Strategies for Unknown Vocabulary

An Investigation of a Swedish EFL Classroom
Abstract

When learning a second language different individuals might prefer to use different vocabulary strategies. When applying this to a school environment, one can find that the classrooms are filled with individuals that might prefer to use different vocabulary strategies to understand the same word.

Previous research about vocabulary strategies has been done by Green and Oxford (1995) and Fan (2003). These studies deal with vocabulary strategies that can be used for the successful learning of vocabulary based on L2 proficiency and biological gender. However, this essay investigates the step before the learning. The aims of this essay are to investigate which vocabulary strategy the students of a Swedish Upper Secondary school prefer to use and how often they use a specific strategy in order to understand a word. An additional aim is to investigate if there is a gender difference in the choice of vocabulary strategy and how often it is used.

This investigation was made with questionnaires and the results show that male and female students are in agreement regarding which vocabulary strategy they do not like or use. Moreover, the results show that both female and male students prefer to use an L2-L1 dictionary when encountering new pieces of vocabulary. However, the results show that almost all of female students preferred to use an L2-L1 dictionary. This majority can not be detected among the male students. This result indicates that the students might prefer if the L1 got a larger part in the EFL classroom.

Keywords
Vocabulary strategies, gender, EFL classroom

Thanks
To teachers and students who helped me with the investigation
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1 Introduction

Learning a new language can be hard. In order to learn the new language, one must first develop a knowledge for the vocabulary in the language. When encountering a new and unfamiliar word, one needs a vocabulary strategy in order to comprehend the new piece of vocabulary.

The scenario of meeting a new word and using vocabulary strategies is familiar to the students in the Swedish Upper Secondary EFL classroom. The Swedish National Agency for Education acknowledges the fact that students often meet new pieces of vocabulary. Moreover, in the syllabus for English in Upper Secondary School, the The Swedish National Agency of Education stresses that the schools must teach the students different strategies: “In addition, students should be given the opportunity to develop their ability to use different strategies to support communication and to solve problems when language skills are inadequate.” (skolverket.se.2012). However, The Swedish National Agency of Education does not state learning of vocabulary strategies as an aim of its own. Therefore, one can make the assumption that students’ encountering of new vocabulary should be integrated into each part of the core content of each course. This assumption can be substantiated by Gu and Johnson (1996)”Most important, vocabulary is no longer thought of as acquired as separate items; it is an integral part of discourse and is developed along with reading strategies such as contextual guessing”(1996:646).

A conclusion can be made that: firstly, the students encounter new vocabulary. Secondly, the students may need different vocabulary strategies in order to comprehend a text. Thirdly, it is the school that must provide the students with the right tools, by teaching the students how, and what to do if the student’s vocabulary proficiency is inadequate. This leads to the fourth part: what strategies should teachers present to the students? The Swedish National Agency of Education does not provide any preferred strategy other than “[t]eaching should as far as possible be conducted in English” (skolverket.se.2012). Thus, since no strategy is mentioned, one can make the assumption that the choice of strategy for comprehension of new vocabulary is up to the teacher.
One important aspect to always keep in mind is that a group of students is never a homogeneous group. This makes the teacher’s choice of vocabulary strategies both challenging and significant. One aspect that the teachers must take into consideration when selecting a strategy is the different levels of L2 proficiency among the students in the class. A student with a high L2 proficiency might prefer to use one strategy, while a student with a lower proficiency might prefer yet another strategy. Moreover, the teacher might need to consider not only the student’s level of L2 proficiency but also the gender of the students. Research done by Green and Oxford show that male and female students use strategies differently. Out of 50 tested vocabulary strategies in the research program SILL (which is further discussed in the Literature Review), Green and Oxford found that “fourteen strategies were used significantly more often by women, and 1 was used significantly more often by men” (1995:282). Therefore, gender might make a difference in the selection of different strategies.

Many studies have been conducted regarding different vocabulary strategies and vocabulary learning, e.g. Fan (2003) and Green and Oxford (1995). However, in order to learn a piece of vocabulary, one needs to first understand the piece of vocabulary. This study does not measure the learning outcome of the different vocabulary strategies. This study will instead focus on what strategies the students use and prefer to use in order to reach the first step of vocabulary understanding.

Aim and research questions:

The aim of this study is to investigate Swedish Upper Secondary school students’ opinion of different vocabulary strategies and what vocabulary strategy they prefer to use.

Therefore, the research questions are:

1) Which strategies are the students familiar with and which ones do they use?
2) Which strategy do students prefer to use when encountering new and unknown vocabulary?
3) Do male and female students prefer different vocabulary strategies?
2 Literature review

This literature review will present a number of different vocabulary strategies and previous research that investigates the correlation between vocabulary strategies and gender.

2.1 Vocabulary Strategies

Laufer (1997) states that “[n]o text comprehension is possible, either in one’s native language or in a foreign language, without understanding the text’s vocabulary” (Laufer.1997:20). This reflects the importance of knowledge of vocabulary in the understanding of a text. Moreover, in order to understand a text in the L2, the reader must have an understanding of at least 95% of the text (1997:24). If the reader does not reach the 95% comprehension of the text, a strategy for vocabulary comprehension will be needed. Briefly, this mean that vocabulary strategies are useful to all readers, in all different levels of proficiency.

In order to gain a 95% comprehension of a text, different vocabulary strategies can be used. Green and Oxford (1995) have developed the program SILL, Strategy Inventory for Language Learning, which is used to measure the correlation between the use of the different strategies and students’ level of success in the L2. In SILL, all strategies are divided into six different sections:

1. affective strategies for anxiety reduction, self-encouragement, and self-reward
2. social strategies such as asking questions, cooperating with native speakers, and becoming culturally aware
3. metacognitive strategies for evaluating one’s progress, planning for language tasks, consciously searching for practice opportunities, paying attention, and monitoring errors
4. memory-related strategies, such as grouping, imagery, rhyming, moving physically, and reviewing in a structured way
5. cognitive strategies, such as reasoning, analyzing, summarizing, and practicing (including but not limited to “active use of the language”)
6. compensatory strategies (to make up for limited knowledge), such as guessing meanings from context and using synonyms and gestures to convey meaning. (p. 264-265)

In addition to this list of strategies, previous research done by Oxford and Zoubir-Shaw (1994) can be added to the cognitive strategies (group number 5). Added to that group is the use of translating words into the L1 and the use of analysing and taking notes during the reading.

