from our perspective is that their last two principles state that personal and intellectual development requires *support* from various institutions and that learning is enhanced “when learners are encouraged to use their home and community language resources as a basis for expanding their linguistic repertoires” (ibid., 5). They are referring of course not just to foreign languages but to language codes, registers and styles, but we can see how this applies in a potentially plurilingual context such as Finland. We will return to the issue of support for learners later in this paper.

Another concept which the report includes in its overview of learning offers us a third dimension to our existing two-dimensional process. In addition to *lifelong* and *lifewide* learning, the authors discuss *lifedeeep learning*. Banks et al. (2007, 13) define it as follows:

Life-deep learning: Beliefs, values, ideologies, and orientations to life. Life-deep learning scaffolds all our ways of approaching challenges and undergoing change. Religious, moral, ethical, and social learning bring life-deep learning that enables us to guide our actions, judge ourselves and others, and express to ourselves and others how we feel and what we believe.

This concept is not new either. It has been attributed to Jacques Delors (1996, 22) when he wrote about the four pillars of education: “... learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be.” In other words, learning should address the whole person and offer individuals a breadth of personality and personal skills in their preparation for life. In our own research (Karlsson 2008, Karlsson and Kjisik 2009), we have also seen how the emotional and psychological aspects of individuals play a major role in learners’ (perceived) successes and failures in language learning. Thus, we present in Diagram 2 a three-dimensional framework of learning, which extends the earlier Skolverket diagram.

Diagram 2. The 3-dimensional framework of lifelong, lifewide and lifedeeep learning.



In the next section of this paper we will move on to consider this from the specific perspective of language learning theory.

LIFEWIDE AND LIFEDEEP *LANGUAGE* LEARNING

Whilst the concepts of lifewide and lifedeeep learning have not yet been specifically used in language learning theory, parallel ideas have been around for some time. For example, the basic tenet in experiential language learning is that experience plays a significant role in learning (Kohonen 2001), and it calls for a need to redefine language learning, not as a time-, context- and individual-free generalisable process but as a situated autobiographical process. The learner's experience is seen as the focus of learning, providing "life, texture, and subjective personal meaning to abstract concepts and at the same time providing a concrete reference point for testing the implications and validity of ideas created during the learning process" (Kolb 1984, 21). Kohonen (1992, 17) also considers that reflection plays a vital role in the process: "Only experience that is reflected upon seriously will yield its full measure of learning, and reflection must in turn be followed by testing new hypotheses in order to obtain further experience." The role of reflection will be considered further in a later section of this paper.

Writers in the field of learner autonomy have also seen the learner from a holistic perspective and, indeed, Henri Holec (1981, 1) also stressed the role of the learner in society as a whole when he wrote that learner autonomy "develops the individual's freedom by developing those abilities which will enable him to act more responsibly in running the affairs of the society in which he lives." Indeed, most definitions of the autonomous learner (see Benson 2001) view the learner as a whole person with needs, aims, learning preferences and histories, all dependent on their specific context and experience. Autonomy is seen as the capacity to reflect upon and make learning decisions based upon their reflections (Holec 1981).

More recently, also in the field of learner autonomy, Phil Benson has drawn particular attention to the importance of *learning beyond the classroom*, which we take here to be the equivalent of lifewide learning. He reminds us that "high levels of foreign language proficiency are seldom achieved in the classroom alone and that acquisition takes place most rapidly through a combination of instruction and exposure" (Benson 2009, 217). On the whole, the exposure takes place in the broader life experiences of the learners. Learner autonomy itself is enhanced by "self-directed engagement with the target language beyond the classroom" (ibid., 218). Benson states that it is high time that there was more research carried out into this area. The current focus on classroom research tends to infer that the classroom plays the central role in learning in spite of the fact that many people have learnt

foreign languages without (or in spite of) formal instruction and institutions. The difficulty in doing research beyond the classroom lies in its diversity. As we have described earlier in the paper, it can range from formal settings such as private language schools, study abroad, self-access centres to social networks such as blogs, Facebook, Twitter and so on. Benson (*ibid.*, 224) uses the term *setting* in an attempt to cover all these various sites of learning, and *modes of practice* for the learning activities that go on within them. There is growing evidence that learners set out to find opportunities for out-of-classroom learning. Benson cites a study by Martin Lamb (2004) who investigated secondary school students in Sumatra. The study revealed that a lot of their learning of English took place outside the classroom, either in private classes or at home. However, what is significant from our point of view was that the content of the lessons in the formal education context was less important than the relationship established with the teacher and the encouragement received to continue learning outside the classroom. We will go on to describe an education context in Helsinki University Language Centre in which such encouragement and support is the mainstay of the language learning programme.

CONTEXT: THE ALMS PROGRAMME³

The ALMS programme offers an alternative to teacher-fronted courses at the Language Centre and is based on autonomous principles and personal study plans negotiated with a counsellor. In ALMS, learners have the freedom to develop their learning and English language skills so that they become more independent and spontaneous language users both academically and professionally. Within this system, students can study alone, in pairs or in groups, supported to a greater or lesser degree by the counsellors, depending on their individual learning programmes which are negotiated at the beginning of their course. No two programmes are identical⁴, and the students are given considerable support in the form of two initial Learner Awareness Sessions, Skills Support Groups, and three obligatory counselling meetings.

³ For a description of the ALMS programme see Karlsson et al., 1997 and for further discussion of the counsellor's role, Karlsson et al., 2007.

⁴ To view an imaginary programme by a typical ALMS student go to: <http://www.helsinki.fi/kksc/alms/journey.html>

When students enter a language course which is organized appreciating the idea of complete education, to borrow the concept used by SCEPTRe (2009), it is important to bridge the conceptual and pedagogical gap between language classes at school and ALMS. Learning and teaching English in Finland exemplifies the centrality of classrooms to language learning. The high level of English skills of our students, however, could be attributed to the wide range of out-of-classroom activities: television programmes and films that are subtitled rather than dubbed, social media and computer games, travelling, studying and living abroad at a young age, and the world of art, literature and music. Nevertheless, lifewide experiential learning is not always given true credit when describing learning outcomes. The presence of and exposure to English in Finland is recognized but school-based approaches still tend to be the ones that are valued and also researched. Therefore, in ALMS, students need to begin by recognizing, and in most cases reframing their perception of what counts as language learning. They need to be assured that the counsellors value various personal, social and study-related learning experiences that are not traditional language course activities, and that in ALMS both formal and informal learning is appreciated.

There is also a need to negotiate our roles as counsellors with the students. This is not unrelated to the need to negotiate and come to a shared understanding of what counts as learning in the programme. The *ownership of learning* (Kohonen 2001) is the key issue here. Learners own their own learning when they make a personal investment in it. But our students still come with backgrounds in teacher-controlled and teacher-owned learning environments. We, as counsellors, would be foolish to think that students automatically take an active learner role and assume control over all the cognitive, affective and meta-cognitive learning activities when given the choice. Becoming the owner of one's learning and acquiring a voice as a learner is a reflection process and needs supportive circumstances, frameworks and structures in order to succeed. External structures (in ALMS, learner awareness and counselling) are needed to develop students' internal support structures in their mental processes (Karlsson et al. 1997). We believe that voice in learning is something that learners have when they fully participate in the process of planning, defining needs and setting objectives, implementing, monitoring and evaluating (Karlsson 2002). This implies a different role for the one supporting the process: unlike a teacher, a counsellor suggests rather than prescribes, and she acts as a guide in students' self-regulated knowledge constructions rather than simply transferring knowledge.

In the two initial Learner Awareness Sessions in ALMS, students start on reflecting and sharing ideas with fellow students on learning, the language learning process, their past learning and life experiences, their lifedeeep realizations, learning styles and strategies, and their ALMS learner duties of planning, setting objectives, skills evaluation and reflection. Learning and mastering English in Finland is a highly competitive process and those not having high level skills often feel stigmatized. It is the lifewide out-of-classroom learning that often gives an edge to young people's English, and if that edge is missing, stigmatization can occur. In the Learner Awareness Sessions, we invite our students to reflect on the relevance and value of their various learning experiences (cf. Barnett 2006). We have come to believe that it is, in particular, the lifedeeep learning that can provide a way of finding personal fulfillment without the pressure from external control and criteria of success. We encourage the sharing of memories of lifewide and lifedeeep learning and emphasize our own belief in their value.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITING IN ALMS

We feel that students benefit from reflective interludes after the initial sessions and during the work they do for their course. These reflective interludes are provided by engaging in autobiographical writing in English. Since 2002, we have been asking our students to write an autobiographical text, a version of a language memoir (Kaplan 1994), at a preliminary stage of their English studies in the autonomous learning environment. The reflection that starts in the language memoir continues in a learning diary, another autobiographical experiential/creative writing many of our students do during their course. We approach students' autobiographical writing as a learning tool which will help students in planning their programmes, in setting meaningful goals and achieving them. Inviting students to write autobiographical texts is a way of encouraging self-reflexivity in them: when writing, students reflect on their past learning experiences, their present skills, motivation and their future plans and wishes. They also probe what they feel, think and imagine, and they look for a way of answering the question "How did I become myself?" (Heikkinen 2001).

We claim that autobiographical writing is one way of helping students to recognize and also believe in the value of their authentic experiences outside the foreign language classroom. As mentioned before, in a formal education context the

relationship between learners and counsellors (teachers) is of crucial importance in order to encourage the students to continue learning outside the classroom. The reflexive autobiographical approach to counselling (Jaatinen 2003) that we promote in the programme is our pedagogical rationale for asking students to write texts. We then take a reader role and share ideas, our reactions and own memories and experiences with them in the counselling. The focus at this point is the content and not the linguistic accuracy. This means that the nature of the counselling dialogue is of utmost importance: it needs to be open, participatory, self-reflexive on both sides, sincere, honest and based on trust.

We also feel that reading these texts is a way for counsellors to know about and appreciate the kinds of experiential learning our students engage in. The texts invite the counsellors to listen to learners' interpretation of their experiences. When a counsellor reads in order to hear the learner's voice in the texts, it refers to both what the students wrote and how they wrote it. This reflects the Bakhtinian idea of the need to see beyond the formal side of language: voice is not only language but meanings, opinions, attitudes and emotions, personality and views (Dufva 2003).

These texts, however, also provide counsellor-researchers with rich data that is unique in the sense that it opens up the students' lifewide learning experiences and, equally importantly, reveals aspects of lifedeeep learning. We will now move to briefly discuss the previous research done into students' autobiographical writing in ALMS and what it suggests about lifewide and lifedeeep learning. We will also present a new case study as an example of our approach to doing research beyond the classroom.

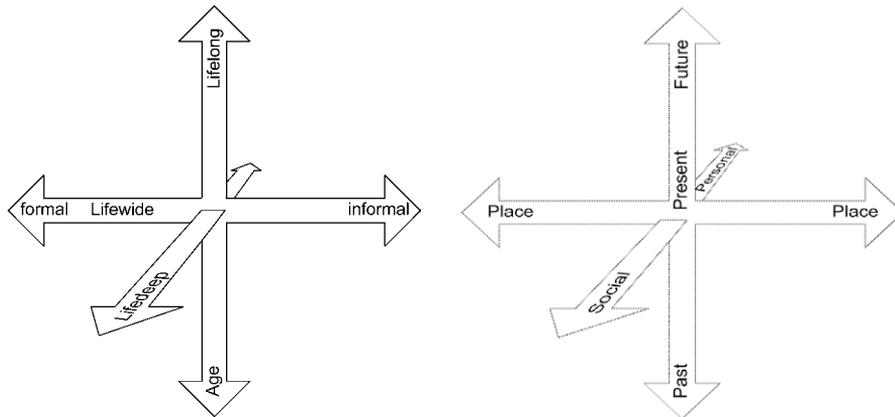
ALMS RESEARCH

Phil Benson (2009) is concerned that current research on autonomy is less interested in autonomy and learning beyond the classroom than it once was. He makes the following suggestion: "... the distinction between classroom learning and learning beyond the classroom could profitably be collapsed under more open-ended investigations of the ways in which individuals engage with language learning in their daily lives" (ibid., 233). In ALMS, we have tried to gain insight into the reality of learning as it is experienced by our students. Research into our counselling has indicated that students' total learning experience does not only consist of formal

course activities. We have carried out collaborative and individual research projects (Karlsson and Kjisik 2007, Karlsson 2008a and b, Karlsson and Kjisik 2009, Karlsson in press) based on students' autobiographical writing and the counselling dialogue arising from them.

Gaining access to the subjective aspects of language learning and its effects on learners' perceptions, memories, and even their identities is what we have been seeking. To this end we have studied our students' autobiographical learner histories and their learning diaries over the past ten years. In an earlier study (Karlsson 2002), it had emerged how crucial students' learning histories and their experiences of both formal and informal learning were to how they coped on a non-traditional course based on learner autonomy. Researching these autobiographical texts requires new modes of inquiry because of the centrality of experience in them. Kramsch (2009) suggests that the modes of inquiry to be used when experience is focused on should aim at understanding rather than explaining. We have chosen to study the texts using narrative inquiry methods exactly because autobiographical writing has the writer organizing her lived experiences in the text. Clandinin and Connelly (2000), whose work arises from John Dewey's writings, conceptualize narrative inquiry as a three-dimensional inquiry space in which temporality forms the first dimension, the personal and the social the second, and place the third. A narrative study thus focuses on the social and the personal: it looks inward to include feelings and outward to include the environment, other people. It has temporal dimensions, it moves backward and forward (past, present, future) and it is also linked to specific places. There is an interesting parallel here with the three-dimensional framework of learning presented earlier in this article (see Diagram 3).

Diagram 3. The 3-dimensional framework of learning and the 3-dimensional inquiry space.



We thus suggest that a narrative inquiry that builds this three-dimensionality into the research process can give us insight into the lifelong, lifewide and lifedep aspects of learning. Indeed, the result might be an example of the more open-ended kind of investigation that Benson calls for. The main findings of our research point towards the significance of autobiographical writing as a form of structured reflection that can empower students and help them to build meaningful learning goals and also to reach these goals as their confidence grows through experiences outside the classroom.

THE CURRENT CASE

In our approach to both research and counselling practice we emphasize variety and individuality rather than uniformity. Our research materials which we bring into the three-dimensional research space are our narrative field texts (Clandinin and Connelly 2000) and come from the ALMS portfolios. As mentioned earlier, our students' personal study programmes are very individual. Their goals and motivations differ, and their educational and life histories are unique and always

influence their choices. In the course of their programmes, however, we see how they all develop their autonomy and shape their learning experiences. The case we are discussing here is Pauliina,⁵ a second-year psychology student who took part in an ALMS course in spring 2010. Pauliina's programme includes many of the elements that ALMS students generally choose and yet the contextual features of her learning situation are unique. She is a student whose learning diary indicates that her autobiographical writing process shaped her whole learning experience. The diary reveals interesting aspects of both lifewide and lifedeeep learning. It also shows that Pauliina developed a true partnership with her counsellor, which is one the main pedagogical goals of our counselling.

When reading Pauliina's autobiographical texts, her language memoir and learning diary, we counsellor-researchers come to understand how her learning has been shaped by time, place and her inner and existential conditions, and how she is writing about her life as a whole when writing about her learning (Clandinin and Connelly 2000). We see a parallel here to our own research writing. Some of us keep a research diary (or various diaries) and in it we reflect on and continuously update our researcher's intellectual autobiography, "an analytic concern with the specifics of how we come to understand what we do" (Stanley 1990, 62). We can only hope to understand the new unique meanings created in Pauliina's writing in the light of the particular combination of her personal and educational history, individual experience and development as a learner.

In her portfolio, Pauliina moves within the three-dimensional learning space and builds a unique, reflexive and context-sensitive narrative. The way we have chosen to re-tell the story illustrates the episodic and fragmentary nature of language learning (Karlsson 2008a). The episodes chosen highlight the web of connections emerging in the narrative between lifewide learning and an academic language and field-specific course programme. Our story of Pauliina's 'self-travel' through writing presents one possible construction of her inquiry into learning English; there are other potential ways of reading her texts.

⁵ Pauliina has given full approval for the use and publication of her story (including all her texts). Furthermore, she has read the drafts of the paper and given additional comments which have been incorporated.

PAULIINA, ONE LEARNING NOMAD'S EDUCATIONAL SELF-TRAVELS⁶

Pauliina embarks on her inquiry into English with a positive attitude. She starts thinking about her future programme by reflecting on her past language learning experiences and personal life. Her sense of identity as a European has developed through living abroad and from an early age this European self has motivated her learning of English.

I lived in Brussels for three years in 1999-2002. Although I was only a child, it was then that I realised I'm not only a Finn but also a European. This attitude has been my primary motivation in learning English ever since. In a globalizing world I feel like I don't only have the right but also the responsibility to learn foreign languages to be able to connect to people around the world. I have always loved learning new things. Living abroad gave me the motivation and an excellent opportunity to study languages. [Language memoir, 22 January⁷]

Pauliina's English needs at the beginning of her ALMS module are strongly linked to her studies as well as to her everyday life, as they are for many of our university students. Together with her present skills, these form the basis of her autonomous programme and she skilfully builds them into her goals. Her structured reflection has already helped her to reframe her idea of what it means to be a good speaker.