SILL measures language learning as a whole and it has a focus on the learning of language. However, the first step towards learning vocabulary is to understand the isolated piece of vocabulary. In order to understand and to answer the question regarding what strategies Swedish upper secondary school students prefer to use when encountering unknown vocabulary, one must find authentic strategies that the students can recognize and work with. The term authentic strategies are defined in this essay as a strategy that students can relate to, use and understand rather quickly without any further explanation. In Green and Oxford’s compilation, one can extract several vocabulary strategies. In the cognitive strategies, the word translating is used. If a reader does not understand the written message, one way to reach understanding can be to translate difficult words into the reader’s L1.

In the section compensatory strategies, the use of a synonym is mentioned. If a reader finds a piece of vocabulary difficult to understand, it might be so that the reader knows another word that means almost the same thing. Therefore, using a colloquial synonym to explain a difficult word is a strategy that can be used. Moreover, the strategy “guessing meanings from context” is mentioned as well as a compensatory strategy. If a reader knows almost every piece of vocabulary in a text except for one or two words, the reader might still understand those words by creating an understanding from the surrounding text. Therefore, three authentic vocabulary strategies can be found in Green and Oxford’s compilation: Translating a difficult word into the reader’s L1, using an L2 synonym and guessing a word’s meaning from the surrounding context.

Vocabulary strategies are useful to all readers, on all proficiency levels. However, not all vocabulary strategies suit all different levels of proficiency. Fan (2003) performed a
study that investigated the use of vocabulary strategies by Hong Kong students when learning English vocabulary. Fan measured what strategies the students used most and which strategies they used least. Moreover, the students were asked to distinguish which strategy that was most and least useful in their learning process. The reported strategies for vocabulary understanding that was most frequently used and seen as the most useful to the students, were guessing the word and the use of dictionaries. One of the least used and perceived as the least useful was “I increase my English vocabulary by studying wordlists at the back of course books and readers” (p. 229). An assumption can be made that pre-written list of vocabulary in textbook might not as useful as intended by authors of textbooks. Moreover, the study investigated what strategies that were the most used by students that were the most proficient in the L2. The results of the study showed that, once more, the use of both guessing strategies, where the students used pre-existing knowledge of both morphology and grammar, and the use of dictionaries where “[t]hey [the students] consulted the dictionary for the English definitions, the pronunciation, the derived forms, and the appropriate usage of the new words.” was most frequently used. By this quote, it can be assumed that the dictionaries mentioned in the study are L2 to L2 dictionaries. When summarising the result from Fan’s study, one finds that the use of guessing from context features here as well as a successful vocabulary strategy along with the use of an L2-L2 dictionary which can be added to the list of authentic vocabulary strategies.

However, a vocabulary strategy does not always have to contain words. An often used strategy is to use an image to explain a certain piece of vocabulary. Brown and Payne (cited in Fan 2003:223) have acknowledged five different strategies in language learning where one strategy is such as “(…) getting a clear image, either visual or auditory or both, of the forms of the new words (…)”. In a text oriented discourse, the use of an image to explain a piece of vocabulary can easily be forgotten. It can nevertheless be used as an effective strategy and seen as an authentic strategy that can be known to Swedish Upper Secondary school students.

2.2 Selecting Strategies

In order to implement the aim of this investigation, a number of strategies must be selected. The strategies must be comprehensible and authentic to Swedish upper
secondary school students. When compiling the results of the previous research, the following list of strategies emerged: From Green and Oxford (1995) the following vocabulary strategies were found: Using an L2 dictionary that translates into the L1, using an L2 synonym and understanding a word in its context. Moreover, from Fan (2003) the following vocabulary strategies were found: Using a dictionary that defines word in the L2 and using an image to describe a word.

2.2.1 Using an image as a vocabulary strategy

A strategy that does not require a high or hardly any L2 proficiency at all is using an image to explain and describe a piece of vocabulary. Most recognize this method from younger children’s children books, where a word, for instance “duck”, is explained by an image of a duck. As the child’s language proficiency develops, the books get more advanced and describe a scenery instead of just a single word. However, using an image to describe a word is not tied to the aspect of age but to the aspect of language proficiency. An adult learner with a low language proficiency can use the same method to gain an essential knowledge of an L2 language.

However, the method is seen as controversial when used among more proficient readers because of the risk of the reader’s distraction. The focal attention hypothesis contains the claim that using an image to support a piece of vocabulary may cause a distraction to the reader because there is a risk that the reader attention is drawn to the image instead to the text. (Sadoski.2005:224-225). From this quote, the assumption can be made that Sadoski is discussing images that are connected directly to the text. One can assume that if the reader needs to move away from the text completely in order to find an image that describes a word, the distraction will be greater.

2.2.2 Using a dictionary

A traditional way to acquire comprehension of the text is to use a dictionary. This strategy is such an integrated part of our life that we might not think of using a dictionary as a strategy. Traditionally, the dictionary has the form of an actual book. It can be either a full size dictionary or a smaller phrasebook, that is used by tourist abroad. However, nowadays the dictionary is more often found online, on a computer or in a smart phone.
Not only can dictionaries be found in different places, they can have a different function as well. Nation (2003) describes two different versions of dictionaries: the monolingual dictionary and the bilingual dictionary. The first describes vocabulary in the target language and the latter explains vocabulary in the L2 using the L1. When using a bilingual dictionary, the user has the supportive structure of the L1. This means that if the user needs to know a certain piece of vocabulary in the L2, the user starts with L1 and proceeds to the L2. On the other hand, if the user does not comprehend a word in the L2, the user can get an explanation of the word in the L1. When using a monolingual dictionary, the user need a higher L2 proficiency because the user needs to understand the explanation of the word.

The Swedish National Agency for Education states that “[t]eaching should as far as possible be conducted in English.” (Skolverket:2012). With this said, one can draw the conclusion that The Swedish National Agency for Education suggests that a monolingual dictionary is to be preferred. A monolingual dictionary uses the L2, English in this case, to describe and explain difficult vocabulary to the user. Conversely, Nation states that “to use a monolingual dictionary effectively learners need to have a [sic] effective receptive vocabulary of 2000 words. Most learners of English as a foreign language do not achieve this until they have been studying English for five to six years.” (2003:4). Nevertheless, the students of the upper secondary school in Sweden should have, with some exceptions, studied English for a minimum of nine years which means that the students should be well equipped to use a monolingual dictionary.

Pritchard (2008) states a number of disadvantages regarding the use of dictionaries. One mayor disadvantage is the time that it takes to use the dictionary. Pritchard points out the consequence of the time consuming act: “One concern is that the time it takes to look up words interferes with readers’ short-term memory and prevents them from focusing on the text as a whole” (2008:217), which can be explained as the interruption of using the dictionary may affects the comprehension of the text itself. However, the research discussed by Pritchard (2008) regards the traditional vocabulary, meaning an actual book. Moreover, Pritchard describes other forms of dictionaries described as handheld electronic dictionaries which can be assumed as not as time consuming as a traditional dictionary. However, the easy access to an electronical dictionary may cause
another sort of interruption. The over usage of an electronical dictionary is as well discussed by Pritchard who states that: “(...) the learners’ overuse of electronic glosses, it is hypothesized that looking up too many words without careful consideration led to shallow processing and short-term retention” (2008:217). This means that a too intense use of a dictionary, in order to gain an understanding of a text, may lead to ineffective understanding.