*I have to read a lot of articles and books in English. Understanding the language does not cause as much problems anymore as it did in the beginning. I also feel like the difficulties I had at start were more of a psychological thing than a knowledge- or skill-based issue. Instead of reading, I feel like my weaknesses in English relate to producing written material. I'm not going to write my master's thesis in English, that's for sure, but I still feel like I would benefit from having more courage and more experience in writing essays, letters and e-mails in English. The language of today's psychology is English: almost all research articles are written in English, and one day I might be part of a research group and find myself sending that article on my group's findings to *Developmental Psychology*, or whatever magazine, who knows! That is why I feel like I should be*

⁶ The terms 'learning nomad' and 'self-travel' have been borrowed from Barnett 2007 and 2010.

⁷ All of Pauliina's quoted texts are transcribed in their original form.

more prepared to produce texts in English.

In addition to writing, I feel like I need to learn to speak English without the fear of making mistakes. I am, or at least I have been, a very perfectionist person (fortunately the situation has changed for the better recently!). I wish I could learn better pronunciation and more vocabulary to speak more fluently, but still I think that the most important thing for me is to get rid of the fear of not being understood and not finding the right words. I want to leave behind the fear of not being perfect in a language that I am not even a native speaker of! To sum up, speaking and producing written material are the most important needs for me concerning the English language at the moment. [Language memoir, 22 January]

She starts her ALMS studies by attending an annual weekend seminar for psychology students, which is held in English. Participants come from all the Nordic countries. In her diary writing afterwards, she is engaged in the meaning-making process in such a way that the distinction of the emotional and the cognitive is blurred. Pauliina focuses on the role of confidence in non-native speakers, an issue of great significance to her, and reflects further on her own attitudes and beliefs: she engages in lifedeeep learning reflection which is becoming an important part of her writing. She keeps probing her motivation, her feelings and thoughts and her answer to the question “How did I become myself as a language learner?” is emerging.

I found it easy to follow the workshops and all the presentations in English. All the speakers were Finnish psychologists, well-known experts and pioneers in their field. While listening to the speakers I actually realized something that has been bothering me for quite some time: I've been afraid to open my mouth because of the fear of not being perfect in my pronunciation or grammar or whatsoever. But watching and listening to my fellow native Finnish speakers giving lectures and teaching in English, I realized that as a listener it didn't bother me at all if they were not using exactly the right words or if they mispronounce something – it is the confidence in the speaker that has the most important impact on their listeners! One's speaking must of course be clear and understandable, but small mistakes won't matter if the message gets through. I don't think I would have realized this if I hadn't written the text on my needs and learning history. I cannot be perfect in speaking a language that is not my mother tongue, and why would I even have to! I'm starting to wonder who put all these irrational and perfectionist thoughts into my mind... [Diary, 30 January]

Her experiences outside the language classroom give her confidence and enthusiasm and she starts looking for opportunities to speak English.

I went to the movies with Maria, another ALMS-student, to see the Oscar-winning film “Precious”. After the movie we went to have a cup of tea and to discuss the film in English. Maria hadn’t liked the movie that much partly because she wasn’t familiar with the genre. She’s more used to romantic comedies and “easy-watching”. This movie was really quite harsh, I have to admit. It really opened my eyes to a reality very different from the one I live in. We both thought the music was good and that the actors, one of them an Oscar-winner, were brilliant. We also talked about our plans for the summer, hiking and school stuff. It was really nice talking with Maria since she is so calm and friendly. I noticed how my speaking got a bit better and it didn’t take so much time to think about which word to use after I got familiar with the situation. Of course it felt a bit strange at first to talk English with someone I usually speak Finnish with. I wouldn’t think I’d do this on my free-time without a proper “excuse” such as ALMS-course. Maybe I should just break the mould and invite my friends over to play board games in English. [Diary, 14 April]

Pauliina’s confidence as a writer grows and brings personal and social aspects of learning into her three-dimensional inquiry space. She reports on learning in various environments and contexts, mostly unlinked to language classrooms. These include her experiences of academic reading for her exams, participating in ALMS support groups, watching movies and visiting museums, getting a summer job as a research assistant, listening to lectures on cross-cultural issues, watching videos on criminal psychology on YouTube, visiting Sweden with a student organisation, and discussing with an Australian friend and her Swedish friends. Her diary proves that many of the cosmopolitan worlds that our students inhabit are multilingual and transnational. In all the entries Pauliina is reflecting on how and why her learning experiences turn out the way they do. She also reports on getting support in her educational inquiry from the initial ALMS Learner Awareness Sessions, and, in particular, from her counsellor.

Later remarks: After discussing this with Leena [her counsellor] in our second meeting, I realized that it might not be the language that causes me some problems with the communication, but it’s the style of communicating that is characteristic of this person that I’m finding it hard to deal with. I’m not used to a very witty and sarcastic dialog. It sort of forces me to take a position as a listener instead of the position that I’m more used to - an active participant. The language is just

something that sort of fortifies this situation I'm not familiar with.
[Diary, February. Undated afterthought to an entry about informal discussions with her Australian friend]

In her final reflections Pauliina writes about her personality and learning style whilst she continues her inner dialogue about her educational travels. She talks about how she encountered a 'strange world' (Barnett 2007) in her psychology studies in her first year, how she took the challenge and let her whole being-in-the-world (Barnett 2010) change. In ALMS during her self-travel, in particular in the autobiographical writing, she acknowledges the same change taking place.

I know I'm a perfectionist and have high demands for my performance. I have fortunately let my hair down a bit more lately. This character in me is something I've been working on since last autumn and have succeeded to lower my demands and stress quite successfully what comes to my psychology studies. Yet, this knowledge and understanding I had gained in other areas had not yet reached the attitudes I used to hold for language learning. I'm glad I got this opportunity to face them again in this course. I also realized I should concentrate more on social learning styles such as group working, and reflect my own feelings related to language learning a bit more carefully in the future. This could also help me lower my demands and be truly satisfied with what I've accomplished. [Diary, 20 April]

Her inner dialogue finishes with reflections on the 'marriage' of reflection and autonomy. Empowerment as a language learner and a student happened when she had the freedom to set personally meaningful goals. It also happened because she made a "journey into herself as a language learner", in the language memoir and in the learning diary. It becomes evident from Pauliina's final reflections that autobiographical inquiry which moves along lifewide, lifedep and lifelong dimensions of experience can bring success in language learning. The support given, however, needs to fully acknowledge the value of learning beyond the classroom. In Pauliina's own words:

Success is a word I'm not too keen on using. I did get the demanded amount of hours done pretty easily without changing my everyday schedules much. I feel like the most successful thing during this course was the journey to myself as a language learner: becoming aware of my language history, weaknesses and strengths. I realized how little I have to do to keep my English skill active. One of the most important things for me during this course was to understand the meaning of the concept "academic freedom": For the first time in the university I

really felt like this is something I'm doing for myself, not for grades and study points. I guess the fact that I could set the goals of this course all by myself according to my level of skills and knowledge was one major factors regarding this relieving feeling of academic freedom.

“This is what learning is. You suddenly understand something you’ve understood all your life, but in a new way”. Doris Lessing [Diary, 20 April]

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OUT-OF-CLASSROOM LANGUAGE LEARNING: A CASE STUDY OF STUDENTS OF ADVANCED ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSES AT HELSINKI UNIVERSITY LANGUAGE CENTRE

Robert Moncrief

This article outlines and discusses a study I conducted during the 2009-10 academic year that investigated how students learn and use English outside a classroom or an academic (formal) setting and was completed by administering two questionnaires to 37 students enrolled in Advanced EAPS (English Academic and Professional Skills) courses. In the survey, participants were asked to list situations which create and utilize opportunities to use English outside of a classroom, denote the frequency of such activities and finally, rate the “usefulness” of each type/strategy in the minds of those surveyed. Additionally, it investigates the use of out-of-class language learning by students in Advanced EAPS courses in terms of whether or not the actions taken by students scaffold both professional and practical cultural knowledge—that is knowledge used in an academic setting and also utilized to access culturally-related knowledge not provided within the normal framework of in-class University-level English language courses.

After careful examination of the data collected, the article concludes by comparing and contrasting the results of the study with those of prior studies of the same type, presents some ideas regarding how teachers can guide and incorporate students’ out-of-class language learning activities in an academic setting and provides some suggestions for future research of this type.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the proliferation of past and current pedagogy and methods involved in the teaching of languages (and teaching in general), it can be generally agreed that there is no universally correct way to learn a language that can be seen as most suitable for every individual. Different students naturally develop and incorporate different ways of studying, thinking, processing as well as encompassing differing personalities. We as language teachers, however, are concerned with the methods

and ways our students learn as well as the promotion of the development of their language skills overall. To this end, much is known about what goes on inside a classroom setting, while little is known about how students learn languages *outside* the classroom.

We do know, as educators, that the proliferation of the use of modern media by our students in their free time has risen exponentially as their access to different sources has increased. Students currently have an ever-expanding access to source material from a variety of locations (through the use of the Internet, and other multi-media sources, for instance), and are no longer required to visit University libraries or self-study learning laboratories to be able to access multifaceted material. Perhaps as a bi-product of globalization, they also have more and more contact with the English language overall, as the current spread of English as a *lingua franca* has provided people in general with a multitude of pathways to engage in the use of English on a constant and exponentially increasing basis. As teachers we are aware of and ask students to make use of these materials and often times, as is the case with many English Academic and Professional Skills courses at the University of Helsinki Language Centre, we ask the students to keep logs of their own independent study, which are presented and discussed with us. However, there appears to be a lack of information on what students specifically do in terms of out-of-class learning, and this in turn has created a gap in the knowledge base we teachers have in this particular area.

One inherent problem is that despite this increasing access to English for students, a traditional teaching perspective does not allow for a deeper understanding of out-of-classroom language learning (OCLL). What we do not know about this type of language learning includes basic issues such as the tools students make use of autonomously, how they organize their learning outside of a classroom setting, where they learn, how frequently they make use of the material available to them and which tools do they view as most valuable in terms of their self-study. One of the primary ways we can gain some insight into student out-of-classroom learning experiences is to ask the students themselves.

The aim of this study was therefore to examine how students taking English language courses learn English in their own time, or autonomously, outside of a classroom or academic setting. This paper outlines and discusses the results of a two-part survey administered to students of Advanced English Academic and Professional Skills (EAPS) courses taught at the University of Helsinki Language

Centre during spring 2010. In this survey the students were asked to list the ways in which they learn languages (in this case English) outside of the classroom, and rank these activities in order of usefulness, to address the aforementioned knowledge gaps and provide firm data on what students do outside the classroom to study English.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

My main aim was to address the following questions:

- 1) Do students create and utilize opportunities to use English outside a classroom and, if so, how? (Questionnaires 1 and 2).
- 2) Do students make any remarks indicating the differences they feel between “formal” and “informal” OCLL, or do they tend to place OCLL in another category other than “learning”? In other words, do students indicate in any way that they equate OCLL with actual “study”, or is it just “fun” for them? (Open-ended questionnaire 1).
- 3) Do the OCLL activities involve professional or practical cultural knowledge, or both? In addition to developing their language skills, do the students also gain access to culturally-related knowledge not provided within the normal framework of in-class English language courses, such as the use of T.V./movies, reading material and interpersonal relationships and travel? (Questionnaires 1 and 2).

DEFINITION OF OUT-OF-CLASSROOM LEARNING AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Benson (2001) has defined out-of-classroom language learning (hereafter referred to as OCLL) in a general sense as “any kind of learning that takes place outside the classroom and involves self-instruction, naturalistic learning or self-directed naturalistic learning” (Benson 2001, 62). This is rather narrow in scope, yet provides a framework from which I can approach my particular study.

Other than Benson's *Teaching and Researching Autonomy in Language Learning* (2001), quite a few other studies have examined OCLL and its importance to the theory and practice of autonomy overall, as well as having examined student motivation towards OCLL. Toohey and Norton (2003) have, in particular, examined learner motivation for OCLL and noted "... these 'autonomous' learners have variable motivations, learning styles, cognitive traits, strategies and personality orientations that are seen as causal of their success or failure in language learning" (2003, 58). However, this study makes no attempt to examine learner motivation, nor the outcome of their OCLL studies, but only tries to outline the tools my students use in terms of OCLL.

Two studies in particular that mirror my own were conducted by Yap (1998) and Pearson (2004). Both attempted to research how English learners use the opportunities that exist outside the classroom to develop their language proficiency through the use of questionnaires and personal interviews. Pearson, in particular concentrated on what he calls the "idiosyncrasies" of OCLL and concluded generally that "Most subjects gave evidence that indicated they were able to exercise learner autonomy to some extent" (Pearson 2004, 4). Further comparison of the results and conclusions of these studies as compared to my own appear in the discussion section of this paper.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As previously mentioned, independent study is an integral part of many English Academic and Professional Skills courses given at Helsinki University Language Centre. Students are often given independent study guidelines and are asked to keep a record of the work they do outside of class (logs, learning diaries, etc.), which are then checked by the teacher towards the end of the course. It is important to note, however, that students participating in my survey were purposely not given direct instructions or guidelines on their independent study until they had completed the survey, so as not to color the potential results.

The study began by administering two questionnaires to students taking advanced English language courses at the University of Helsinki Language Centre: two Business English courses, an Academic Writing course and a Presentation Skills course. The questionnaires were given to a total of 37 students in the spring semester of 2010 during the beginning of the courses by myself and another teacher at the

Language Centre. Students were given each questionnaire separately, so that they would not be able to refer to one or the other when filling out the forms. The students in the courses, for the most part, were Finns and were native Finnish speakers, although some were Swedish-speaking Finns and 5 participants were exchange students. In the first questionnaire, the students were asked to answer the open-ended question “*How are you able to learn and use your English language skills outside of a classroom or an academic setting?*”

In the second questionnaire, the students were given a table listing possible ways they might use English in their everyday lives. The nine categories included: television/movies, reading (newspapers, books, magazines, etc.), hobbies, travel, job or work-related activities, interpersonal relationships or socializing, music, the Internet and ‘other’. For the final two categories, more information was requested from the students and the question “how?” was posed to them, followed by an empty space in which they could answer the questions themselves. The students were asked to “*indicate the ways in which you MOST use English outside of the classroom*” in descending order of usefulness from 9-1 (9 being most useful, 1 being least). The completed questionnaires were then analyzed and the responses compared with previous studies of this type.

RESULTS

All 37 students who participated in the survey correctly completed Questionnaire #1, but 7 of the 37 students failed to complete the table contained in Questionnaire #2 correctly. The responses to the first questionnaire are summarized in Tables 1 and 2 below. Reading, watching television and movies and speaking English were the most frequently mentioned ways in which students developed their English language skills, with writing being the least frequent activity. Only two students reported not using English outside the classroom, or not developing their language skills if they did use the language.

Table 1. Summary of the responses to Questionnaire #1 (n = 37). Types of OCLL activities mentioned by the students are not categorized but listed only in terms of frequency of mention.

TYPE OF ACTIVITY	TIMES MENTIONED
-Speaking with foreigners, exchange students, friends, boy/ girlfriend, tourists, relatives	25
- Reading books	19
- Watching T.V.	17
- Travel (and/or study abroad)	17
- Using the Internet (unspecified)	13
- Reading magazines	10
- Watching movies (without subtitles)	9
- Use on the job	8
- Listening to radio	3
- Facebook	2
- internet chat (writing)	2
- Reading (unspecified)	1
- Games (video)	1
- Internet tv and radio	1
- Writing e-mails	1
- "I use it (outside of class) but I don't 'learn'"	1

Table 2. Summary of the responses to Questionnaire #1 (n = 37). Types of OCLL activities mentioned by the students are categorized in this table and the categories are listed according to their ranking from most to least frequently mentioned.

TYPE OF ACTIVITY	TIMES MENTIONED	RANK
READING (unspecified)	1	
- books	19	
- magazines	10	
TOTAL	30	1
WATCHING/LISTENING		
- t.v.	17	
- movies (without subtitles)	9	
- radio	3	
TOTAL	29	2
SPEAKING		
-with foreigners, exchange students, friends, boy/ girlfriend, tourists, relatives	25	
TOTAL	25	3
PERSONAL		
- travel (and/or study abroad)	17	
- games (video)	1	
TOTAL	18	4
INTERNET (unspecified)	13	
- Facebook	2	
- Internet tv and radio	1	
TOTAL	16	5
PROFESSIONAL		
- job	8	
TOTAL	8	6
WRITING		
- e-mail	1	
- chat	2	
TOTAL	3	7
DON'T USE OUTSIDE OF ACADEMIC SETTING	1	
- "I use it but I don't 'learn'"	1	
TOTAL	1	8

The responses to the second questionnaire, in which students were provided a list of alternate ways they might use English outside of the classroom, are summarized below in Table 3. As can be seen, passive activities such as watching television and reading scored more highly from among the options provided in terms of their usefulness in OCLL than more active use of English, such as in work and socializing.

Table 3. Summary of the responses to Questionnaire #2 (n = 30). Activities are ranked according to their usefulness to the students in developing their English language skills outside the classroom.

TYPE OF ACTIVITY	TOTAL POINTS/ AVERAGE	RANK
T.V./Movies	193/6.4	1
Reading	179/6.0	2
Travel	168/5.6	3
Internet	164/5.5	4
Job/Work-Related	160/5.3	5
Interpersonal Relationships/ Socializing	143/4.8	6
Music	108/3.6	7
Hobbies	91/3.0	8
Other	34/1.1	9

based on the average scores for each activity.

DISCUSSION

From this study, a few general trends were apparent, some of which are directly related to the primary research questions.

On a basic and general level, it can be noted that according to the data, *students DO create and utilize opportunities to use English outside a classroom setting.* The primary ways in which they do so are by reading, watching and listening to media-related broadcasts on radio and T.V., speaking and through travel. These findings

were apparent in both questionnaires, regardless of the survey being open-ended or providing suggestions. The less utilized means include using the Internet, using English in a professional context and writing. (Research question 1).

I find it particularly interesting to note the opportunities that are common to Finland and students at Finnish Universities in general as based on the data collected: it seems that they have ample opportunities to use English outside of a classroom setting, as shown by the results of open-ended Questionnaire #1. Most students indicated in this section that they are able to read English books and magazines, watch television and movies, listen to English radio broadcasts and speak with people who are of foreign origin (exchange students, friends, boy/girlfriends, tourists and relatives). “Reading books and magazines” and “watching television and movies” were both listed as the most common activities in Questionnaire #1 (out of 37 students, 30 indicated that *reading* and 29 indicated *watching/listening* as their responses). “Speaking” was listed as third (out of 37 students, 25 mentioned this). It first appeared in my research that speaking would be listed as the most common answer to Questionnaire #1, as it was the most frequently mentioned individual activity (see Table 1), but when categorizing these responses into groups, it soon became clear that reading and watching/listening were the most frequent OCLL activities (see Table 2).

This aligns perfectly with the answers from Questionnaire #2 (Table 3), as when given a list of possible ways to utilize English for OCLL study in Questionnaire #2, most students chose “T.V./Movies” (average rating 6.4 out of 9) as the most valuable in terms of OCLL study, while “reading” ranked second (average 6.0) and “travel” third (average 5.6). Perhaps the reason that students utilize television/movies and reading to such a great degree, as indicated in both questionnaires, comes as a direct result of the proliferation of media outlets and publications available to them. For example, newsstands in Finland provide a wealth of foreign magazines, books and newspapers. Also, foreign movies and television programs are not dubbed in Finland, perhaps due in part to the fact that Finland has a 99% literacy rate (according to the United Nations Development Program Report of 2009), but also, I presume, because this has long been the custom in Finland. The increase in mobility and travel in general also seems to promote learning among the students, or at least they rate it valuable in terms of Questionnaire #2. Regardless of the reasons, the students surveyed seemed to rely most heavily upon these methods in terms of OCLL.

When examining the tabulated results from both questionnaires, it appears that the activities that students most frequently participate in are also those which they rank most highly in terms of the use and development in terms of their language skills in English. This supports the argument that the students surveyed are aware of and make use of the OCLL tools which they consider to be the most useful.

There are minor discrepancies between the responses to the two questionnaires. For example, in questionnaire 1, speaking was ranked third in terms of frequency as an OCLL activity, but in questionnaire 2, speaking was not specifically mentioned in terms of usefulness. Perhaps this is due to the fact that I failed to specify *speaking* as means of communication in the ‘interpersonal relationships/socializing’ category, or that I failed to indicate a speaking category at all. I felt that the categories entitled ‘interpersonal relationships/socializing’, ‘travel’, ‘internet’, ‘jobs’ and ‘hobbies’ would all involve spoken production to some degree. I now see that if were I to re-administer this study, that problem would have to be rectified.

As for research question 2, only a few students remarked in the open-ended questionnaire on the use of OCLL as a form of language *learning*. A few, in particular, wrote down statements such as:

I use English outside the classroom, but I don't learn.

This is for fun, not study.

I only learn English at school [= university], although I sometimes use it outside of class.

I find these remarks, although infrequent, to be very revealing. Some students do not seem to equate “free time” use of English outside of a classroom setting as study, but rather as “fun”. Learning, on the other hand, only seems to take place, at least in the minds of some of the students, when actually in an English classroom setting.

In terms of research question 3, it is also clear that the use of OCLL by the students involves both professional and practical cultural knowledge, that is, they have particular access to culturally-bound knowledge, which is usually not covered in detail within the usual framework of an in-class English language course, even if the students themselves are unaware of this. Activities such as watching movies and television, reading books and magazines and traveling and speaking informally with others allow them to gain a frame of reference and provide a window into the cultural specificities (such as common cultural references, the vernacular use of

language, etc.) which they perhaps would not normally have a way of gaining insight into.

As previously mentioned, Yap (1998) and Pearson (2004) performed similar studies to this, both of which focused on Chinese students using OCLL (at the secondary (Yap) and tertiary (Pearson) levels). Both researchers not only used questionnaires, but also incorporated other data-collection methods, including student interviews and conversations with the students. Pearson additionally used student logs to collect data. Both studies also attempted to grasp an understanding of how useful OCLL activities are to the students themselves on a general level in terms of the promotion and increase in their overall grasp of the target language.

One important finding of both Yap and Pearson is that the students participated in tasks that involved receptive rather than productive language use. By contrast, students in this study used both productive *and* receptive language use equally. Yap, in particular, noted that her subjects found fewer opportunities to speak, more opportunities to read and listen, whereas my students seemed to make use of both speaking and listening to a great degree.

Pearson's study revealed that "Although OCLL opportunities may be exploited by some learners, others are not" (Pearson 2003, 7). Perhaps these statements held true in his study, but according to my research, all students surveyed exploited opportunities to use their English outside of the classroom setting. The discrepancy here may be due to the fact that learners in different environments have differing levels of motivation, teacher encouragement and fewer everyday opportunities which to take advantage of OCLL, but with respect to Pearson's publication the answers are not clearly apparent, as he fails to discuss the possible causes for his results.

I also somewhat disagree with Pearson when he states "It could be a mistake to assume that learners themselves know best how to take charge of their own learning" (Pearson 2003, 4). While this may hold true in terms of in-class language learning, this statement appears to be an underestimation of students' abilities as adult learners, at least in the sense of OCLL. Autonomy is generally agreed to be an extremely important factor in motivating students, and allows for a form of flexibility and captures student interest in an individual and personal way. The results of this, in terms of the improvement of their overall language skills, cannot

be underestimated as a way of enhancing an individual's language learning experience, and is surely beneficial.

Finally, I also share the hopes and intentions of the previously mentioned research that this paper will provide a number of new ideas for teachers to promote language and culturally-related learning overall in a more cohesive and complete sense. Student input is in itself clearly valuable to the development of the teaching of languages and, moreover, efforts to promote OCLL should build upon the activities that students already value and utilize in order to help them attain their goals of becoming more fluent and gaining knowledge in the target language that they study. It follows then that the solicitation and analysis of student ideas and activities will go a long way in supporting the future monitoring and promotion of OCLL as a whole.

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STUDENTS ON THEIR OWN: LISTENING ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM WITHOUT TEACHER SUPERVISION

Marlene Broemer & Anu Virkkunen-Fullenwider

As part of their course requirements, students are asked to engage in at least seven hours (20 hours for the 5-credit course) of independent listening in English. They may choose their own activities, but are advised to spread their exercises out over several different tasks. The following suggestions are given in the course: listening to English news on the radio or Internet, watching English TV programs (without subtitles), interviewing English speakers, speaking English with friends or with native speakers, attending events in English, such as lectures, church services or presentations, and listening to music lyrics in English. Students are encouraged to think of other activities which sometimes include a business or work situation. Students can also visit the Self-Access Learning Centre and use their materials. For the purposes of the course, students are asked to document their listening activities and keep track of the number of hours they spend at each activity, in 15-minute blocks of time. Some activities require more concentration than others, especially the pronunciation practice. This article is a qualitative summary of the students' self-reports regarding listening activities. The data has been gathered from more than eight English for Academic and Professional Purposes (EAPS) courses per year for the past four years and will be summarized to highlight the students' most popular listening activities. Special attention will also be paid to the least popular exercises as this may suggest future changes that would encourage and/or enable students to increase their English language interface for practice purposes during their course of study in a non-English environment.

INTRODUCTION

Listening plays a vital role in language acquisition and learning. Therefore, this receptive skill is trained in all language instruction, starting from elementary courses. In advanced courses, learners are expected to comprehend complex, versatile and detailed information in a profound way.

All the University of Helsinki (UH) degrees have an obligatory language component that includes studies in the second national language and at least one foreign language. The students can themselves decide on which foreign language they want to concentrate (the choice is between English, French, German, Italian, Russian and

Spanish). The popularity of English (the choice of more than 80% of UH students) seems a universal trend in European universities. The majority prefer to fulfil this language requirement by taking a course called “English Academic and Professional Skills” (EAPS). The length of this course and the number of credits the students receive after completing it varies from faculty to faculty, ranging from 3 to 5 ECTS (points).

As part of their requirements for completing a 3-point EAPS course, students are asked to engage in at least seven hours (about 20 hours for the 5-point course) of independent listening in English. They may choose their own activities, but are advised to spread their exercises out over several different tasks. To help students start, the teachers of these courses usually give a list of authentic activities that are accessible to the general public or academia, even in Finland, where English is not one of the official languages.

Having taught EAPS courses so far for about ten years, we wanted to evaluate how these independent and freely chosen listening activities function as part of an academic English course. The purpose of this study was twofold. Having gathered data from the students for years, we aimed to answer two questions: 1) What listening activities, when done as independent study, do students choose in order to improve their listening comprehension? and 2) Do students find listening activities useful or helpful?

The data for this study consisted of the student self-reports regarding listening activities gathered from more than eight EAPS courses per year for the past six years and will be summarized to highlight the students’ most popular listening activities. Special attention will also be paid to the least popular exercises, as this may suggest future changes that would encourage and/or enable students to increase their English language interface for practice purposes during their course of study in a non-English environment.

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

Because listening is such an integral part of teaching and learning English, there are several guidebooks on the teaching of listening skills. For example, in her book *Teaching Listening Comprehension* (1984), Penny Ur discusses both real-life listening and listening to English as a foreign language. In real-life listening

situations, according to her, comprehension can be influenced by important factors such as what the purpose of listening and the listener's expectations are, whether the speaker is visible, whether there are environmental clues for the listener, the length of the spoken text, whether the language is formal or informal or even colloquial, and whether there is redundancy in the speech. The influence of speakers is also manifested in their pace, volume and pitch, whereas the environment can produce noise that disturbs the listener (ibid., 3-10).

According to Ur, listening to English as a foreign language differs from that in real-life situations in many ways. Firstly, in order to comprehend, the listeners must have learned to understand the sounds, intonation and both word and sentence stress. Secondly, they also have to cope with noise and outside disturbance, but unlike native speakers, they are not able to predict what would come next in a phrase. They may not have enough vocabulary, understanding different accents may prove impossible, and they may not be able to use visual or aural environmental clues for help. In addition, fatigue has to be taken into account, as a non-native speaker of English will become tired of listening much faster than a native speaker (Ibid., 11-20).

L2 listening comprehension was a popular area to study in the 1970s and the 1980s. In their discussion of that research, Anderson and Lynch (1989) point out that, in addition to background problems (language is always connected to a culture and history) and linguistic problems if the language input is difficult (ibid., 35-39), there are many problems that native speakers share with non-native speakers. The more difficult the language input is, the more important background information becomes. However, they criticize the fact that so much of the research done in those days was based on the comprehension of singular sentences rather than a real context.

When discussing aural reception or listening, the Common Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR 2001, 65-68) provides scales for overall listening comprehension, understanding interaction between native speakers, listening as a member of a live audience, listening to announcements and instructions, and listening to audio media and recordings. In our courses, the teachers' suggestions for listening activities cover all but the announcements and instructions because, for academic purposes, understanding longer passages of spoken English is regarded as more important and also more demanding.

One recent article by Garold Murray (2009) suggests some parameters for considering the challenges of learner autonomy and, in our case, how they apply to listening exercises outside the classroom. First of all, Murray (2009, 119) emphasizes the definition of learner autonomy according to H. Holec as “the ability to take charge of one’s learning”. He notes that educators “will need to take great care in crafting the learning structure”. He lays great importance on the planning of learning goals by the students, along with a follow-up program of teacher support, reflection, management of learning activities and personalization (ibid., 121). These guidelines have been followed, for the most part, in our teaching and research, but any failures or short-comings may be addressed by re-evaluating how many of these steps have been successfully carried out. For example, in our courses, the teacher suggests areas of listening activity, but how often do the students then simply follow those suggestions and not seek out areas that might in fact be more useful to them? Group listening log reports, described below, can serve to provide students with additional listening suggestions from fellow students and might prod students to be more resourceful in their own listening, but again, this factor has not been controlled for specifically in our research.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study was based on two sets of materials written by the students in the EAPS courses. To answer the first research question about the popularity of various listening exercises, the data came from Group Listening Log reports, and feedback forms given to the students after the course were used to determine whether students were motivated to find relevant listening activities. While reviewing the feedback forms, we also paid attention to what their reactions were to the listening exercises in general.

The sample consisted of groups of up to 20 humanities students for 7-week courses, some for 14 weeks, during 2004-2010. The total number of students was approximately 960. The following suggestions were given in the course: listen to English news on the radio or Internet, watch English TV programs (without subtitles), interview English speakers, speak English with friends or with native speakers, attend events in English, such as lectures, church services or presentations, and listen to music lyrics in English. Students were encouraged to think of other activities, which sometimes included business or work situations. Students were

also encouraged to visit the Self-Access Centre, an independent learning unit of the Language Centre, and use their materials. For the purposes of these courses, students were asked to document their listening activities and keep track of the number of hours they spent on each activity, in 15-minute blocks of time. In addition, they were required to keep a written Listening Log in which they evaluated their listening skills and activities. Some of the quotations in this article were taken from these logs.

To find out more about students' listening, and to complement the Listening Logs kept by individual students, the teacher created a Group Listening Log Report for the student groups to use to record their individual listening activities on a bi-weekly basis (see Figure 1). The groups had earlier been formed according to the student study area, i.e., history, literature, and languages. Students were asked to tally the number of times they performed each listening activity and to discuss with their group-mates the particular usefulness or difficulty of the chosen activity. They were also encouraged to share their discoveries with each other so that students could develop for themselves the most practical listening tasks. These tallies were then reported to the entire class so that all groups could hear other groups' reports. After the reports, the teacher encouraged the students to seek out different activities in their next listening tasks to broaden their language exposure and skills.

Figure 1 Sample Log Report / Humanities 3- and 5-point courses.

Group Name:			Date:
Activity	# stu	#. of times	Comments: programs, difficulties?
<i>Watch</i> BBC/English news			
<i>Listen to</i> BBC/English news			
<i>Watch</i> DVD/video/no subtitles			
<i>Watch</i> film at cinema			
<i>Watch</i> TV program/no subtitles			
<i>Watch</i> film on TV/no subtitles			
<i>Attend</i> event in English			
<i>Interview</i> English speaker			
<i>Attend</i> lecture in English			
<i>Speak</i> English w/ friends			
<i>Speak</i> English/native speakers			
<i>Listen to</i> CDs/music/lyrics			
<i>Other:</i>			

After the English language course, an evaluation form designed by the teacher was provided for the students to give two kinds of feedback: first, they could tick boxes indicating that an exercise was ‘Very helpful’, ‘Somewhat helpful’, or ‘Not helpful at all’. The rest of the form consisted of questions about the exercise, to which they could respond in paragraph form, which they often did. The feedback reported here is primarily based on the ticked boxes on 130 randomly selected feed-back forms from the same years as the Listening Logs (2004-2010). Some comments of special interest are also reviewed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The students who were in the groups between 2004-2010 returned nearly 1000 Group Log Reports. Out of these, as representative samples, 128 group log reports and 130 feedback forms from humanities students were chosen for this study. The following results were based on these reports.

The two most popular listening activities were watching BBC or other English news (CNN, France 24, Deutsche Welle in English, Al-Jazeera, or American commercial news channels available on the Internet, such as ABC, CBS and NBC) and listening to music in English on CDs or a portable media player. Over 85% of the students chose to accomplish these tasks with varying degrees of skill. Students found that some activities required more concentration than others. Their comments ranged from: “language is difficult” (BBC news) to “lyrics are difficult to understand” or “in some songs the lyrics are drowned by the music” when listening to English music. Students regularly reported that BBC news was different from Finnish news, and also that it was easier to follow if they had watched Finnish news first and possibly learned about the topics. They also commented on the high quality of the English in BBC programs and that it was useful to hear ‘proper’ English: “clearly pronounced English, useful, gets you used to this kind of language (politics, economics, etc.).” However, it also presented a challenge: “Tempo felt fast, it was hard to concentrate”. Some students actually found listening to the radio easier—“Every time I was surprised how easy it was to follow the news even without pictures. Maybe it is so that I concentrate better when I only have to listen”. However, others have reported that having the pictures helps them understand the unfamiliar vocabulary better.