2.2.3 Using a Thesaurus

A too intense use of a dictionary may emerge if the user does not understand the explanation that is given in the dictionary, even if the reader uses a dictionary that corresponds to the reader’s level of education. However, if the reader finds an unfamiliar word and does not understand the explanation in the dictionary, the reader might know another word with a similar meaning, a synonym, or a word that has the opposite meaning, e.g. an antonym. Therefore, the reader can understand the unfamiliar word by using a thesaurus. The reader might recognize a synonym or an antonym from a word they learned earlier in their education or from another source, outside of the EFL classroom. The vocabulary knowledge that the reader has gained in the EFL classroom is intentional learning which is described by Hulstijn (2002) as: “(...) months and even years of "intentional" study, involving the deliberate committing to memory of thousands of words (their meaning, sound and spelling) and dozens of grammar rules” (2002:01), which can be summarized as studying.

Sources outside of the EFL classroom can be described as incidental learning, which is described by Hulstijn (2002) as: (...) "incidental" learning, involving the "picking up" of words ands [sic] structures, simply by engaging in a variety of communicative activities, in particular reading and listening activities, during which the learner's attention is focused on the meaning rather than on the form of language” (2002:1). This quote shows that knowledge of vocabulary, such as recognizing a synonym or an antonym, may come from communicative activities outside of the EFL classroom. Hulstijn mentions different reading and listening activities which could be interpreted as watching a movie or listening to a song. Therefore, when the reader is using a thesaurus, he or she might find a piece of vocabulary that can help with the understanding of an
unfamiliar word. The synonym or antonym does not need to be taught from school. It can just as well come from a source outside of the EFL classroom.

2.2.4 Guessing from the context

When reading a text or participating in a discussion in the L2, one may not always be able to use a dictionary for an explanation or a translation. However, one might still gain a comprehension of the unknown vocabulary in its context. Gu and Johnson (1996) state that this strategy may not suit all language learners “First: vocabulary acquisition through reading presumes a basic reading ability in the L2, a skill beginning learners possess only to a limited extent.” (p.646) In order to use the strategy of contextual guessing, the reader must comprehend almost every piece of vocabulary in the text. This may be interpreted as the reader must be to a close to 95% comprehension of the text.

Nassaji (2003) states that a higher level L2 reader will have a greater success in comprehension compared to a lower level L2 reader. The use of the strategy of guessing a word from its context may not be the best choice of strategy for every reader. However, Nassaji claims that “lexical inferencing was the most frequent and preferred strategy their adult L2 learners used to learn the meanings of new words when reading.” (p.647). Nassaji conducted an investigation to examine what aspects that lies behind successful guessing. Nassaji claims that one source is grammatical and/or morphological knowledge, where the structure of the piece of vocabulary creates a comprehension. Furthermore, another sources are making a connection to the L1, making a connection to the surrounding text and using the previous knowledge of surrounding world. The result showed that the most used source was the knowledge of the surrounding world. A conclusion can be made that in order to successfully guess the meaning of a piece of vocabulary, one must have a high level of proficiency in the L2 and be knowledgeable about the world.
2.1 Vocabulary Strategies and Gender

Green and Oxford (1995) used SILL to investigate if a certain gender were more inclined to use a certain strategy. They found that the female participants used all strategies more frequently than the male participants. However, Green and Oxford state that:

Male-female differences in language learning strategies do not necessarily mean that people of one gender are more successful at language learning than people of the other. In the current study, variation by gender and variation by proficiency appear to be working in very different and probably unrelated ways. It is notable that there was no overlap between the strategies used more often by women and the strategies used more often by more proficient students. (p.290).

This quote shows that even though the female participants used vocabulary strategies more frequently, it did not automatically make them more proficient in the L2.

A study performed by Grace (2000) investigated if access to the L1 affected male and female students’ performance on a receptive vocabulary test. Moreover, an additional aim with the study was to investigate the time the students used to look up unknown vocabulary. The students were divided into two groups, one group with access to L1 translation and one group with no access to L1 translation. Grace found that the group, regardless of gender, who had access to the L1 out-scored the group who did not have access to the L1. Moreover, no precise difference between male and female students could be found, neither in the score of the tests or in the time spent to look up unknown vocabulary.

When compiling the results from Green and Oxford (1995) one can find that females do use strategies more often. Grace (2000), on the other hand found that access to the L1 was far more important than gender. Therefore, an assumption can be made that use of vocabulary strategies, gender and proficiency do not correlate.
3 Material and Method

3.1 The Pilot Study

Prior to this investigation, a pilot study was conducted. The aim of the pilot study was to investigate which vocabulary strategies a group of students preferred to use when reading a short story. The students were asked to read three different short stories. The first short story contained a wordlist with difficult words translated into Swedish. However, the students who had another L1 than Swedish were allowed to translate the words into their L1, on or with a device of their own choice. The second short story contained a wordlist with difficult words explained or simplified in English. When the student read the third short story, they had no access to a wordlist. Instead they were allowed to discuss the text and the vocabulary with their peers.

The readings of the short stories took place during three separate lessons. In the fourth lesson, the students were asked to grade the strategies in the order 1-3, where one (1) was the strategy that they preferred to use. The results of the pilot study showed that males preferred to have difficult words described in English but not by a clear majority. However, the results from the females showed that 58.9% preferred to get difficult words described in their L1. (Table can be found in appendix A) The pilot study generated the question if the choice of strategy is based on gender. The questionnaire that this investigation is based on was produced in order to answer that question and to investigate the student’s opinion regarding a larger amount of strategies.

3.1 The Participants

The participants are students who take the course of English 5 in a Swedish Upper Secondary school in a small town of southern Sweden. The students belong to two different classes in two different preparatory educations. The two classes consist of 50 students in total. This study has a total of 32 participants where 16 participants belong in one class and 16 participants belong in the other class. Three of the 32 students are 18 years of age and could therefore give their own consent for participation in this study. Moreover, all students were orally asked if they wanted to participate in this study. However, the majority of the students are under the age of 18. Therefore, the legal
guardian received a letter through the students which asked for permission for the participation from the legal guardian. This letter can be found in appendix B. The letter stressed the fact that the students would be anonymous. Out of 50 students, 32 students handed in the letter of consent from their legal guardian. Out of the 32 students whose questionnaires could be used, 12 identifies themselves as male, 19 identifies themselves as female and 1 identifies themselves as neither. The participant who identified themselves as neither will hereafter be labelled Unspecified (UnS). However, this participant did not answer most of the questions. The few results that exist will be included in some of the tables but not analysed since the result of one person do not indicate a trend.