The next most popular range of activities included watching films in various formats or watching television programming in English, preferably without subtitles. Well over half and perhaps as many as three-quarters of the students chose to accomplish this task and willingly chose such listening exercises. Often they were surprised when they turned off the subtitles—either that their listening was not as good as they had thought, or that they were in fact able to understand the dialogue without reading the subtitles. Students commonly reported that these activities were “easy”, “mostly easy, a few strange words, but I got the idea”, or they may have discovered that they had forgotten to turn off the subtitles, but did not really need them. Once they were aware that they should look for language, they were then able to learn new vocabulary or social language from this type of media viewing. Language that proved challenging included criminal jargon or medical terminology from drama series, or foreign accents.

These activities helped the students evaluate their listening abilities perhaps better than any other tasks, but they were not normally part of the students’ daily life. These sorts of listening activities without subtitles activated for them a new evaluation-task for their future learning. The goal was that they would continue to

improve their listening and practice the more difficult listening without subtitles in the future to maintain their language skills. One student wrote about the realities of trying to maintain these habits in the long-term:

Because watching movies without [sub]titles on was much harder work than I could have guessed, I need to practise that later too. I've always been a little unpopular in my family because of this kind of exchange of spoken or written languages while we watch movies and I've already given up with it, but now I'll try again because anyway we all need to learn English or keep it active.

It seems that these kinds of 'language realities' should be discussed more in the course both to help students achieve their listening goals and to inform the teachers of the students' learning challenges.

A third range of activities involved direct interaction and competence in live English situations, either in lectures, one-to-one contact through work or casual meetings, or through social networking. They included attending an event in English, interviewing an English speaker, speaking English with friends or speaking English with native speakers. In this area, students often added their own unusual activities or situations in which they had some experience of English, such as eavesdropping on English conversations on the train, helping lost tourists, using English in the workplace to deal with foreigners, who may or may not have been native speakers, and speaking with native speakers with accents to which they were unaccustomed. However, these were by far the least common activities chosen by the students, even though they are the ones that could potentially provide them with the most competence and feed-back on their own language skills. Less than fifty percent of the students reported engaging in these activities for their listening logs. When engaged in at all, the most common were lectures in English (for students in a programme where the teaching was in English as well as in the mother tongue) and speaking English with friends (probably foreign students who were not native speakers). In the case of the lectures, the students had to work very hard to understand and follow the lectures: "Quite hard to understand the American lecturers [of human sciences]". It was the most challenging activity in which they engaged. The lack of listening or note-taking strategies was most evident here, and the course was not designed to provide the students with any strategies, which is again perhaps a deficiency which should be remedied in the future. The interaction of speaking English with friends is probably the most useful task in which the students voluntarily engaged and they consistently reported their satisfaction with their own

skills (“since none of us are native speakers, it is easier to relax and talk and not worry about the mistakes”) and they are also able to see the usefulness of such skills in their social, academic and professional future. Students rarely reported speaking English with a native speaker, or that they had friends who were native speakers. Their exposure to English in their daily lives seemed to be limited to the media. When faced with actual English interaction, they by and large found it easier to listen than to speak. Less than twenty-five percent of them reported interacting in English on a regular basis, or that they would be likely to continue doing so with native speakers in the future.

While not significant percentage-wise, many of the students’ comments in their Listening Log Journals reflect their growing awareness of English in their environment, which is one of the goals of the listening exercises. Students report such infrequent and/or unusual ways of practising as attending a Christening ceremony: “formal English”; and attending a panel discussion on international NGO work. Some students also challenged themselves in the notoriously most difficult arena for language comprehension—humour—by listening to jokes online or attending stand-up comedy performances in English. The latter could also include challenging dialects from Ireland, Scotland, or Australia. Finally, in the realm of music listening, one student noted: “It is difficult to follow an opera singer [singing in English]!”

Some students mentioned singing karaoke in English in their Listening Log Journals: “Hard to follow the lyrics at the same time as you sing”. This is a challenging exercise, though it cannot be regarded as a listening exercise per se because the singer just follows the text at the bottom of the screen while trying to sing the song according to the melody heard. However, the singer must have a memory of how the text was pronounced in the original recording to do the job well.

Steve Tauroza (2001), who examined the listening comprehension of first-year students of either English for Professional Communication or Teaching English as a Second Language in the City University of Hong Kong, is very critical of the inauthenticity of the listening situation used in most listening comprehension research. He also points out that the typical way of measuring listening comprehension through students’ lecture notes is invalid, because the relationship between the two is not automatic but the notes are filtered through the student’s mind. For example, students might not write down something they have comprehended but that they know very well already—i.e., there is no need to record

well-known facts. He also criticizes using self-reports because he feels that the students do not always have a realistic picture of the extent of their comprehension skills (Tauroza 2001, 360-62).

Our study avoided these problems by asking the students only to report on the kinds and length of the listening activities they did on their own. In their individual listening logs, the students recorded the dates of listening in segments as short as 15 minutes. Sometimes, in their bi-weekly group reports, the students honestly reported that they had not done any listening during those weeks. We can, however, always question the reliability of the student reports but when the students were commenting on their listening experiences, we were able to conclude that they had done what they claimed to have done.

Even though the University of Helsinki Language Centre has an excellent self-access study unit with all kinds of listening comprehension materials in English, recommended by the teachers in the lists of alternative listening exercises, the students found the above-mentioned activities much more appealing. The reason may have been that they could engage in these activities at home whenever they had time. They would have had to make a visit and spend time in the self-access study unit, which has long opening hours but does close at 8 p.m. at the latest. Working in the Self-Access Centre was not a requirement of these listening exercises, but was suggested as an easy place in which to engage in listening activities if home life precluded such work. Students with children and students in group-living arrangements sometimes took advantage of this option and mentioned in their logs when they had used English-language materials there, especially listening to audio-books or pronunciation cassettes.

The only study we know of comparing self-study listening comprehension outside language classes to listening comprehension within classroom teaching is by Felicity Harper (2002). She had also asked her students of French to complete listening comprehension exercises on their own, using commercially produced materials some of which had additional tasks to help listening and to give the students some idea of their listening skills. There were tapes with and without visuals, and some programmes gave students immediate feedback.

Harper's students did not take the opportunity of working by themselves. The first experiment failed so that Harper decided to drop the self-study component altogether and move all listening comprehension activities to be part of her

classroom instruction. She came to the conclusion that her students were not motivated to work on their own—not even when their listening tasks were structured. They did not have strategies and they needed preparation before they could be autonomous learners. Therefore, she divided her second experiment into three teacher-led stages, during the last one of which students applied the meta-cognitive strategies they had been taught when they were “designing appropriate pre-listening activities and adopting a suitable approach to a variety of listening tasks”, which were “designed for students to do with teacher help as required” (ibid., 26). Harper finds the teacher’s role of vital importance when empowering the learner “to identify a learning need, select strategies to tackle it and evaluate the outcomes, before adding this to their store of experience to draw on in future learning situations” (ibid., 28).

Harper was working with sixth form (high school) students, which means that the Finnish students in our sample were several years older and, therefore, much more motivated to take responsibility. They also had more experience in learning languages having studied at least three languages before coming to the university. In addition, many students had had up to 10 years of English in their pre-university education. These factors may have influenced the fact that we did not encounter one single student who would not have fulfilled the listening comprehension requirement. The only exceptions were the very few students who, for one reason or another—but never because of listening exercises--were not able to complete their course.

Our second research question concerned the usefulness or helpfulness of the listening activities. Do students feel it is useful? Can it still be an exercise? After the EAPS course, the students gave feedback both by ticking boxes indicating that an exercise was ‘Very helpful’, ‘Somewhat helpful’, or ‘Not helpful at all’, and by responding to questions about the exercises in paragraph form. According to the ticked boxes on the 130 randomly chosen feed-back forms from the same years as the Listening Logs (2004-2010), the overwhelming majority of the students (121) found the Listening Log task to be helpful in their studies: 56 considered it to be ‘Very helpful’, and 65 said it was ‘Somewhat helpful’. Only six students thought that the exercise was ‘Not helpful at all’.

CONCLUSION

The students fulfilled their listening comprehension requirements and reported on their listening activities in detail. But how effective were these activities? Unfortunately, no follow-up studies were part of this language-tracking, and perhaps should be considered in future research so that we could determine exactly how effective these independent listening strategies are in creating long-term competence. Nor was there any comparison of the students' listening competence before and after the listening exercises.

In his essay, "Mapping out the world of language learning beyond the classroom" (2009), Phil Benson of the Hong Kong Institute of Education asks whether we really know what is the worth of out-of-classroom learning. Is a tutorial 'out-of-classroom' learning? In reviewing his research, he finds that students have actually been finding many new forms of learning, and we as teachers have to take them into account: while you can call self-access centre work 'out of classroom' learning, it does not compare to the learning that might take place on student blogs and social networking sites (*ibid.*, 228). While we as teachers and researchers have spent a great deal of time trying to devise specific learning settings, especially in self-access centres, for example, he points out that students themselves are finding their own learning zones outside of these settings, which may not conform to our ideas of necessary learning environments. However, for the students they are very real.

Professor Larry Vandergrift (2010), in his article on listening, emphasises the fact that students do better in listening exercises when they can self-evaluate their skills and progress. Using listening exercises solely for testing can inhibit the development of effective listening habits. In our study, all of the student listening activities are free from testing anxiety, although some additional listening exercises may be used in class to help students develop their acute listening skills.

Another important factor in listening comprehension, as shown by Rahimi and Abedini (2009), is the students' self confidence or, as they put it, self-efficacy. They studied first-year Iranian university students studying English. These researchers were able to show that high self-efficacy significantly and positively affected performance in listening comprehension tests, whereas low self-efficacy had a significant negative effect on test performance.

In our study, we relied on group log reports, although we were and are aware of significant variation in both the listening skills and the self-confidence of our students. One suggestion for further study could be to look into students' individual differences in and their affective approaches to English listening comprehension. As shown above, students did provide some personal opinions, although mostly only when it came to what they found difficult to understand and what was easy. However, there was very little profound analysis of why one task was more difficult to understand and complete than another.

This study was conducted using group log reports and end-of-course feedback forms from humanities students. The results might have been very different had we had reports by science, law or medical students. It would be interesting to see how their reports would differ from those now at hand.

Based on learning theory and the need for students to be more directly involved in planning their learning, it might be advisable in the future to provide more scaffolding for this learning task. For example, the listening could be divided into three parts, each progressively more difficult. The students could still choose their own learning/listening tasks, but the beginning tasks would be as outlined earlier: the easiest listening to BBC and music, then the TV/film/online listening with/without subtitles, and finally the actual use of English in an interactive situation, i.e., interviewing a native or SL English speaker. If the completion of all the three stages of the listening activities were a course requirement, students might be more inclined to carefully plan their listening activities to lead up to the final, and more difficult and stressful, live speaking/listening situation. Listening to dialogue in television programming can be more directly useful if the student can then use or listen to that type of social interaction in a live English-speaking situation. At least at the University of Helsinki, and in Helsinki itself, there is no shortage of English speakers who might be available for such interaction, although the teacher might have to structure these opportunities a bit more than is necessary with planning the other listening exercises, which the students can develop for themselves.

It would seem beneficial to continue the use of the Listening Log exercise in our English language courses, with a goal of having more students find it 'Very helpful' rather than simply 'Somewhat helpful'. The previous suggestions that the exercise be better scaffolded and divided into three working parts might improve the usefulness of the task for the students. In the end, they are the ones who can determine if the work is helpful to them or not. Furthermore, a detailed examination

of the written responses on the feedback form could yield more specific information about students' evaluation of the listening tasks. In fact, more detailed feedback could be elicited specifically in an open-response question on the feedback form. In some of those written comments students noted: "It was difficult to find the right material for listening; some of it was too easy" and "For me the listening log was a bit unnecessary. I hear English so much anyway in my everyday life, though not in the academic field". These two comments together indicate a possible area for improvement: either that the teacher provides or the students are required to locate for themselves more listening tasks in academic English, whether they are lectures, online discussions and lectures, seminars, or public events in English.

It seems that to receive more detailed information from their students, teachers have to give more precise instructions as to what kinds of goals the students should be able to achieve by completing the listening tasks. Student motivation to carry out the exercises is still unclear; as long as the students are required to complete the listening component to get the credit for the course, they have no choice. Would the students want to improve their English skills by doing something else? This could also be considered in future research.

Most of our students had understood the listening exercises to be listening as such, not as part of English interaction. We feel, however, that they would benefit very much from interacting in English with either native or SL English speakers. What could be done to focus on communication in English?

It is quite clear that more information is needed to answer the question of how effective these autonomous listening activities have been in improving the students' listening proficiency. The autonomous listening component continues to be included in our courses. We now know that students are motivated to work on their listening comprehension on their own, and we hope to be able to make an informed decision on the efficiency of these autonomous listening activities in the near future.

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TYÖELÄMÄN ÄÄNI – PODCASTIT KIELTENOPETUKSESSA

Lis Auvinen & Berit Peltonen

This article describes how podcasts can be used in language teaching. The issue is not one of introducing a new technical tool into teaching, but rather how podcasts can enrich and support learning. For several years we have consciously broken the traditional classroom borders in our language courses because for instance the course content of university-level language courses has had to be imported from the real professional environment. A large part of the work the student is required to complete for the course requirements is meant to be accomplished through learning tasks outside the classroom. However, since the students often work at the same time learning takes place as a part of their real professional environment and this is also utilized in language teaching. This article is based on our experiences in a project called *Röster från arbetslivet* (Voices from working life), in which students interviewed academically educated Finnish speakers who use Swedish as a working language. These interviews were conducted in Swedish. So far, the interviews have been openly accessible on the web and more will be added in the future. The University of Helsinki and the Aalto University School of Economics have adopted this project as a part the Swedish language courses. The experiences of the interviewers in carrying out the interview task have been mapped for a report to assist later in planning and implementing new interviews. We have also asked about the use of podcasts as course material. Further benefits of the use of podcasts derive from the possibility to produce authentic student-generated material for use by other students, including in other Finnish universities. This authentic material provides information about language needs in the workplace for language teachers and about how our students cope linguistically with work tasks. Both student feedback and our own experiences are utilized to evaluate and develop the project.

JOHDANTO

Nykyteknologia on muuttanut käsitystämme luokahuoneesta. Kun sanotaan, että oppimista tapahtuu sekä luokassa että luokan ulkopuolella, puhutaan luokahuoneesta joko paikkaan sidottuna tai virtuaalisena. Kielten kursseilla olemme jo usean vuoden tietoisesti rikkoneet perinteisen luokahuoneen rajoja, koska esimerkiksi kurssisisällöt yliopistotasolla tulee hakea todellisesta akateemisesta ammattiympäristöstä. Opiskelijan työmäärää varten kursseihin on resurssoitu aikaa, josta suuri osa on tarkoitettu käyttämään opiskeluun omalla ajalla oppimistehtävien parissa. Mutta oppimista tapahtuu myös varsinaisen opiskelun

ulkopuolella niin vapaa-ajalla kuin ns. oikeissa töissä, ja tätä voidaan hyödyntää opetuksessa. Elinikäisen oppimisen (Lifelong Learning) lisäksi onkin alettu puhua elämänlaajuisesta oppimisesta (Lifewide Learning) (esim. Karlsson ja Kjisik 2011) .

Mobiili teknologia häivyttää rajoja myös viihteen ja opiskelun väliltä. Kun kerran nykyinen opiskelijasukupolvi on tottunut lataamaan äänitiedostoja verkosta ja kulkemaan napit korvissa, niin miksipä tätä ei hyödynnettäisi opetuksessakin. Podcasting on helppokäyttöinen Web 2.0 –teknologia, joka on kaikkien ulottuvilla (Salmon and Nie 2008). Päätimme kokeilla tätä mobiiliteknologiaa ruotsin kurseillamme Aalto-yliopiston kauppakorkeakoulussa (ASE) ja Helsingin yliopiston Kielikeskuksessa. Uusi väline tuntui sopivan hyvin sulautuvan opetuksen malliin, jolla kurssimme toteutamme. Podcastien käyttö alkoi pilottina vuonna 2008 jatkuen projektina Röster från arbetslivet, ja on nyt vakiintunut normaaliksi käytännöksi.

PODCASTIT

Podcasting tarkoittaa äänitiedostojen julkaisemista ja tilaamista verkossa. Käyttäjä voi tilata tiedostoja uutissyötteinä (RSS = Really Simple Syndication) esimerkiksi tietyltä aihealueelta. Podcastit ovat digitaalisia äänitiedostoja, jotka ovat kuunneltavissa ja ladattavissa tietokoneelle verkon kautta. Tällaiset audioblogit voi siirtää ja niitä voi kuunnella mp3-soittimella tai muulla mobiililaitteella, kuten matkapuhelimella. Videopodcasteissa on puolestaan kuva mukana. (Vrt. Salmon, Mobbs et al. 2008.) Podcasteja voi käyttää myös tilaamatta uutissyötteitä, sillä nykyään internetissä on podcast-sivustoja eri aloilta, ja tiedotusvälineet julkaisevat ohjelmiaan ladattavina mp3-tiedostoina. Esimerkiksi YLE aloitti podcast-lähetöksensä vuonna 2005. Kieltenopetukseenkin löytyy internetistä paljon podcast-ohjelmia eri kielillä¹, ks. esimerkiksi Language Learning Podcast (2010).