A group of students is never a homogenous group. Table 1 shows the diversity of L1s in this study. Many of the participants do not have Swedish as their L1. In Table 1, some European languages are represented in the group, such as Lithuanian, Spanish and Bosnian. Moreover, there are three non-European languages as well, such as Cantonese, Dari and Arabic.

Table 1. Languages in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>UnS</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dari</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuanian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.1 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire presented six (6) different strategies: translation into the L1, a definition of the word in the target language, understanding a word from its context, using a synonym, using an antonym and the last strategy was using an image to understand a word. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix D. Every question was initiated with an example in order to picture the strategy to the participants. The participants were asked if the example enabled them to comprehend the word and if they recognised this strategy. If the students recognised the strategy, they were asked from where they recognised it.

The participants were given three suggestions:” Lower Secondary school”, “Upper Secondary school” and “when I read at home”. The first suggestion was selected to investigate what strategies the participants were used to before they began Upper Secondary school. The second suggestion was selected in order to investigate what strategies the participants may use during their English classes at Upper Secondary school. Finally, the third suggestion was selected in order to investigate how the participants work with vocabulary in their spare time. These questions might answer if the participants actually use the strategies that are taught in school. In addition to this, the participants were given a fourth suggestion, called “other”, where they could answer with their own words.

Moreover, participants were asked to grade on a scale from 1 to 6, where 1 is “never use” and 6 was “always use”, how often they use the specific strategy. Furthermore, the students were asked to grade how much they liked the selected strategy on a scale from 1 to 6, where 1 was “do not like at all” and 6 was “like quite a lot”.

On the last page, the students were asked to rate their three favourite strategies, where the strategy they liked the most was put in first place and their second choice was put in second place. When the student had selected their number one strategy, they were asked why they chose this specific strategy. This question consists of multiple answers such as “It is the most convenient” and “This way is the best way for me to learn”. The students had the opportunity to write other answers as well.
Despite the fact that the questionnaire dealt with strategies in the EFL classroom and was answered during an English class, the used language in the questionnaire was Swedish. The choice of language was based on knowledge that no group of students are homogeneous and there might be a risk that the students’ level of proficiency could interfere with their interpretation of the questions. However, the examples that described every question were in English.

The two groups of participants answered the questionnaire at two separate times during their ordinary English class. Before the participants were allowed to answer the questionnaire, they were given an instruction orally. Moreover, that fact that there is no right or wrong answer to the questions in the questionnaire was stressed. The participants had no specific timeframe that they needed to consider when answering the questionnaire.

3.2 Advantages and Disadvantages

There are some advantages with using questionnaires as a method. By using a questionnaire, a large number of participants can be reached compared to using interviews where only a few participants can be interviewed. Moreover, answering a questionnaire is not that time consuming. However, when using a questionnaire, it may be difficult to receive the participants’ own view regarding the nature of the question. Therefore, the participants were encouraged to leave comments.

However, some disadvantages can as well be detected. Firstly, one can never be absolutely confident that all of the participants understand the questions. Some participants may ask if they do not understand whereupon questions can be explained or clarified. However, there is a risk that most will not ask at all. Secondly, another risk might be that the participants will not take the questionnaire seriously. The participants are young and therefore not used to reflecting on what vocabulary strategies are how the use them.
3.3 Data Analysis

The result of the questionnaires will be presented in two different parts. The first part is the biographical part where background information regarding the participants, such as the use of English outside the EFL classroom and the participants’ estimation of how often they look up unfamiliar words, will be presented. The second part regards the different strategies. The results of the questions concerning whether the participants recognize the strategies and from where they recognize them, will be presented. Moreover, the question of which vocabulary strategy the participants prefer to use will be presented.

4 Results

4.1 The Participants’ Use of English in the EFL Classroom

The participants were asked to estimate to what extent they use English outside of the EFL classroom by selecting one of the following suggestions: Never, Seldom, Sometimes, Quite often, A lot and All the time. The table shows the results of all students and the results of the females, males and UnS. The numbers within parentheses are the number of persons who answered a specific answer and the percentage show how many percent of a particular group answered in a certain way. When considering the participants as a group, the spread of the use of English outside the EFL classroom is quite identical as seen in Table 2. 9 participants, 29% estimate that they sometimes use English in their spare time. However, when dividing the participants into groups based on gender, one can notice a difference. 50% of the males, or 6 participants out of 12, answered that they use English in their spare time “A lot” whereas only one (1) female participant estimates her use of English outside the EFL classroom as “A lot”. The result of this question shows that the female participants estimate that they use less English outside of the EFL classroom compared to the male participants.
The participants were asked to leave comments regarding the context of their use of English outside the EFL classroom. The female participants left comments such as:

1) “with my cousins that do not live in Sweden”,
2) “with my friends”,
3) “when I meet people who do not speak Swedish or my first language”,
4) “when I meet some people who don’t speak the same language as I speak”,
5) “basket practice”,
6) “when I speak to others”,
7) “travels”,
8) “social media”.

The male participants on the other hand left comments as:

9) “when I meet an English-speaking person”,
10) “YouTube”,
11) “if I do not understand in Swedish, I use English instead”

Moreover, six participants mentioned games and friends from other countries that they meet through the game. (All of these comments are my translation. The original comments can be found in Appendix C).

When comparing the comments, a pattern is visible. The female participants often speak directly to other people whereas the male participants more often speak English online. When comparing the results of the question and the comments, the result shows that the students who answered that they use English when playing (online) games are the same participants that estimate their use of English outside of the EFL classroom as “a lot”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>All students</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>UnS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n (31)</td>
<td>n (18)</td>
<td>n (12)</td>
<td>n (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>25.8 (8)</td>
<td>33.3 (6)</td>
<td>16.6 (2)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>29.0 (9)</td>
<td>33.3 (6)</td>
<td>16.6 (2)</td>
<td>100 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite often</td>
<td>22.5 (7)</td>
<td>27.7 (5)</td>
<td>16.6 (2)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot</td>
<td>22.5 (7)</td>
<td>5.5 (1)</td>
<td>50.0 (6)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the time</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Participants use of English outside the classroom
Thus, a conclusion can be made that the participants that play online games use English to a greater extent than the participants who use English to communicate face to face with other people.

4.2 The Frequency of Looking up Unknown Words

The participants were asked to estimate how often they look up an unfamiliar word. The result of the question shows that the participants have a rather high frequency of looking up unfamiliar words. This implies that they may be used to using different strategies when encountering an unfamiliar word. When considering the results of the participants as a group, it shows that 37.5% of the group claim that they look up words quite often. Moreover, 28.1% claim that they look up unknown vocabulary sometimes. Only one male participant, claims to never look up a piece of vocabulary.

Apart from that, the results show that the male participants seem to look up words more frequently compared to the female participants. 33%, or 4 individuals, of the male participants claim to look up words all the time. The same percentage of the male participants claim to look up unfamiliar words quite often. This differs from the female participants, where 16%, or 3 individuals, estimate that they look up words all the time. However, 42% of the female participants’ estimate that they look up words quite often and 37% percent claim that they look up pieces of vocabulary sometimes.

When summarizing the participants’ use of English outside the classroom and the frequency of looking up unfamiliar words, the results show that the male participants use English more often outside of the EFL classroom compared to the female group. Moreover, the male participants look up unfamiliar words more often.

Table 3. Participants’ frequency of looking up words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>All students n (32)</th>
<th>Females n (19)</th>
<th>Males n (12)</th>
<th>UnS n (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>3.1 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>8 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>6.2 (2)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>8 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>28.1 (9)</td>
<td>37 (7)</td>
<td>16 (2)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite often</td>
<td>37.5 (12)</td>
<td>42 (8)</td>
<td>33 (4)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the time</td>
<td>25.0 (8)</td>
<td>16 (3)</td>
<td>33 (4)</td>
<td>100 (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3 Recognition of Vocabulary Strategies

The previous paragraph (4.2) shows that the participants have a tendency of looking up new and unfamiliar words. This was further investigated by asking the participants what different strategies for looking up unfamiliar words that they recognized. The first column (Total) of Table 4 shows the number (n) of participants who answered the question. The result of the question is presented in Table 4 under Did you recognize (the strategy) and shows that all the suggested strategies were recognized by the participants to a certain extent. The strategy that almost all participants recognized was the use of an L2-L1 dictionary, which was recognized by 30 participants out of 32. Out of the 30 participants that recognized the L2-L1 dictionary strategy, 17 were female and 12 were male. Only 2 participants claim that they do not recognize the use of an L2-L1 dictionary. The strategy that was least known to the students was the use of an antonym in order to understand a word. Only 9 out of 32 participants recognized this way of working with vocabulary and 23 participants claim not to recognize this strategy. Out of the 9 who recognized the strategy, 4 were female and 5 were male.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Total (n)</th>
<th>Did you recognise?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (n)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2-L1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2-L2</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synonym</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonym</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4 Where the Strategies Are Known From

The participants who did recognize a strategy were asked to define from where they recognized it, using the alternatives ‘Lower Secondary school’, ‘Upper Secondary school’ and ‘From reading at home’. The numbers within parentheses are the number of students who recognize the strategies and therefore could answer from where they recognize it. The result in Table 5 shows that the method most recognized from Lower Secondary school is use of an L2 synonym whereas the least know strategy is the use of an image. Moreover, the use of an image is the least know strategy in Upper Secondary
school as well and the most recognized strategy from Upper Secondary School was the use of an L2-L1 dictionary. The most recognised strategy from the participants reading at home, is the use of an L2-L1 dictionary and the least know strategy is the use of an antonym. Furthermore, one participant states that the strategy of using an image is recognised from primary school: 13) “says “dog” and you get to see a picture of a dog” (My translation. Full quote in appendix C)

Table 5. Where the strategies are known from. Results of all students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategey</th>
<th>Total answers (n)</th>
<th>Lower Secondary (n)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Upper Secondary (n)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Home (n)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L2-L1</td>
<td>(30)</td>
<td>(23)</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>(21)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>(23)</td>
<td>76.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2-L2</td>
<td>(28)</td>
<td>(23)</td>
<td>82.1</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>(27)</td>
<td>(18)</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>(18)</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>51.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synonym</td>
<td>(25)</td>
<td>(21)</td>
<td>84.0</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonym</td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image</td>
<td>(22)</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When viewing the results from a gender perspective in Table 6, one can see that the male participants overall recognize more strategies compared to the female participants. The most recognized strategy from Lower Secondary school among the female participants is the use of an L2-L2 dictionary. The most known strategy from Upper Secondary school among the female participants is understanding from the context. The results from the male participants show that the use of a synonym is the most recognized strategy from both Lower Secondary school and Upper Secondary school. When considering the results from the most recognized strategy from the participants reading at home, a difference can be noticed. The female participants show a clear majority in the use of an L2-L1 dictionary. In the same section, the most recognized strategy among the male participants is use of an L2-L2 dictionary. However, the results from the male participants do not show the same majority result as the result from the female participant.
Table 6. Recognition of strategies from a gender perspective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Secondary</td>
<td>Upper Secondary</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Lower Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n)</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>(n)</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>(n)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2-L1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2-L2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synonym</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonym</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5 Usage of Vocabulary Strategies

The different strategies were all known to some extent from Lower Secondary school, Upper Secondary school and from the participants reading at home. The next question investigates how often the participants’ use the different strategies. Therefore, the participants that recognized the different strategies were asked to grade on a scale from 1-6 how often they use the strategies. The number within parentheses in the column Total score are the highest score the strategy could have reached if all the participants gave the strategy the highest score. The L2-L1 strategy received 134 points out of a possible 180 points and received the highest average score of 4.3 out of 6. The least used strategy is the to use an antonym which scored an average score of 2.9 out of 6 and received 29 points of 54.

Table 7. Usage of vocabulary strategies. All participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total (n)</th>
<th>Total score</th>
<th>Average score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L2-L1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>134 (180)</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2-L2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>107 (168)</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>87 (162)</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synonym</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>113 (150)</td>
<td>4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonym</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29 (54)</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>74 (132)</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 shows the results from a gender perspective. The male participants gave the highest average score to the L2 synonym strategy whereas the female participants gave
the highest average score to the use of an L2-L1 dictionary. However, the results from the male participants do not show a majority. The average score of the L2 synonym was 4.3 and the average score to the guessing from context was 4.2. This results are very close and the results could have looked different if just one male had rated the latter a bit higher. The result show that male and female participants gave their lowest average score to the use of an antonym. These results show that the male and female participants are in agreement when considering what strategy, they do not use. However, when comparing what strategy that they actually use, one can observe a difference. The largest difference between the males’ and females’ average scores can be seen in the strategy of using the context to understand a word. One female participant left the comment: 14) “not so much” (My translation. Full quote in appendix C) in close connection to the question which can be seen as a way to explain that the participant does not often guess from the context when reading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Females (n)</th>
<th>Total score</th>
<th>Average score</th>
<th>Males (n)</th>
<th>Total score</th>
<th>Average score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L2-L1</td>
<td>(17)</td>
<td>76 (102)</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>53 (72)</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2-L2</td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td>63 (96)</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>44 (72)</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td>59 (96)</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>28 (66)</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synonym</td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td>65 (96)</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>48 (54)</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonym</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>11 (24)</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>18 (30)</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>44 (72)</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>29 (54)</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6 Opinions Regarding the Suggested Strategies