PODCASTIEN KÄYTTÖ YLIOPISTO-OPETUKSESSA

Luentonauhoitteet ovat tavallisin ja todennäköisesti myös nopeimmin leviävä tapa käyttää podcastingia opetuksessa. Kun opiskelija on tilannut luentosarjan uutissyötteen, on luentojen seuraaminen omalta päätelaitteelta helppoa (Majava ja

¹ Esimerkiksi <http://www.word2word.com/pod.html>

Koski-Kotiranta 2008) . Luentoja voi kuunnella jälkikäteen, jos ei pääse paikalle tai jos haluaa palata sisältöön myöhemmin. Esimerkiksi monia valtiotieteellisen tiedekunnan luentoja voi seurata Helsingin yliopiston podcast –palvelun kautta (HY-Podcast)². Vastaavasti videopodcasteilla voidaan havainnollistaa vaikkapa anatomian opetusta (esim. Cox et al. 2008), ja varsinkin luonnontieteissä podcasteja käytetään kenttätöiden ohjaamiseen ja tulosten välittämiseen (esim. Downward et al. 2008). Podcastit tarjoavat myös mahdollisuuden tutustua luentoihin etukäteen, jotta vaikeat käsitteet olisi helpompi omaksua. Aliotta et al. (2008) ovat kokeilleet tällaista käyttöä fysiikan kursseillaan. France ja Ribchester (2008) puolestaan ovat käyttäneet podcasteja palautteen antamiseen opiskelijoille.

Podcastien käyttöä yliopisto-opetuksessa on tutkittu muun muassa Britanniassa projektissa Informal Mobile Podcasting And Learning Adaptation (IMPALA), jossa oli mukana noin 20 opettajaa ja 500 opiskelijaa kuudelta eri tieteenalalta (Salmon and Edirisingha 2008). Eräs tärkeä etu verrattuna perinteisiin luentoihin ja kirjatentteihin oli tutkimuksen mukaan joustavuus. Opiskelijat voivat kuunnella luentoja omaan tahtiinsa missä ja milloin heille sopii. Helppokäyttöisyyden lisäksi monet opiskelijat arvostivat sitä, että podcastien avulla on mahdollista huomioida erilaiset oppimistyyli: auditiivinen oppija kuuntelee mieluummin kuin lukee. Lisäksi aineistoon voi palata yhä uudestaan. (Salmon and Nie 2008, Rothwell 2008.)

Kieltenopetusta IMPALA-projektissa edusti kurssi, jonka tavoitteena oli opettaa kulttuurienvälistä viestintää sekä kehittää yhteisöllisen oppimisen taitoja dialogin avulla. Kurssi muodostui tapaamisista ja verkko-opiskelusta. Oppimisalustana käytettiin Blackboardia, johon podcastit liitettiin. Suurin osa podcasteista oli opettajien ja tutoreiden tuottamia, mutta opiskelijoita oli otettu mukaan haastateltavina, ja joissakin nauhoituksissa opiskelijat pohtivat arviointia. Opiskelijoista 61 % kuunteli podcasteja kampuksen ulkopuolella ja kertoi pitävänsä siitä, että voi itse valita ajan ja paikan sekä määrätä tahdin. Monet arvostivat mahdollisuutta kuunnella luentoja, jos joutuivat olemaan niiltä poissa. Opiskelijat kokivat, että podcastit vähensivät opettajan kontrollia ja siirsivät vastuuta oppimisesta heille itselleen. (Rothwell 2008.)

² Äänitteiden osoite on: <http://www-hotell.it.helsinki.fi/~optek/podcast/>

OPISKELIJAT PODCASTIEN TUOTTAJINA

Podcastien tekemisen helppous ja edullisuus on tuonut verrattoman keinon tuottaa autenttista ja tuoretta oppimateriaaleja kursseille. Tuotannossa voidaan opettajien lisäksi luovasti käyttää muitakin toimijoita, esimerkiksi opiskelijoita, eri alojen asiantuntijoita, alumneja ja työelämän edustajia (vrt. Salmon et al. 2008). Helsingin yliopiston Podcast-pilottihankkeessa, jota käsittelemme tuonnempana, suurin osa materiaalista oli luentotallenteita. Oman pilottimme Röstet från arbetslivet lisäksi vain käyttäytymistieteellisen tiedekunnan aineisto oli opiskelijoiden itsensä tuottamaa. Mediakasvatuksen opiskelijat reflektoivat alansa kysymyksiä (HY-Podcast)³, kun taas omat opiskelijamme tuottivat oppimateriaalia haastattelemalla alansa edustajia työelämässä. Myös IMPALA-projektin esimerkeissä opiskelijoiden tuottamissa podcasteissa on yleensä kyse oppimisen reflektoinnista (Jenkins and Lonsdale 2008, Ng'ambi 2008, Rothwell 2008). Luonnontieteissä mobiilioppimista on hyödynnetty jo pitkään, ja opiskelijat ovat tuottaneet materiaaleja kursseille, mutta vastaamme ei vielä ole kirjallisuudessa tullut yhtään kuvausta opiskelijoiden tuottamasta kielenopetusmateriaalista.

PODCASTIT SULAUTUVASSA OPETUKSESSA

Sulautuvassa opetuksessa (Blended Learning) yhdistetään suunnitelmallisesti kontaktiopetusta ja verkko-opetusta. Pedagogisissa ratkaisuissa hyödynnetään vuorovaikutteisen opetuksen menetelmiä kuten pienryhmätyöskentelyä kasvokkain ja verkossa, vertaisvuorovaikutusta, verkkoluentoja sekä yhteisöllistä tiedon tuottamista. Tapaamiset luokahuoneessa kasvokkain tarjoavat mahdollisuuden yhteiseen ideointiin, koska vuorovaikutus on välitöntä ja samanaikaista. Verkkotyöskentelyssä hyödynnetään vuorovaikutuksen asynkronisuutta ja paikasta riippumattomuutta. Verkossa opiskelijat voivat työskennellä omaan tahtiinsa. Heillä on aikaa pohtia sekä tuottaa ja jakaa asioita kirjallisesti. (Joutsenvirta ja Kukkonen 2009.)

Salmonin ja Nien (2008) mukaan podcastit taipuvat monenlaiseen käyttöön ja sopivat hyvin integroitaviksi muihin aktiviteetteihin sulautuvassa opetuksessa. Edellä mainittu Rothwellin (2008) kurssi on tästä esimerkki. Jäljempänä kuvaamme,

³ Kuunneltavissa osoitteessa: <http://www-hotel1.it.helsinki.fi/~optek/podcast/?o=A60000>

kuinka podcasteja on käytetty sulautuvassa opetuksessa kahdella Aalto-yliopiston kursilla.

TYÖELÄMÄN VAATIMUKSET

Suomalaisissa yliopistoissa kielikeskusten kielenopetuksen lähtökohtana on ammatillinen kielitaitotarve, jonka vuoksi kurssiemme sisällöt räätälöidään eri alojen opiskelijoille sopiviksi. Opetussuunnitelman lisäksi ruotsin opetusta ohjaa kielitaitolaki (Laki julkisyhteisöjen henkilöstöltä vaadittavasta kielitaidosta 424/2003), joka edellyttää, että opiskelija saavuttaa sellaisen ruotsin kielen taidon, joka vaaditaan korkeakoulututkintoa edellyttävään virkaan kaksikielisellä virka-alueella ja joka on tarpeen oman alan kannalta.

Opiskelijoidemme ammatilliseen kompetenssiin kuuluvat oman ammattialan tuntemuksen ohella kieli- ja viestintätaidot, IT:n hallinta, ryhmätyötaidot sekä elinikäinen oppiminen. Näitä taitoja kaipaavat sekä opiskelijat työelämään tultuaan että heidän työnantajansa. Esimerkiksi Akateemisten rekrytointipalvelujen Aarresaaren tuoreessa tutkimuksessa yrityksiin sijoittuneet tohtorit kaipasivat koulutukseen myös esiintymis- ja vuorovaikutustaitoja (Sainio 2010), ja muidenkin uraseurantaraporttien mukaan erilaiset kieli- ja viestintätaidot koetaan tärkeiksi. (Ollikainen ja Lindholm 2009,Uraseurantaraportti 2009, Karjalainen ja Lehtonen 2005).

RÖSTER FRÅN ARBETSLIVET

Röster från arbetslivet -projekti alkoi pilottina Helsingin yliopiston opetusteknologiakeskuksen johdolla kesällä 2008. Pilottien tarkoituksena oli selvittää podcastien käyttöä opetuksessa. Tekniikka ei ollut haaste podcastien tekemiselle, sillä itse tekniikka oli yksinkertainen, ja osallistujia myös perehdytettiin siihen. Meille ei riittänyt pelkästään uuden tekniikan tuominen kokeiluna opetukseen, vaikka se jo sellaisenaan voikin lisätä opiskelumotivaatiota (Engsäll 2008), vaan halusimme hyödyntää tätä uutta tekniikkaa mahdollisimman mielekkäällä tavalla ruotsin kielen opetuksessa. Niinpä päädyimme lähettämään opiskelijoita työelämään digitaalitalentimen kera tekemään haastatteluja ruotsin kielellä. Näiden haastattelutallenteiden (podcastien) ideana oli tuoda työelämä osaksi opiskelua myös muille opiskelijoille, sillä haastattelut saatiin vapaasti

verkkoon kuunneltaviksi joko omalta koneelta tai ladattuna esim. mobiililaitteeseen. Meille opettajille tämä autenttinen verkossa oleva haastattelumateriaali toimii myös tiedonlähteenä. Podcastpilotti valmistui syksyllä 2008, ja siitä saatujen hyvien kokemusten pohjalta päätimme jatkaa hanketta projektina ja sisällyttää haastattelutallenteiden tekemisen ja käytön osaksi normaalia opetustamme ruotsin ammattikielen kursseilla.

HAASTATTELUJEN TEKEMINEN

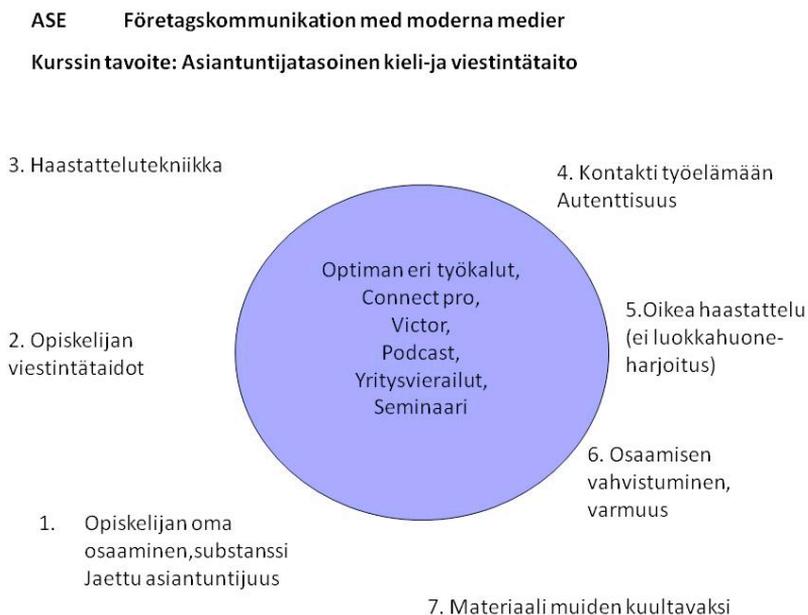
Röster från arbetslivet -projektissa lähdetään liikkeelle siitä, että opiskelijat haastattelevat työelämän edustajia ruotsiksi ja haastattelut tallennetaan verkkoon muiden opiskelijoiden kuultaviksi. Haastateltavat ovat akateemisen loppututkinnon suorittaneita äidinkieleltään suomenkielisiä henkilöitä, jotka käyttävät ruotsia työtehtävissään. Haastattelijat opiskelevat ruotsia Helsingin yliopiston kielikeskuksessa tai Aalto-yliopiston kauppakorkeakoulussa. He saavat itse suunnitella haastattelun, jonka tarkoituksena on kartoittaa haastateltavien kielitausta, ammatillinen kehitys, nykyiset työtehtävät, ruotsin kielen käyttö erilaisissa tehtävissä suullisesti ja kirjallisesti sekä haastateltavien mahdolliset terveiset korkeakoulujen kieltenopetukseen. Haastattelijat voivat myös hyödyntää opettajien valmiiksi tekemiä ruotsinkielisiä kysymyksiä edellä mainituilta aloilta. Haastattelun toteuttaminen on osa oppimisprosessia ja haastattelua varten käydään kurssilla läpi haastattelutekniikan erityispiirteitä. Tässä tehtävässä kielen ja sisällön oppiminen yhdistyvät luontevasti⁴, ja opiskelijan vuorovaikutustaidot paranevat sekä asiantuntijuus kehittyä, kun hän kommunikoi oman alansa asiantuntijan kanssa. Tehtävän mielekkyys toteutuu siinä, kun teoria ja käytäntö kohtaavat.

Opiskelijälähtöisyys tässä tehtävässä toteutuu yhtäältä siinä, että opiskelijat voivat itse suunnitella haastattelun ja halutessaan myös hankkia haastateltavan, ja toisaalta siinä, että haastattelu on vapaaehtoinen osa kurssia. Helsingin yliopistossa haastatteluja on tehty joillakin oikeustieteellisen, valtiotieteellisen ja maatalous-metsätieteellisen tiedekunnan ruotsin kursseilla. Kauppakorkeakoulussa haastattelutehtävä on vaihtoehtona kurssilla Företagskommunikation med moderna medier (FMMM), johon tämän uuden välineen käyttö myös sisällöllisesti sopii.

⁴ Vrt. CLIL Content and language integrated learning
http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/language-teaching/doc236_en.htm

Kuten kuvan 1 keskiöstä näkee, podcastit ovat yksi kurssin työkaluista⁵ sulautuvassa opetuksessa, joka toteutetaan Optima-ympäristössä⁶. Haastattelun tekemällä opiskelija pääsee autenttiseen työympäristöön ja tuottaa samalla muille opiskelijoille autenttista materiaalia kuultavaksi. Opiskelija pääsee siten käytännössä testaamaan asiantuntijatasoista kielitaitoaan, ja tämän odotetaan vahvistavan omaa osaamista. Opiskelijat tulevat kurssille jo hankittuine kielitaitoineen ja sisältöosaamisineen, kun taas kurssilla keskitytään viestintään (vrt. Karjalainen ja Laulajainen 2011). Haastattelutekniikan hallinta puolestaan on osa opiskelijan viestintätaitoa.

Kuva 1



Syksyllä 2008 haastattelijoiden kokemukset haastattelutehtävästä kartoitettiin raportointia varten. Saatuja kokemuksia on käytetty myöhemmillä kursseilla apuna

⁵ Muita työkaluja ovat esim. videoannotaatio-ohjelma Victor <http://matriisi.ee.tut.fi/victor/english.php> sekä verkkokokousjärjestelmä Adobe Connect pro <http://www.adobe.com/resources/acrobatconnect/>

⁶ Optima on Aalto-yliopistossa käytössä oleva verkkopohjainen oppimisolusta. <https://optima.discendum.com/>

uusien haastattelujen suunnittelussa ja toteutuksessa. Kerättyä ohjeistoa on täydennetty viimeksi syksyllä 2009. Opiskelijoiden tekemiä viestinnällisesti tärkeitä havaintoja ovat muun muassa:

Haastattelija ei saa puhua liikaa, vaan hänen täytyy kuunnella haastateltavaa. Pitää unohtaa itsensä ja antaa haastateltavan loistaa.

Haastattelijan kannattaa tehdä etukäteen paljon varakysymyksiä, sillä vastaukset saattavat olla odotettua lyhyempiä.

Haastattelijan ei tule vain lueskella omia kysymyksiään, vaan kuunnella haastateltavaa ja tehdä jatkokysymyksiä. Haastattelun tulisi olla interaktiivinen.

Haastatteluun pitää valmistautua hyvin myös siksi, että silloin voi paremmin keskittyä itse haastatteluun sen aikana. Voi esimerkiksi miettiä valmiiksi, millaisia vastausvaihtoehtoja haastateltava voi esittää, ja niihin voi suunnitella sopivia jatkokysymyksiä.

Kannattaa olla kohtelias ja osoittaa kiinnostusta haastateltavaa kohtaan.

Tekniikka kannattaa testata etukäteen, niin voi rauhassa keskittyä itse haastatteluun.

Tämän ohjeiston syntyminen itse haastattelujen ohella on osa projektin tuotoksia. Haastattelut ovat verkossa vapaasti kuultavissa⁷ ja käytettävissä opetuksessa monella tavalla: kuuntelutehtävinä, keskustelun pohjana, raportointitehtävinä jne. Niitä kuunnellaan tavallisesti omalla ajalla, mikä juuri onkin podcastien käytön idea, mutta myös opetuksen yhteydessä. Kurssilla opiskelijat saavat yleensä itse valita, ketä haluavat kuunnella, mutta esimerkiksi kauppar korkeakoulussa kuunnellaan luonnollisesti kaupallisen alan toimijoiden haastatteluja.