The results show that some vocabulary strategies are more used than others. However, all the participants were asked to grade on a scale of 1-6, where 1 is ‘do not like at all’ and 6 is ‘like quite a lot’, how much they like the strategies. Two strategies, the use of an L2-L1 dictionary and the use of an L2-L2 dictionary, were given the highest scores by the participants. However, the use of an L2-L2 dictionary was given a slightly higher average score than the L2-L1 dictionary but given a lower total score. When comparing the total scores, the least liked strategies were the use of an antonym and the use of an image. The use of an antonym was given an average score of 2.96, which makes it the least liked strategy.
When viewing the results from a perspective of gender, the results show that the strategy that was highest rated by the females was using an L2-L2 dictionary, conversely to the males, who rated the use of an L2-L1 dictionary highest, both by average score and by points. The least liked strategy proclaimed by both genders was the use of an antonym.

When comparing the results from the participants’ estimations of their usage and opinions of the vocabulary strategies, the results show that the female participants most often use an L2-L1 dictionary yet they have a higher opinion about the L2-L2 dictionary strategy. The male participants rated the usage of an L2-L1 dictionary highest; yet they claim to use an L2 synonym strategy most. The result shows that the strategy that the participants use is not the one that they have the highest opinion of.

### 4.7 The Strategy Preferred by the Students

The result show that the vocabulary strategy that most participants used did not correlate to the strategy they had the highest opinion about. The next step was to ask the participants to rate the different vocabulary strategies in order, where their preferred strategy to use was rated as number one and so forth. The results in Table 11 show that

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9. Opinions about the strategies. All participants.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (n)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2-L1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2-L2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synonym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 10. Opinions about the strategies. From a gender perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Females (n)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2-L1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2-L2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synonym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result show that the vocabulary strategy that most participants used did not correlate to the strategy they had the highest opinion about. The next step was to ask the participants to rate the different vocabulary strategies in order, where their preferred strategy to use was rated as number one and so forth. The results in Table 11 show that
the preferred strategy among the participants is to use an L2-L1 dictionary. Out of the 30 participants who answered the question, 21 participants or 70%, rated the use of an L2-L1 dictionary as the preferred strategy. The second preferred strategy is the usage of an L2-L2 dictionary which was placed as the second best strategy by 12 participants, or 40% (Table 11: column Second Place). Finally, the use of an L2 synonym got 33.3 percent, being the third most preferred strategy (Table 11: column Third Place).

When viewing the results of the participants’ favourite strategy (column First Place), the results show that the use of an L2-L1 dictionary is the preferred vocabulary choice for almost all of the participants. The use of an L2-L2 dictionary and the guessing a word from the context have a shared second place (when looking at percentage). None of the participants rated the use of an antonym and the use of an image as their preferred strategy.

Table 11. Preferred strategy. All participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>First place</th>
<th></th>
<th>Second place</th>
<th></th>
<th>Third place</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n (31)</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n(30)</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n(30)</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2 to L1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2 to L2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synonym</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonym</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some participants left comments to give further information regarding their choice of strategy. One student, who selected the L2-L1 strategy wrote: 15) “this is the way that I learned from the beginning and am used to” (My translation. Full quote in appendix C). Another participant who selected the same strategy wrote: 16) “simple, less energy-consuming” (My translation. Full quote in appendix C). Moreover, the participants were asked if they are used to using some other strategy not included in the questionnaire. Five participants answered that they use the strategy of asking a friend.

When comparing the results from a gender perspective, it may seem as the results from the male and female participants mirror the result from the whole group. Both genders prefer to use an L2-L1 dictionary. However, when viewing the numbers as percentage, the results show a gender difference. 83%, or 15 out of 18 (Table 12), of the female participants listed the strategy of using an L2-L1 dictionary as highest opposed to the
male participants (in Table 13) where only 44%, or 8 out of 18, listed the same strategy as the highest. The results show that the group of male participants do not have the same majority in their selection of preferred strategy as the female participants have. The result from the male participants are more even.

Table 12. Preferred strategy. Female participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Females</th>
<th>1 tot</th>
<th>2 tot</th>
<th>3 tot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n (18)</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n(18)</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1 to L2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2 to L2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synonym</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonym</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13. Preferred strategy. Male participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Males</th>
<th>1 tot</th>
<th>2 tot</th>
<th>3 tot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n (12)</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n(12)</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1 to L2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2 to L2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synonym</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonym</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.8 Reasons for Selection of Preferred Strategy

After ranking their preferred strategies, the participants were asked to justify their choice of strategy in a multiple answer question. The participants could choose from the following suggestions:

1) It is the most convenient
2) It is the quickest way
3) I learn best by using this strategy
4) I understand easiest by using this strategy
5) The school expects me to use this strategy

The strategy that most participants preferred was the use of an L2-L1 dictionary. Most participants justified their choice by claiming that it is both the quickest and the most
convenient way with 13 points or 61.9% each. The female participants rated it as the quickest way with 66% and the male participants claimed it to be the most convenient with 83.3%. This can be connected to the claim of one participant: 15) “this is the way that I learned from the beginning and am used to”. When a student is starting to learn English, the teaching and the learning are based upon the L1. The reason for this are foremost two: firstly, the learning is, in most cases, conducted in the own country. Secondly, the teaching is, in most cases, done by a teacher who has the L1 as the same student. Hence, it becomes natural for both teacher and student to codeswitch into the L1.

When comparing the results of the participants who preferred the use of an L2-L1 dictionary to the results from the participants who preferred the use of an L2-L2 dictionary, which was the second most preferred strategy, one can notice a difference. 83.3 percent of the participants claim that they chose the strategy because that they learn best from using that strategy. All of the female participants and 66.6% of the male participants claimed that they learn best by using an L2-L2 dictionary. One can make the conclusion from the results that the L2-L1 strategy is used because it is the quickest and the most convenient way. When using the L2-L2 strategy the learning is in focus instead.