PODCASTIEN KÄYTTÖ OPETUKSESSA

Kauppar korkeakoulussa haastatteluja on käytetty kurssilla Svensk affärskommunikation 1 muun muassa mallina (kuva 2, kohta 2) omasta työstä kertomisessa integroituna toiseen verkkopohjaiseen materiaaliin Språknät⁸, josta

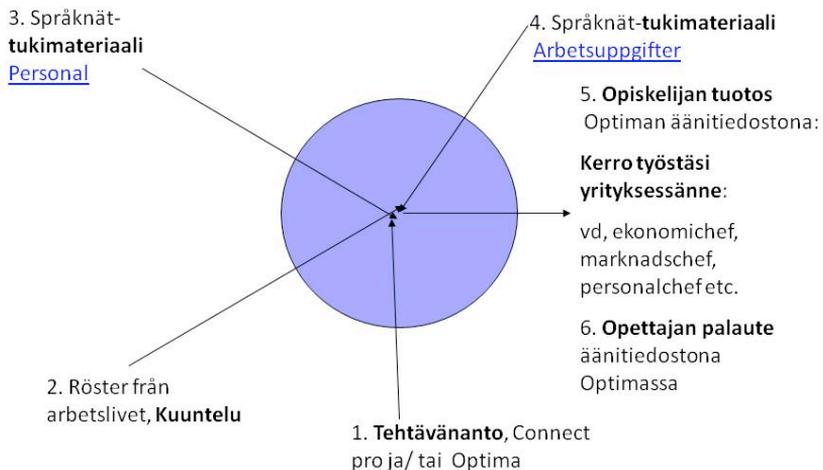
⁷ <http://www-hotel1.it.helsinki.fi/~optek/podcast/?o=A90600>

⁸ <http://h27.it.helsinki.fi/spraknat/>

löytyy sellaisia fraaseja, joita opiskelija voi käyttää kuvaillessaan haastattelumallien mukaan omia kuviteltuja tai oikeita työtehtäviänsä.

Kuva 2

ASE Svensk affärskommunikation 1
Omasta työstä kertominen, simulaatio Företag



Hauskana yksityiskohtana voi mainita, että vaikka opiskelijan tehtävänkuvaus on fiktiivinen, monet eläytyvät tehtävään niin täydellisesti, että he kertovat myös siitä, miten käyttävät ruotsin kieltä eri työtehtävissään, kuten haastattelumalleissakin tehdään. Työstä kertominen tapahtuu äänitiedostona ja opettaja antaa siitä myös palautteen samassa muodossa.

Opiskelijoiden kokemuksia podcastien kuuntelusta kartoitetaan keskusteluilla ja verkkokyselyllä. Meillä on suuret odotukset haastattelujen sopivuudesta opetuskäyttöön, sillä onhan kyseessä nuorille tuttu tekniikka sovellettuna opetukseen. Lisäksi arvelemme autenttisen, opiskelijoiden itse tuottaman oppimateriaalin olevan motivoivampaa kuin muun materiaalin.

Tällä hetkellä verkossa on 16 haastattelua, joista muutama mallihaastattelu on opettajan tekemä. Haastateltavat edustavat eri aloja kuten rehtori, vientisihteeri,

poliitikko, päätoimittaja, yritysjohtaja, johdon assistentti, myyntiverkostopäällikkö jne., joten haastattelumateriaali sopii käytettäväksi eri koulutusohjelmiin. Yhteydenotto haastateltavaan tapahtuu monella tavalla: joskus opettaja ottaa ensikontaktin, joskus opiskelija hoitaa tehtävän alusta alkaen.

Haastattelun sivutuotteena on ollut hauska todeta, että vastaanotto työpaikoilla on ollut myönteinen ja monet haastateltavat ovat olleet iloisia saadessaan osallistua projektiin. Vaikka henkilö ei ole voinut asettua haastateltavaksi, hänen asenteensa itse projektia kohtaan on ollut myönteinen.

RÖSTER FRÅN ARBETSLIVET -PROJEKTIN TULOKSIA

Podcastien käyttö ruotsin ammattikielen opetuksessa on osoittautunut moniulotteiseksi kokonaisuudeksi. Se, minkä aluksi piti olla vain tekniikan sovelluksen testausta opetuksessa, onkin tuottanut uusia kokemuksia kielen ja sisällön yhdistämisestä kielenopetuksessa sekä vuorovaikutustaitojen oppimisesta. Opiskelijoiden kokemuksia podcastien käytöstä olemme kartoittaneet sekä haastatteluilla että kyselyillä. Oma näkemyksemme perustuu saamamme kokemuksen lisäksi vertailuun aikaisempien kurssiemme kanssa.

Koska haastattelutehtävä on vapaaehtoinen, meitä kiinnostaa, mikä saa opiskelijan tekemään ylimääräisen tehtävän ja miten opiskelija katsoo siinä onnistuneensa. Saaduista vastauksista ilmenee mm., että kyseessä on ”Mielekäs tapa tutustua työelämään ja päästä kokeilemaan siipiään” (syksy 2008).

Käytännön järjestelyt, kuten haastattelusta sopiminen ja itse haastattelutilanne sekä tekniikka olivat sujuneet ongelmitta, ja haastattelutehtävää suositeltiin muillekin toteamalla ”kannattaa tehdä”. Jotkut opiskelijat ovatkin tehneet kaksi haastattelua, mikä osoittaa, että rohkeus puhua ruotsia on kasvanut, ja että opiskelija on saanut varmuutta omien vuorovaikutustaitojensa toimivuudesta. Itsensä ylittämisen kokemus on vahva kaikilla haastattelijoilla, ja itse haastattelutilanteessa he ovat todenneet ns. småpratnin merkityksen, mikä onkin tärkeä oppimishavainto erityisesti ajatellen kommunikointia ruotsalaisten kanssa. Muilta opiskelijoilta halusimme palautetta haastattelujen kuuntelemisesta, niiden sisällöstä ja sopivuudesta kieltenopetukseen samoin kuin tekniikasta ja sen laadusta. Lisäksi meitä kiinnosti opiskelijoiden halukkuus tehdä omia haastatteluja podcasteina tai videopodcasteina.

Tiivistetysti voidaan todeta, että tekniikkaan ollaan tyytyväisiä, samoin podcastien laatuun. Podcasteja kuunnellaan enimmäkseen omalta koneelta, mutta myös mobiilimahdollisuutta arvostetaan (vrt. Rothwell 2008). Podcastien käyttö kieltenopetuksessa koetaan mielekkääksi. Haastattelut ovat motivoivia, ja niiden kautta saadaan uutta kiinnostavaa tietoa, josta halutaan keskustella. Itse haastattelu tehtävän tekeminen alkoi kiinnostaa joitakin opiskelijoita heidän nähtyään mistä on kysymys, ja myös videopodcasteja haluttaisiin tehdä. Myös näiden opiskelijoiden rohkeus puhua ruotsia sekä usko vuorovaikutustaitoihin oli näin ollen vahvistunut, mikä opettajan näkökulmasta on osa oppimista, ja toisaalta elinikäisen oppimisen kannalta hyvä havainto opiskelijalta.

Seuraavassa taulukossa (taulukko 1) on verrattu saatuja vastauksia muutamiin keskeisiin väittämiimme neljässä eri ryhmässä Kauppakorkeakoulussa: kolmella peruskurssilla (Ryhmät 10, 11 ja 14) ja yhdellä jatkokurssilla (FMMM8). Nämä koskevat siis pääasiassa podcastien kuuntelua, sillä vain FMMM8-ryhmässä saattaa olla mukana myös haastattelun tekijöitä. Vastausten mukaan kaikissa ryhmissä ollaan suurelta osin sitä mieltä, että podcastien käyttö sopii kieltenopetukseen ja että haastattelut ovat kiinnostavia kuunnella. Uutta informaatiota saadaan enemmän peruskursseilla kuin jatkokurssilla, ja haastatteluja pidetään hyödyllisinä kielenoppimisen kannalta. Näkemyksemme on, että podcastit koetaan hyödyllisiksi opetuksessa varsinkin niiden autenttisten sisältöjen vuoksi, jotka koskevat opiskelijoiden tulevia ammatteja.

Taulukko 1. Opiskelijoiden näkemyksiä podcastien sopivuudesta kielten opetukseen.

Fråga 1	Podcasts passar bra till undervisningen			
Skala	Grupp 10	Grupp11	Grupp14	FMMM8
1 Instämmer inte alls	0	0	0	0
2 Instämmer till en liten del	2	3	2	0
3 Kan inte säga	3	1	0	0
4 Instämmer till stor del	11	12	7	3
5 Instämmer helt	2	1	3	1
Fråga 2	Intervjuerna var intressanta att lyssna på			
	Grupp 10	Grupp11	Grupp14	FMMM8
1 Instämmer inte alls	1	0	0	0
2 Instämmer till en liten del	6	4	3	0
3 Kan inte säga	4	2	1	0
4 Instämmer till stor del	7	11	7	3
5 Instämmer helt	0	0	1	1
Fråga 3	Jag fick ny information			
	Grupp 10	Grupp11	Grupp14	FMMM8
1 Instämmer inte alls	1	1	0	0
2 Instämmer till en liten del	5	6	3	2
3 Kan inte säga	3	4	1	1
4 Instämmer till stor del	8	4	4	1
5 Instämmer helt	1	2	4	0
Fråga 4	Intervjuerna var nyttiga med tanke på språkinläringen			
	Grupp 10	Grupp11	Grupp14	FMMM8
1 Instämmer inte alls	0	0	0	0
2 Instämmer till en liten del	5	3	2	0
3 Kan inte säga	2	3	0	2
4 Instämmer till stor del	11	11	7	2
5 Instämmer helt	0	0	3	0

Syksyn 2009 jatkokurssilla (FMMM) Kauppakorkeakoulussa saadut tulokset ovat suurelta osin samansuuntaisia kuin aikaisemmat, mutta tällä kertaa uutta informaatiota saaneiden osuus on suurempi kuin syksyn 2008 ryhmässä. Tämä riippuu tietenkin kurssilaisten omasta aikaisemmasta kokemuksesta, sillä opiskelijat ovat taustaltaan hyvinkin erilaisia, ja kurssi on vapaavalintainen. Tulokseen on saattanut vaikuttaa myös se, että haastattelujen määrä on miltei kaksinkertainen

verrattuna syksyyn 2008 ja informaatiota näin ollen paljon enemmän. Jatkokurssilla kiinnostus haastattelutehtävän suorittamiseen kasvoi selvästi kurssin aikana, ja opettaja joutui jopa hankkimaan uusia haastateltavia. Hän sai näin vahvistusta tehtävän mielekkyydestä, kun opiskelijat oma-aloitteisesti halusivat testata kieli- ja viestintätaitojaan todellisessa työelämässä. Tämä osoittaa, että jotkut opiskelijat ovat jo sisäistäneet työelämän odotukset.

Kevään 2010 peruskurssilla opiskelijat kuuntelivat haastatteluja vapaaehtoisesti omalla ajallaan. Kurssin loppuun suorittaneista 20 opiskelijasta vain viisi vastasi kyselyyn. Vastaukset vahvistavat aikaisempia tuloksia, mutta tässäkin opiskelijat kokivat saaneensa enemmän uutta informaatiota kuin aikaisemmat ryhmät.

Podcastien käyttö sovellettuna ruotsin kielen opetukseen on tässä kokeilussa saatujen tulosten pohjalta mielestämme onnistunut hyvin, sillä niin haastattelijat kuin haastateltavat ja haastattelujen kuulijat ovat olleet tyytyväisiä niiden tuomaan lisäarvoon oppimisprosessissa. Myös opettajana voi olla tyytyväinen tuloksiin, sillä opiskelijoiden kiinnostus niin haastattelujen tekemiseen kuin sisällön kuunteluun on kasvanut, ja se näkyy rohkeutena puhua ruotsia myös luokan ulkopuolella. Podcastien havainnollistama ruotsin kielen käyttö työelämässä on toiminut lisäylykkeenä haastattelujen tekemiseen ja samalla vuorovaikutustaitojen testaamiseen. Projektin tuotoksena olevat haastattelut ovat vapaasti kaikkien kiinnostuneiden käytettävissä niin opetuksen yhteydessä kuin omien intressien pohjalta, millä on myös valtakunnallisesti merkitystä.

Opettajille suurin hyöty lienee haastattelujen sisällöstä, sillä haastatteluissa on kartoitettu ruotsin kielen käyttöä eri tehtävissä niin kirjallisesti kuin suullisestikin. Haastattelujen perusteella voidaankin todeta, että useimmissa työtehtävissä suullinen viestintä on ruotsiksi tavallisempaa kuin kirjallinen, sillä vaativimmat kirjoitustehtävät työelämässä teetetään kääntämisen asiantuntijoilla. Ruotsia puhutaan ruotsinkielisten asiakkaiden ja ruotsinruotsalaisten kanssa niin itse työssä kuin sosiaalisissa kontakteissa. Monet haastatellut myös lukevat paljon ammattikirjallisuutta ruotsiksi. Nämä tulokset puoltavat suullisen kielitaidon harjoittamisen tarvetta yliopistoissa.

YHTEENVETO

Röster från arbetslivet – Työelämän äänet on nyt vakiintunut osaksi opetustamme. Luokkahuoneen rajojen ylittäminen lähettämällä opiskelijat työelämään sekä tuomalla työelämä opiskelijoiden kuultavaksi ja koettavaksi on osoittautunut myönteiseksi ja hyödylliseksi kokemukseksi ja toimintatavaksi. Opiskelijoiden tuottamana autenttinen materiaali on varmasti kuulijoiden mielestä neutraalimpaa kuin se olisi ruotsin opettajan tai oppimateriaalin kustantajan tuottamana. Tämän uskomme olevan keskeistä materiaalin uskottavuuden kannalta. Toisaalta opiskelutoverin tuottama materiaali itsessään voi tuoda lisäarvoa. Haastattelujen perusteella olemme saaneet käsityksen työelämän ruotsin kielen tarpeesta, mikä jo sinänsä on arvokasta tietoa yliopisto-opiskelijalle tulevia työtehtäviä ajatellen.

Rajojen ylittäminen opetuksessa on nykypäivänä mahdollista toteuttaa monella tavoin. Teknisesti mahdollisuudet vain lisääntyvät ja paranevat, kuten opiskelijoiden tuottamat *Röster från arbetslivet* -podcastit ovat osoittaneet. Saamiemme tulosten perusteella väitämme, että opiskelijat myös arvostavat tätä mahdollisuutta. Juuri opiskelijoiden innostus ja osaamisen taso on ollut yksi kannustin projektin viemisessä eteenpäin. Monet ovat myös arvostaneet konkreettista mahdollisuutta käydä yrityksessä tai muussa työpaikassa tekemässä haastattelu ja saada tutustua haastateltavaan. Haastateltavan positiivinen palaute opiskelijalle antaa myös paljon rohkeutta ja varmuutta, jota opiskelija tarvitsee tulevilla kielenkäyttötilanteissa.

Perinteisen luokkahuoneen rajojen ylittäminen joko podcastien tai muiden tekniikoiden avulla antaa monia mahdollisuuksia ja sopii kaikkien kielten opetukseen. Omassa opetuksessamme olemme jo kehittämässä uusia tapoja hyödyntää podcasteja. Opiskelijälähtöisyyttä voimme vielä lisätä haastattelutehtävän annossa, ja haastattelija voi haastattelun lisäksi kirjoittaa raportin itse haastattelutilanteesta. Lisäksi näiden raporttien tuloksia voi hyödyntää esim. akateemisessa kirjoittamisessa tai suullisesti keskustelun alustuksena. Jaettu asiantuntijuus toteutuu näin useammalla tasolla. Työelämän ja opiskelijoiden toivomaa kieli- ja viestintätaitojen harjoittelua voi tällä tavoin lisätä rajattomasti opetuksessa.

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'ME AND LEARNING ENGLISH' – THE SURVIVAL JOURNEY OF A STUDENT WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Kaija Ervola

This chapter describes the 'survival journey' of a 39-year-old art student working her way through the compulsory English studies despite severe dyslexia and other learning difficulties. After attending unsuccessfully several 'regular' English courses, an experience that had totally traumatized her and made her drop out of her studies for ten years, the student finally found her own way of learning English as an autonomous language learner and was able to finish her foreign language studies and her BA degree in Art Education. She is an example of how learner autonomy, motivation, encouragement, counselling and perseverance can make the impossible become possible, a dream come true.

INTRODUCTION

Dyslexia is a type of developmental learning disability that impairs a person's ability to read despite adequate intelligence (Kormos & Kontra 2008). It is one of the most frequent of learning disabilities, according to Finnish research, affecting about 6-7% of the Finnish population (Lyytinen et al., 2004). Common characteristics of dyslexia are difficulties with the working memory, spelling and phonological awareness (Taskinen 2008). However, a dyslexic can be a very talented and creative person in his or her special field and some studies suggest that there may be a higher incidence of dyslexia among artistically talented individuals (Wolff & Lundberg 2001).