However, none of the participants selected used the suggestion *The school expects me to use this strategy*. This finding is interesting because when reading the syllabi for English, it is prominent that both teachers and students should use English as much as possible in the EFL classroom. Since none of the participants chose this answer, one can assume that the answers are authentic and the participants actual opinions, because if they considered what was expected of them they might have chosen differently. An assumption can be made based on this information: it seems as if the participants are not aware of why the target language should be used when learning a language. The participants may be aware of what to learn but not how it is suppose to be done.
5 Discussion

This essay investigated which strategies the participants were familiar with and which ones they use when encountering new and unfamiliar vocabulary. The results show that all the suggested strategies were recognized by all participants to some degree. The most used vocabulary strategy when comparing the results from all the participants was the use of an L2-L1 dictionary. However, there was a difference in gender. The male participants gave their highest average grade to the L2 synonym whereas the female participants gave their highest average score to the use of an L2-L1 dictionary. This difference may have affected the total result. If there had been a male majority among the participants, the total result could have been different since the results from the males were quite close between the use of a synonym and guessing from the context.

Green and Oxford (1995) found that the female participants in their study used more strategies compared to the male participants. However, this study shows a different result because both the male and female participants claimed to use all of the strategies. The result from this study show that females use all strategies yet they use an L2-L1 dictionary more. On the other hand, the results from the male participants in this investigation seem to use different strategies equal. However, Green and Oxford measured different sorts of strategies such as affective strategies and social strategies compared to this investigation which focused on cognitive and compensatory strategies.

One aim of this study was to investigate what vocabulary strategy the participants prefer to use. Furthermore, an additional aim was to investigate if the male and female
participants preferred different strategies. This investigation shows that the male and the female participants both prefer to get non-comprehensible words explained in their L1. When comparing this to the previous pilot study, one can notice a difference. The results of the pilot study show that the male participants preferred to get difficult pieces of vocabulary explained in English while the female participants preferred to use the L1 to understand difficult words.

In this study, 50% or 6 out of 12, of the male participants chose the L2-L1 strategy. When comparing this to the female participants, one can notice the same result yet in a different way. 83 % or 15 out of 19 of the female participants chose the L2-L1 strategy which is a majority.

Moreover, this mirrors the result of the participants’ use of English outside of the EFL classroom. Those results show that 50% of the male participants estimate that they use English outside the classroom “A lot”. This can be compared to the 5.5% of the female participants, who estimate that they use the target language “A lot” outside of the classroom. One might assume that the more frequently an individual uses the target language outside the classroom, the more flexible, meaning that they can use more strategies, that individual becomes when it comes to the use of different vocabulary strategies. In order to investigate this further, another study can be conducted where focus lays within the use of English outside of the EFL classroom and the use of different vocabulary strategies.

Overall, differences between genders in previous studies are difficult to find. Grace (2000) found that participants did benefit from access to their L1 in a vocabulary test regardless of gender. On the other hand, Green and Oxford found that females tend to use vocabulary strategies to a greater extent than men. Yet, a strong connection between gender, choice of vocabulary strategies and proficiency could not be made.

Furthermore, some results of this investigation may indicate a difference. A difference in gender can not be detected, if one only observes the student’s first choice of vocabulary strategy. One needs to distinguish the difference between their first choice with their second and their third choices. While the female participants selected the strategy of using L2-L1 dictionary with a majority, the male participants did not. Another assumption can be made that males benefit from their extent use of English
outside of the EFL classroom which may provide them with the ability to use different vocabulary strategies. However, this is a small investigation which can not speak for all the students of Upper Secondary school in Sweden.

An answered question is traditionally seen as a result. However, questions that remain unanswered and suggestions that are not selected are results as well. The participants were asked select the strategy that they prefer to use. In addition to this, they were as well asked to motivate their decision. The participants were given to opportunity to answer the question with their own words as well as using provided suggestions. However, one suggestion was not selected by any of the students. “The school expects of me to use this strategy”. This may show how vague The Swedish National Agency for Education is when it comes to providing concrete material. The guideline from The Swedish National Agency for Education says that the target language should be used in the EFL classroom. However, the fact that no one chose the alternative stating that the school expects them to use a particular strategy may indicate that the students are not aware of the guidelines from The Swedish National Agency for Education. Otherwise, the participants who selected the L2-L2 strategy, would have selected the suggestion “The school expects of me to use this strategy”.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this essay has investigated which vocabulary strategies a group of Swedish Upper Secondary school students are familiar with and which vocabulary strategies they use. Moreover, this essay investigated which vocabulary strategy the students prefer to use in order to understand new and unknown vocabulary. An additional aim was to investigate if the male and female students prefer different vocabulary strategies.

The students were asked if they recognised 6 different strategies:

- using an L2-L1 dictionary
- using an L2-L2 dictionary
- using an L2 synonym
- using an L2 antonym
- understanding a word in its context
- using an image to understand a word

The strategy that most students recognised was the use of an L2-L1 dictionary. This was the strategy that most students recognised from Lower and Upper Secondary school and as well from when they read at home. The strategy that was least recognised, from both Lower and Upper Secondary school and from reading at home, was the use of an L2 antonym.

The use of an L2-L1 dictionary was also the strategy that the students used the most. The second most used strategy was the use of an L2 synonym. In this question, no difference between the genders could be detected.

The strategy that the students felt most positive about was the use of an L2-L2 dictionary. A difference in gender could be detected: the female students gave their highest average score to the use of an L2-L2 dictionary whereas the male students gave their highest average score to the use of an L2-L1 dictionary. The least liked strategy by both male and female students were the use of an L2 antonym.

The strategy that both the female and the male students prefer to use is the use of an L2-L1 dictionary. However, the female students had a clear majority in their selection of the strategy whereas the male participants did not reach the same majority as the female
students. This can mean that the male students have a more flexible strategy competence, meaning that they are willing to use different vocabulary strategies. Moreover, this can be connected to the fact that the male students use English outside of the EFL classroom to a greater extent compared to the female students.

The pedagogical implications of this study can be that the students rely on the L1 to a great extent and that some students would feel more comfortable and perhaps perform better if the use of the L1 increased.

This is a small scale study. Nevertheless, the study indicates that a difference between genders and their choice of vocabulary strategy may exist. Anyhow, the difference in usage of English outside of the EFL classroom seems to be a strong indicator regardless of gender. Further investigations that focus on whether gender, proficiency and use of English outside of the EFL classroom are recommended.
7 List of References


Appendix
Appendix A

Table over the results of the pilot study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th></th>
<th>UnS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2-L1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2-L2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: L2-L1 is using a translation to the L1. L2-L2 is using a word or a phrase in English to explain a word. Discuss is using discussing with peers
Appendix B

Hej,

Mitt namn är Ulrica Karlsson och jag är lärarstudent vid Linnéuniversitet. Jag kommer under December att genomföra ett läsprojekt i ämnet engelska med ett antal klasser i årskurs 1. Denna undersökning kommer sedan att ligga till grund för min kommande c-upsats. Projektet går ut på att låta eleverna få exempel på olika ordstategier. Eleverna att få fylla i en anonym enkät där de får svara på frågor såsom om vad de tycker om de olika ordstrategierna och vilka de känner igen. Slutfilen kommer eleverna få avgöra vilken av de olika strategierna de fann bäst.