The number of students with dyslexia as well as other learning disabilities is increasing in Finnish universities. However, there are few studies about the incidence of dyslexia at tertiary level, because dyslexia is more common in students of lower levels of education (Taskinen 2008). Moreover, the diagnosis of dyslexia is difficult in adult students, because of their abilities to compensate for weaknesses and deficiencies caused by dyslexia with other skills, and this delays the identification of their real problems (Kormos & Kontra 2008, Holopainen &

Savolainen 2006). Research suggests that about one third of all dyslexic students have not been diagnosed before their university studies (Schenker 2005, Nilsson-Lindström 2003, Heiman & Kariv 2004).

The degree of disability caused by dyslexia is now greater than some decades ago, because in the modern technological society good reading and writing skills are a must, both in education and for equal opportunities in working life (Taskinen 2008). Supporting dyslexic students is a challenge for teachers, especially language teachers. They lack the knowledge, skills and resources to face their students' problems (Taskinen 2008). Foreign language requirements are an obstacle for dyslexic students to achieving their university degree and, indeed, language studies are often the reason for interrupting or even dropping out of studies (Richardson & Wydell 2003).

Helsinki University Language Centre supports students with dyslexia and other learning difficulties by providing special courses and tutoring services for them. Amongst the English courses offered to fulfil the compulsory degree requirements, ALMS (Autonomous Learning Modules) is an alternative to teacher-fronted courses and is an important option for students with learning difficulties. ALMS is based on autonomous learning principles and personal study plans that are negotiated with a counsellor. Even though some students choose to study alone, they are all obliged to come to two initial Learner Awareness Sessions and have three individual counselling meetings with their own counsellor during the course.

My article describes the 'survival journey' of a 39-year-old art student working her way through the compulsory English studies despite severe dyslexia and other learning difficulties. Although Virve did not officially take part in an ALMS module, I acted as her counsellor much in the same way as I would with my ALMS students, offering her help and support, giving feedback and evaluating her work in order to give her the credits needed. Virve's story here is based on her learning diary and our counselling and email discussions.

BACKGROUND

Virve had started her studies in Art Education at the University of Art and Design Helsinki in 1989.

Foreign languages had always been a problem for her and she had a very negative attitude towards language studies. After attending unsuccessfully several ‘regular’ English courses, an experience that had totally traumatised her, she lost motivation and dropped out of her studies for ten years. Dyslexia and other learning difficulties were diagnosed as late as 2007. Virve’s particular problems were with her short-term working memory, phonological awareness and word recognition, all of which especially affect the learning of foreign languages. The result of the diagnosis proved that she would not benefit from ‘regular’ or conventional language courses. The final incentive for restarting her studies, especially the compulsory English studies, was the degree reform in Finnish universities in 2008, which meant that a student had to have the BA degree finished by August 2008 in order to take the MA degree. Virve decided to complete her BA degree, and start by dealing with the language studies, but in her own way. She hesitated for quite a long time before contacting the Language Centre and had, in fact, started her journey and work on her English before we met. In our first meeting (in January 2008) we agreed that she could continue working according to the plan that she had made. We also agreed on keeping in contact through email and she reported to me on her work regularly.

“MY JOURNEY TO ENGLISH AND TO MYSELF, MY ATTITUDES AND FEELINGS”: VIRVE’S STORY BEGINS

The first step in Virve’s “survival journey” to English was to write her personal language learning history. In autumn 2007 she wrote the following text.¹

¹ Virve has given full approval for the use and publication of her story including all her texts. In this paper Virve’s texts always appear in the language in which they were written. The English translations are to be found at the end. Text 1 was a handwritten mind-map with illustrations. The text has been abridged by me. Virve uses three dots to indicate her process of reflection the way her memories come back to her.

'MINÄ KIELENOPPIJANA' (TEXT 1)

Väsynyt...tahdon antaa periksi...itkuinen olo...ahdistaa kohdata menneet asiat...epävarmuus tunnilla...kohta on minun vuoro... voisinpä olla näkymätön...yritän, mutta se oli taas väärin... kielenopettajat rakastavat puuttumista pienimpäänkin yksityiskohtaan...missä on kannustavat sanat...voisiko vähempi kuin täydellinen riittää...?

Vieraat kielet ovat pilanneet elämäni...voisiko joku luovuttaa minulle lisää muistia...tarvitsen muistinlaajennuskortin 3 opintoviikon edestä päähäni asennettavaksi...painajaistahan tämä on... ei, vaan todellista...on pakko oppia...tahdon pois tästä piinasta...miksi minut on jätetty yksin tämän asian kanssa?

Epäonnistumiset

Epäonnistumisten määrä on valtavan suuri...se täyttää 99% kielten oppimiskokemuksista... tyhmä... laiska...oppimaton...ei edes yritä oppia...lukee liian vähän...passiivinen...en osaa tarvittavaa määrää sanoja, kielioppia – mitä se on? - en ymmärrä missä mennään tai mistä puhutaan tai mitä pitäisi oppia...tipahdan oppitunnilla kärryiltä...

Onnistumiset

tämä on vaikeaa...kirjoittaa onnistumisen kokemuksista...varovasti uskallan sanoa ääneen: ymmärsin lähes kokonaan mitä Ridge sanoi Brookille...laimea ilo pyyhkäisee olemukseni yli...sitten se onkin jo pois – ilo ymmärtämisestä...

Työkalut

Oppimisen pitäisi olla mielekästä ja motivoitunutta...toivoisin suhteeni vieraisiin kieliin muuttuvan ahdistuksen ja kiusaantumisen sijasta iloisuuteen, jossa huumorilla ja onnistumisilla rakennetaan uusi pohja...haluaisin oppia englantia vailla stressiä perheen rohkaisemana ...menetelmien ja työkalujen pitää tuntua minulle sopivilta...

Haaveet, toiveet

Haaveilen siitä, että puhun ilman häpeätunnetta englanniksi... vapautuneena ja helpottuneena...olla oma itseni ja tulla ymmärretyksi...tuottamani teksti ei vilisisi kielioppivirheitä...parantaa itsetuntoani...menneisyyden haavat voisivat jo parantua...

In research carried out by teachers in the ALMS programme it has emerged that writing reflective histories can become a way for students to find out about themselves and their learning. We agree with Kramersch (2005) that writing makes it possible to remember *how* (past experiences and emotions) and imagine *what if* (future scenarios for action) and thus develop as a learner. Virve did not write her language learning history specifically for a course or a teacher, but for herself. It was not an impersonal “gift” for the teacher (Saarnivaara et al., 2004 in Karlsson 2008, 205) but rather a telling of her personal life and educational story and even an emotional ventilation, giving form to a particular lived experience (Karlsson 2008).

After deciding to continue her studies, the next step for Virve was to participate in a ‘Learning to learn’ project in a rehabilitation centre (Kuntoutussäätiö, Helsinki). The project (2006-2010) gave support and training to young adults with learning difficulties and dyslexia. Virve had about ten intensive meetings with a psychologist and a special education teacher and was also in regular email contact with this ‘support team’, reporting to them on her work and progress in her English studies. The meetings clearly improved her self-confidence, encouraged her and gave her tools (e.g., memory techniques) to make learning easier in her particular case.

Writing a learning diary was essential to her ‘recovery’ from the very beginning. She began by writing in Finnish, but gradually changed the language into English and finally wrote everything in English. Learning diaries are a type of personal writing that ALMS research has shown to be of great importance to students’ learner identities and the development of their self-expression (see Karlsson and Kjisik 2011). Diaries also serve to document the learning process. Virve’s diary begins with a decision to stick to a set of principles, her very own internal support structures that will help her persist in her journey:

EXTRACT FROM VIRVE’S DIARY (TEXT 2)

Lauantai 1.9.2007

Seuraavia asioita ajattelin pakata reppuuni, jotta jaksaisin kohdata ja voittaa matkalla ilmestyviä ongelmia, enkä jäisi kyvyttömänä maahan makaamaan. Realistista on kuitenkin ajatella, että eteen tulee myös hetkiä, jolloin haluaisin lopettaa ikuiselta tuntuvan vaeltamisen ja

päästä vain äkkiä takaisin entiseen, mutta juuri tätä varten olen kirjoittamassa itselleni omat teesit, joille en voi kääntää selkääni, vaan viimeistään parin taaksepäin otetun askeleen jälkeen, otan uudestaan ne vaaditut askeleet ja pääsen jatkamaan taas kohti tavoitettani.

Tämän haluan muistaa matkallani..

Ilo...

Mitä elämä olisikaan ilman iloa elämästä itsestään, että siitä mitä koemme elämämme aikana, joten minun on etsittävä myös englannin opiskelussa asioita ja tapoja, jotka saavat tuntemaan oloni iloiseksi ja joista pystyn kokemaan onnistumista. Huumorin ja naurun pitäisi näkyä ainakin joskus ja muulloin olotilan, jossa viihdyn...

Rentous...

Olla rentona ja vastaanottavaisena. Minun pitää muistaa, että en voi etukäteen ahdistua kaikista edessä olevista vaateista, koska silloin annan murskata mieleni ja rikki mennyt mieli vaatii niin paljon aikaa parantuakseen uudelleen ja pystyäkseen ottamaan asiaa uudestaan vastaan. Voisin hiukan höllätä ja antaa myös tiedostamattoman puolen minussa tehdä töitä hyväkseni.

Tekeminen on itseni näköistä...

Kirjoitan ja luon oppimistapoja. Niitä ei ole valmiina listalla, vaan käyttämäni keinot ovat tiedonhankintatapoja, jotka ovat itselleni luontevia ja jo itsessään viihdyttävät ja motivoivat minua. Tällöin myös rentous säilyisi asioita oppiessa varmemmin prosessin tärkeänä tekijänä. Haluan siis kokea nautintoa, iloa ja onnistumista häpeän- ja huonouden tunteen sijaan.

Luovuus ja itseni ilmaiseminen on minulle tapa elää, siis miksi se ei näkyisi myös tämän asian kohdalla. Ymmärtämättömyyttäni olen aiemmin sulkenut vieraiden kielten oppimisen luovuuden ulkopuolelle, kielten opiskelun olen nähnyt vain teknisenä suoritteena. Haluan kokeilla ja nähdä millaisiin ilmenemismuotoihin kielten opiskeleminen taipuu. Voisiko vieras kieli olla osana visuaalista ilmaisua, taustalla, osana prosessia ja pystyykö kuvallisen tekemisen terapeuttisuus häivyttämään alleen ne kokemukset, jotka mielessäni nyt elävät? Voisiko luovuus parantaa näin syvät haavat?

Kirjoittaminen...

Kirjoittamisesta on tullut viime vuosina yhä tärkeämpi kanava ilmaista itseäni ja se on ohittanut jopa kuvallisen ilmaisun ajoittain. Käsitteet, sanat ja merkitykset ovat kiinnostavia ja myös kuvallinen ajatteluni lähtee usein käsitteiden ja sanojen pohjalta rakentumaan. Ne aukaisevat ikään kuin mieleeni ikkunan, jossa pystyn siirtämään asioita uusiin yhteyksiin ja näin luomaan itseni näköistä tarinaa, joka ulkoistuu joko paperille kuvallisena luonnoksena tai kirjoitettuna tarinana, johon myöhemmin kehitellen visuaalisen ympäristön.

Omien ajatusten kirjoittaminen on myös hyvin minää hoitavaa, johon syntyy riippuvuussuhde ja toimimisen tapa, josta on tullut minulle tarve, jota en voi ohittaa.²

MOTIVATION THROUGH AUTONOMOUS LEARNING

As mentioned earlier, Virve had no actual experience of ALMS courses, but she created her own principles of autonomous learning when she made the decision to finally finish her university studies. Reflecting on her own previous language learning situations and experiences became her personal awareness-raising process. In her diary she wrote about the process of becoming an autonomous learner and stated that she would not let ANYBODY traumatise her any more and offer her learning strategies that were unsuitable for her and thus a waste of time and resources of all parties.

By this time she had realised one of the most important principles of learner autonomy as defined by Henri Holec: “The learner is an individual who should take responsibility for her learning based on an awareness of personal learning strategies, styles and experience” (1987). Learner autonomy means a form of independence where the learner is “solely in charge of his or her learning” (Holec 1997, 9). It also means planning and carrying out learning activities suitable for one’s needs and personal ways. However, autonomous learning does not mean working alone, because language needs to be used in real situations and in “co-operation with others, as a socially responsible person” (Dam 1995 in Karlsson 2008, 16).

² English translation at the end of the chapter.

Autonomous language learners also need support and guidance or counselling during their learning process. My role in Virve's language studies was to be her counsellor and helper, not her teacher in the traditional sense. I supported and encouraged her and made some suggestions, but did not control her learning process. She made a detailed learning schedule and timetable and recorded the time spent on the learning activities of her own choice covering listening, reading, writing and speaking skills. At the end of every entry, she also wrote about her feelings and moods, using a scale of her own. This is an interesting example of an affective strategy that she developed herself.

1. nothing at all works / have to stop (4)
2. working grudgingly / want to stop (5)
3. slight interest / tiring (6)
4. no special feelings / working along (7)
5. occasional feelings of success / interesting (8)
6. lots of successes / want to continue (9)
7. success beyond own expectations / need to continue (10)³

Virve was fortunate in having a husband who could support her at the times she felt frustrated and unsure of her progress, especially with her writing and speaking skills. Reflection on the learning process and evaluation of the results are among the key principles of learner autonomy and this is what Virve did throughout her English studies. In Felicity Kjisik's words, she had started to trust her own abilities to analyse problems, set objectives, make plans and finally, evaluate herself (Karlsson et al., 1997, 27).

THE TURNING POINT

At the end of November there is an interesting entry in Virve's diary. She starts her writing in Finnish but then changes the language and writes her comments on the

³ Translated from Finnish.

painting in English. The entry then continues in Finnish and she reflects on this use of English after so many years and explains how the text came into being.

EXTRACT FROM VIRVE'S DIARY (TEXT 3)

Tänään halusin löytää jonkin taideteoksen netistä, jonka voisin tulostaa. Ongelmaksi vain muodostui kuvien valtava määrä, enkä selailultani pystynyt päättämään, minkä noista sadoista töistä valitsisin. Tyypillistä minulle – kunpa töitä ei olisi niin paljon, päättäminen ei ehkä olisi silloin niin vaikeaa.

Tässä 1.kuvavalintani:

The Circle Theatre

Edward Hopper;1936; Oil on canvas, 27 x 36 inches; Private collection⁴

My comments...

This painting is beautiful. I especially like its colours.

The artist - Edward Hopper has painted a view of a city and placed only one person in the picture. It is a clear and soundless day, maybe it is still early morning.

The chosen colours are in harmony with each other. The black colour stands up from the picture and gives contrast to the whole work.

The painting is empty and full at the same time. Nothing is happening and only one person is standing in front of the theatre. On the street there is no traffic and all movement has stopped. The buildings are enough important parts themselves to fill this painting.

Omituista - kirjoitin ensimmäisen kerran vuosiin jotakin englanniksi. Pyrin kirjoittamaan suoraan englanniksi, vaikka aluksi kaikki sanat olivat täysin hukassa. Jäin monen perussanan kohdalla miettimään kirjoitusasua. Huomasin, että mitä enemmän jäin miettimään sanan oikeinkirjoitusta, sitä epävarmemmaksi tulin ja usein tuntumalta kirjoitettuna useimmat sanat menivät paremmin oikein. Tämän lyhyen tekstin tekemiseen sain uppoamaan muutaman tunnin... kokeilin useita eri tapoja miten saisin kirjoitettua ajatukseni englanniksi ja välillä

⁴ To view the picture go to <http://www.artchive.com/artchive/H/hopper/circle.jpg.html>

jäin myös miettimään oikeaa aikamuotoa, verbin taiputusta tai mikä prepositio olisi järkevä.

Aivan itse kaiken sain kuitenkin tehtyä ja vasta lopuksi pyysin Mattia oikolukemaan tekstini. Olin todella yllättynyt, kun Matti piti tekstiäni ihan ymmärrettävänä ja muutaman korjauksen jälkeen siitä tuli myös oikeasti luettava. Tästä tuli iloisen yllättynyt olo.

Valitusta kuvasta omien ajatusten kirjoittamista ... (3t) ... "aluksi olin todella jäässä, mutta usean yrittämisen jälkeen sain tuotettua tekstiä / tekeminen tuntui raskaalta" ... (6) ... "lopuksi olin tyytyväinen, että olin saanut jotakin tekstiä tuotettua / olin ihmeissäni ja iloinen / tätä haluan jatkaa"...(9)

She still goes back to writing in Finnish, especially when she reflects on her learning. Writing in Finnish about her learning, though, serves the purpose of getting on with her studies. She uses Finnish on her feelings and moods (see page 158) in an interesting way.

EXTRACT FROM VIRVE'S DIARY (TEXT 4)

Sunnuntai 10.2.2008

...

Voihan olla, että juuri aikaisemmat oppimiskokemukset englannin suullisessa ilmaisussa on ollut se rankin paikka...puhuessa persoonani, ääneni ja kehoni ovat kokonaisvaltaisemmin mukana ja myös epäonnistumiset näkyvät heti. Virheidensä korjaamiseen ei juuri ole aikaa... puhuminen on kuin virrassa olemista, se tapahtuu niin hetkessä... vaatii herkeämätöntä valppautta tai ajaa itsensä karille.

Tunnen, että tämän yli pääsemiseksi pitää odottaa vielä hetki... se tarvittava askel on jo nurkan takana. Työstän usein tätä ajatuksissani ja olen jopa nähnyt unia siitä, kun olen rohkaistunut puhumaan... toivottavasti se on merkki jostakin hyvästä.

Itse puhumiseen on vaikea hypätä heti ja ajattelinkin tästä syystä ensin kokeilla valmiin tekstin ääneen puhumista ja sen nauhoittamista. Kun kuuntelen äänitystä uudestaan kuulen vasta silloin sen miten tosiasiaassa puhuin.

Haaveeni on saada englannin iso kivi käännettyä kokonaan ympäri ja huomata jonain päivänä, että istun kuopan sijasta käännetyn kiven päällä. Matka tähän on vielä todella pitkä, mutta juuri nyt tuntuu, että se on asia, joka on myös minulle mahdollinen. Voin pikku hiljaa sanoa ääneen ja uskoa, että myös minä voin oppia englantia...⁵

The language of the diary has been mainly Finnish up to this point. I suggested that she could try and write a bit more in English, which she then did. She also makes changes to the way she writes the diary. She starts using colours; for example, green is for new words and purple for ‘ways of saying’ or useful expressions. In the following texts (Texts 5 and 6) the colours have been replaced by words in **bold** (new words in green) and underlining (‘ways of saying’ in purple).

EXTRACTS FROM VIRVE'S DIARY (TEXT 5)

Monday 11.2.2008

*This week I will try to write more in English about everything... titles and my thoughts from learning. That way my diary does not become too long... I think that could be the **ergonomic** way. That will be **a large jump** for me but I am hopeful.*

*Because I will take this large jump I will also want to change my diary's **outlook**. The colours of the text could be different. I want that this change will be a **visible** part of my English diary.*

Picked up words:

- **ergonomic / ergonominen /
tarkoituksenmukainen**
- **hopeful / toiveikas**
- **an outlook / ulkoasu**
- **visible / näkyvä**
- **to pick up / poimia ylös**

Ways of saying:

- ways of saying - sanomisen tapoja
- full of work - täynnä työtä
- this week - tällä viikolla

⁵ The text has been abridged by me.

- about everything - kaikesta
- a large jump - iso hyppy

Oppimispäiväkirjan kirjoittamisen aloittaminen lähes kokonaan englanniksi ... ulkoasun miettimistä uudistuneeseen päiväkirjaan ... välipäivän pitämistä (11/2t) ... Työskentelystä / mieliala ... “Kolmen intensiivisen opiskelun jälkeen haluan höllätä hetkeksi ja kerätä voimia sekä uudistaa ulkoisesti omaa oppimispäiväkirjaani ... Päätös, että jatkossa kirjoitan lähes kokonaan englanniksi tätä päiväkirjaa on muhinut päässäni jo jonkin aikaa ja sen aloittaminen tänään tuntui hyvältä, vaikka jatko hiukan jännittääkin”. (8)⁶

Tuesday 12.2.2008 (Text 6)

*The text which I have pasted below is the first email that I have ever written **completely** in English.*

*I noticed that I can do that and it gave a **marvellous** feeling to me. I was delighted that I succeeded in it.*

Picked up words:

- *to paste / liittää / liimata*
- *below / alla*
- *completely / täydellisesti / täysin*
- *marvellous / mahtava / ihmeellinen*
- *a marvel / ihme*

Ways of saying :

- *to be delighted - ilahtua*
- *to succeed in - onnistua jossakin*

Hello Kaija!

*Last time when you wrote to me you **proposed** that I could write in English to you...that was a good idea... now I will try that.*

*This email is late because my older son become ill last weekend and that is why a part of my daytime has been **reserved** to other things.*

*From **the third** week...*

I have still enjoyed to study English... it is still amazing and I wonder that every day.

Some of the reasons I have spent a lot of time with English

⁶ She continues to use Finnish for reflection.

learning last week.

*I found many interesting websites and **particularly I have listened to** radio-programs from Australia and America. The listening on the background was one of the learning **experiments**.*

I also wanted to find fresh material to English studying.

*I have made a new **article appendix** for my learning diary... I will send that together with this email.*

*I think that it was good for me to **search** for something new.*

*The **theme** of photography is still continued and it will again continue this week.*

From this week...

*I planned that I will go to Kiasma...there is a photograph exhibition which I am **interested in** just now.*

I thought that I will write my own comments from the photographs.

Is this all right?

Words are important and these I will study all the time.

*Speaking is the most difficult thing and I will continue to **record** something... **hopefully** my own speech.*

I hope that you will understand what I wrote...

*For the next week (week number 8) I will not give so many hours because my children have **a skiing-vacation** then. I try to do my best...⁷*

Friendly regards.

Virve

Sähköpostin kirjoittaminen englanniksi ... sanojen poimimista s-postista ... päiväkirjan kirjoittamista (21/2t) ... Työskentelystä / mieliala "S-postin kirjoittaminen englanniksi tuntui aluksi varsin hankalalta, mutta olin lopulta tyytyväinen siihen mitä olin saanut aikaiseksi ... helpottunut olo, kun sain s-postin lähetettyä". (9)⁸

As mentioned earlier, studying foreign languages is often one of the greatest problems for students with learning difficulties and dyslexia. Every student in Finnish universities is required to take at least one foreign language for their BA degree. This may seem an impossible and insurmountable challenge for dyslexic students. They feel ashamed and want to keep their problems to themselves. They

⁷ Unedited text written by Virve.

⁸ She continues to use Finnish for reflection.

become frustrated and finally give up trying when asking for help and finding a way out of their difficulties seem impossible.

VIRVE'S SURVIVAL JOURNEY COMES TO AN END

Virve's story has a happy ending. Her objective was to make her dream come true, to learn to read, write, speak and understand English at last. She wrote in her diary: "I'm going to break this oppressive barrier in my life and want to stick to my decision".⁹ She shows how suitable learning strategies, motivation, support, encouragement and perseverance with a lot of work made it possible for her to overcome her difficulties in learning English, finish the requirements in foreign language studies and obtain her BA degree. Her set of principles and her persistence in working and studying English in her own preferred ways helped her to reach her goals. This is how she finishes her diary.

EXTRACT FROM VIRVE'S DIARY (TEXT 7)

Monday 2.6.2008 – Tuesday 3.6.2008

At the end...

Now I am ending the official part of my learning diary and I aim to compare myself against my first page's thoughts as a learner of English.

What I am thinking at the moment...

I think that this learning process has been much more than I ever dared to think or hope. This process has changed my awareness of my possibilities to learn English for ever.

Since the first of September in 2007 I started to study English by the new way for me.

I started to keep a diary for myself and this effected in a surprising way to my ability to learn English.

⁹ Translated by me.

Now I think that the most important thing was writing first in Finnish and later also in English during this learning process.

I also believe that my attitudes towards English learning have shaped into a positive form with the help of my diary.

At the beginning of my diary I wrote down my theses¹⁰ for myself which I wanted to take with me for my journey as a learner of English.

My theses were joy, relaxed feeling, my own ways of doing and writing.

1) Joy...

Joy has been with me on my journey almost all the time. I have really enjoyed and rejoiced on this journey and now I feel that I am the happiest person in the world when I dared to start to study English after a long time.

I believe that just now I have a good enough of self-trusting and a feeling to continue studying English by myself and I also will do that. I want to learn more and more to use English for better writing, speaking and hearing.

I am really happy that I have learned to enjoy studying English because it is a central thing to feel joy about learning.

2) Relaxed feeling...

I have had with a relaxed feeling when I have studied English even if this journey has been long and it has taken almost all of my tension during the last nine months.

I have also learned to accept mistakes as a learner much better than earlier. This experience to accept mistakes as a part of learning process has given a lot for me. I have learned to regard to English in a more realistic and healthy way than earlier and it has given a chance to succeed with myself also later in the future.

3) My own way of doing...

It has been an important thing to create own ways of learning. I believe that this has helped to keep on my motivation for learning English. It has been a great enjoyment to get to do things my own way. It has been an amazing thing to see how my own ways of learning

¹⁰ A list of maxims or guiding principles.

English have affected like a right medicine which has cured horrible diseases.

I believe that my own way of doing has cured my relationship to English.

I don't lie down and stay still on a ground anymore but I can move my arms and legs and work like anybody else. I have a strong feeling that I will cope with my own tools in the future. It was a marvellous thing to find my own way of doing for learning English.

4) Writing...

I have found writing as one of my self-expression form these last years.

That is why I felt writing as a good and natural way to study English.

I have written a lot in Finnish about my earlier experiences with learning English but later I started to write also in English in my diary. The first time when I tried to write in English it was like an impossible barrier to climb over. Little by little writing became easy and I could enjoy writing in English as well as in Finnish earlier.

One day I decided to write all texts in English in my diary and it was a good thing because by this way I noticed that I can learn much faster then earlier.

At this moment I think that I will continue in some way to write in English.

It is very possible that I will start to write a new diary for myself because I also want to keep on my learned skills and in particular to develop my skills in English. I know that it also will be a long journey if I want to realise this wish but I think that English will be a part of my life always in the future.

Time spent...

I haven't counted how many hours I have spent by my diary.

Actually I only know that I have loaded a huge amount of hours, weeks and even months to this learning process.

I still agree that absolutely it has been worthy.

My weak moments...

When I have had my weak moments I have read my theses again. My theses have reminded me that I must continue on the way which I have chosen and to respect my own feelings both to listen to myself at the same time.

I have wanted to believe that everything goes well if I only can trust myself.

I have noticed that learning is also a question of will. If a human being wants something badly it will happen with hard work, trust, belief and will.

About all of this...

Now I feel that I have climbed towards a mountain which has done a transformation in front of me eyes. At first I saw a mountain which top I didn't see at all. At the moment I see myself sitting on the top of the mountain and I feel that I lost a lot power on my journey but at the same time I feel very strong and happy with myself. On this journey I have seen how a huge mountain can to transform into a hill which is less dangerous and rather an exciting challenge.

I have changed an impossible thing to a possible thing in my mind.

*I have enormous pride about all of this what I have done. During these nine months I have experienced the greater change in myself then I have ever experienced before.*¹¹

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APPENDIX

'ME AS A LANGUAGE LEARNER' (TEXT 1)

'Tired...want to give up...feel like crying... I feel distressed facing the past... insecurity in class...it's my turn to answer...wish I were invisible...I try but it always goes wrong...teachers enjoy pointing out at the mistakes... where are the encouraging words...could less than perfect be enough...?

Foreign languages have spoilt my life... could somebody give me some extra memory... could I have a memory card for 3 credits installed in my head... this is a nightmare...no, it's real...I must learn and get out of this agony...why am I left all alone with this thing?

Failures

'The number of failures is tremendous... it's 99% of my learning experiences... stupid...lazy...unable to learn... doesn't even try to learn...doesn't study enough ... inactive in class...I don't know enough words, grammar – what is it? – can't follow

the instructions or understand what is being taught or what should be learnt... completely lost the thread...

Successes

'This is difficult...just barely dare to say aloud: I almost understood what Ridge said to Brooke...feel faint joy...then it's gone – the joy of understanding...

Tools

'Learning should be meaningful, motivating...I wish I could feel joy instead of anguish and embarrassment when learning...I want to learn English without stress... with methods and tools suitable for me...with humour and experiences of success...encouragement from family...

Dreams, hopes

'I dream of speaking English without being ashamed...relaxed...be myself and be understood...write texts that wouldn't be full of mistakes...improve my self-esteem and confidence...heal the wounds of the past.'

Saturday 1.9.2007 (Text 2)

I thought of packing the following things in my back-pack so I have the strength to face and beat the problems that appear on my journey, instead of lying incapacitated on the ground. Nevertheless I have to think realistically that there will also be moments when I would like to stop what seems like endless wandering around and quickly get back to where I was, but this is just why I'm writing myself my own rules, which I can't turn my back on but instead, after no more than a couple of steps backwards, I take again those necessary steps and feel able to continue towards my goal.

This is what I want to remember on my journey

Joy...

What would life be like without joy about life itself, what we experience during our lives, so I also have to find things and ways in my English studies that get me to feel

joy in myself and let me experience success. Humour and laughter should be at least sometimes visible and at other times a state of mind which I can enjoy...

Relaxation...

To be relaxed and receptive. I have to remember that I can't anguish in advance about all the demands ahead, because then I would let my mind be crushed and a broken mind takes so much time to recover again and be able to face things again. I could loosen up a little and let the subconscious side in me work on my behalf.

Whatever I do feels like me...

I write and create ways to learn. These do not exist as a ready list, rather the means I use are ways of acquiring information that feel natural and entertain and motivate me in themselves. In this way also relaxation would be more likely to remain an important factor in learning things. I mean I want to experience pleasure, joy and success instead of feelings of shame and inferiority.

Creativity and self-expression are a way of life for me, so why shouldn't it also be seen here. Through a lack of understanding I have earlier kept the learning of foreign languages apart from creativity, seeing language study as merely a technical achievement. I want to experiment and see what forms of expression the learning of languages could be bent into. Could a foreign language be a part of visual expression, in the background, part of a process and could the therapeutic effect of making images obliterate those experiences that now live in my mind. Could creativity cure such deep wounds?

Writing...

In recent years writing has become an increasingly important channel for expressing myself and it has even occasionally surpassed visual expression. Concepts, words and meanings are interesting and also my visual thinking often gets started on the basis of concepts and words. It is as if they open up a window in my mind where I can move things into new connections and thus create a story that looks like me, which then is externalised onto paper as a visual sketch or written story, for which I later develop a visual environment.

Writing my own thoughts is also good for the ego, which forms an interdependence and way of working that for me has become a need that I can't ignore.

...This is an interesting example of an affective strategy that she developed herself.
(see page 158)

1. mistään ei tule mitään / pakko lopettaa (4)
2. pitkin hampain tekemistä / halu lopettaa (5)
3. vähäinen mielenkiinto / väsyttävää (6)
4. ei erityisiä tunteuksia / tekeminen sujuu (7)
5. hetkittäin jopa onnistumisen tunteuksia / kiinnostavaa (8)
6. paljon onnistumisia / halu jatkaa (9)
7. onnistuminen yli omien odotusten / tarve jatkaa (10)

EXTRACT FROM VIRVE'S DIARY (TEXT 3)

Today I wanted to find a work of art on the Net that I could print. The problem turned out to be the huge amount of pictures and while browsing the Net I couldn't decide which of the hundreds of works would I choose. Typical for me – if there hadn't been so many works, the decision may have been easier.

Here is the picture I chose:

Strange – for the first time in years I wrote something in English. I tried to write straight away in English, although at first all the words were totally lost. With many basic words I got stuck thinking about the spelling. I noticed that the more I stopped to think about the spelling, the more uncertain I became and often when I wrote spontaneously the words went more easily right. Making this short text cost me several hours ... I tried many different ways for writing my thoughts in English and occasionally I was left thinking about the right tense, the verb form or what the logical preposition was.

I anyway got everything done all on my own and only at the end did I ask Matti to check my text. I was really surprised when Matti thought that my text was quite

comprehensible and after a few corrections it became truly readable. This gave me a surprising feeling of joy.

Writing my own thoughts about a chosen picture ... (3h) ... “at first I was really frozen but after a few goes I produced a text / doing it was really hard” ... (6) ... “in the end I was satisfied that I had produced some text / I was amazed and happy / this I want to continue” ... (9)

EXTRACT FROM VIRVE'S DIARY (TEXT 4)

Sunday 10.2.2008

...

Could be that it is just those earlier learning experiences in spoken English that have been the worst place...when speaking, my person, my voice and my body are completely present and also the failures show immediately. There's no time to correct mistakes... speaking is like being in a stream, it all happens in an instant... demands constant vigilance or all is lost. I have the feeling that getting over this still requires a moment... the required step is just round the corner. I often go over this in my thoughts and I have even dreamt that I have found the courage to speak... hopefully this is a sign of something good.

Speaking itself is difficult to jump into right away and that's why I've been thinking of first trying to read out loud a ready text and to record it. It is only when I listen to the recording again that I hear how I actually spoke.

It is my dream to get the big stone of English turned over completely and notice one day that instead of sitting in a hole I sit on top of the turned stone. It is still a long way to this point but I now feel that it is something that is also possible for me. Gradually I can quietly say out loud that I too can learn English...

...

EXTRACTS (TEXT 5)

(footnote 6)

Starting to write the learning diary almost entirely in English ... thinking about the appearance of the newborn diary ... taking a day's break (11/2h) ... Work / mood ...

“After three intensive periods of study I want to loosen up for a moment and gather strength and renew externally my own learning diary ... The decision to from now on write this diary almost entirely in English has been brewing in my head for some time now and starting it today felt good, although the future scares me a little.

(footnote 8)

Writing email in English ... picking out words from emails ... writing learning diary (21/2h) ... Work / mood Writing email in English felt quite awkward at first, but I am finally satisfied with what I have achieved ... feeling of relief when I got the email sent off”.

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