Då eleverna är underåriga behöver jag förmyndares godkännande för att få använda elevens svar till min mindre studie. Enkätarna kommer, som ovan nämnt, vara anonyma så när som på att eleverna kommer få svara på könstillhörighet. Denna faktor är intressant då forskning visar att pojkar har en större vokabulär än flickor. Studien kommer inte att publiceras i någon form av tidskrift men kommer vara tillgänglig på Diva portalen.

Vid frågor, tveka inte att kontakta mig på (email) alt. (phone number)

[ ] Ja, min son/dotter får delta i studien

[ ] Nej, min son/dotter får inte delta i studien

Elevens namn

Förmyndares namnteckning
Appendix C

1) “with my cousins that do not live in Sweden” “med mina kusiner som inte bor i Sverige"

2) “with my friends” “med mina vänner”

3) “when I meet people who do not speak Swedish or my first language” “när jag möter personer som kan inte svenska eller mitt modersmål”

4) “when I meet some people who don’t speak the same language as I speak” “när jag möter några personer som inte talar samma spark som jag talar”

5) “basket practice” “basketträningarna”

6) “when I speak to others” “när jag talar med andra”

8) “travels” “resor”

9) “social media” ”sociala medier”

10) “when I meet an English-speaking person” “när jag stöter på en engelsktalande person”

11) “YouTube” ”YouTube”

12) “if I do not understand in Swedish, I use English instead” “om jag förstår inte på svenska då kör jag på engelska istället”

13) “says “dog” and you get to see a picture of a dog” “står “hund” och du ser en bild på en hund”

14) “not so much” “inte så ofta”

15) “this is the way that I learned from the beginning and am used to” “detta är vad jag lärt mig från början och är van vid”

16) (“simple, less energy-consuming” “enklast, minst energikrävande”
Appendix D The questionnaire


Först, svara på dessa frågor:

Jag identifierar mig som:

☐ Tjej  ☐ Kille  ☐ Annat

Vilket är ditt modersmål:____________________________________

Har du bott i ett engelsktalande land, och i så fall, hur länge?_________________________

Jag använder engelska utanför skolan:

☐ Aldrig  ☐ Sällan  ☐ Ibland  ☐ Ganska ofta  ☐ Mycket  ☐ Hela tiden

Om du talar engelska utanför skolan, i vilket sammanhang talar du då engelska?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

När du möter på ett ord som du inte förstår, hur ofta söker du upp vad ordet betyder?

☐ Aldrig  ☐ Sällan  ☐ Ibland  ☐ Ganska ofta  ☐ Hela tiden
Översättning

Man kan översätta ett svårt ord till sitt modersmål genom att använda exempelvis Google Translate eller en engelsk-svensk ordbok.

“He was a skinny, black-haired, bespectacled boy”

bespectacled = Glasögonprydd

Gjorde översättningen så att du förstod ordet?

☐ Nej   ☐ Ja

Kommentar: ___________________________________________________________

Känner du igen det här sättet att arbeta med en text?

☐ Nej   ☐ Ja

Om du svarat Ja; varifrån känner du igen sättet att arbeta? Du kan kryssa i fler alternativ.

☐ Högstadiet  ☐ Gymnasiet  ☐ När jag läser själv hemma

☐ Annat ställe som:

________________________________________________________________________

Om du känner igen det här sättet att förstå nya ord, hur ofta använder du det?

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<tr>
<th>Använder aldrig</th>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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På en skala mellan 1-6, vad tycker du om denna strategi?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gillar inte alls</th>
<th>Gillar ganska mycket</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Förklaring på engelska


“He was a skinny, black-haired, bespectacled boy”
Bespectacled = wearing eyeglasses

Gjorde förklaringen så att du förstod ordet?
☐ Nej ☐ Ja

Kommentar:_____________________________________________________

Känner du igen det här sättet att arbeta med en text?
☐ Nej ☐ Ja

Om du svarat Ja; varifrån känner du igen sättet att arbeta? Du kan kryssa i fler alternativ.
☐ Högstadiet  ☐ Gymnasiet  ☐ När jag läser själv hemma

☐ Annat ställe som:

Om du känner igen det här sättet att förstå nya ord, hur ofta använder du det?

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På en skala mellan 1-6, vad tycker du om denna strategi?

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<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
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Att förstå ett ord i kontexten

Ibland kan man förstå vad ett ord betyder på ett ungefär genom att fortsätta läsa, det vill säga; att man förstår ordet i dess kontext.

"The acerbity of the lemon caused the little girl to spit out the bite she had just taken"

Fick du en uppfattning om vad ordet acerbity kan betyda?

☐ Nej ☐ Ja

Kommentar: ________________________________

Känner du igen det här sättet att arbeta med en text?

☐ Nej ☐ Ja

Om du svarat Ja; varifrån känner du igen sättet att arbeta? Du kan kryssa i fler alternativ.

☐ Högstadiet ☐ Gymnasiet ☐ När jag läser själv hemma

☐ Annat ställe som:

____________________________________________

Om du känner igen det här sättet att förstå nya ord, hur ofta använder du det?

Använder aldrig 1 2 3 4 5 6

Använder alltid

På en skala mellan 1-6, vad tycker du om denna strategi?

Gillar inte alls

1 2 3 4 5 6

Gillar ganska mycket

增

VII
**Använda en synonym**

Man kan förstå ett ords betydelse genom att använda en synonym, alltså ett ord som betyder ungefär samma sak. Synonymer till ett okänt ord kan du hitta i en engelsk-engelsk synonymordbok och online på t.ex. thesaurus.com

I would describe him as **cheerful**.

Cheerful = Happy

Gjorde synonymen så att du förstod ordet?

☐ Nej  ☐ Ja

Kommentar: ______________________________________________________

Känner du igen det här sättet att arbeta med en text?

☐ Nej  ☐ Ja

Om du svarat Ja; varifrån känner du igen sättet att arbeta? Du kan kryssa i fler alternativ.

☐ Högstadiet  ☐ Gymnasiet  ☐ När jag läser själv hemma

☐ Annat ställe som:

________________________________________________________

Om du känner igen det här sättet att förstå nya ord, hur ofta använder du det?

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På en skala mellan 1-6, vad tycker du om denna strategi?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gillar inte alls</th>
<th>Gillar ganska mycket</th>
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Använda en antonym

Man kan även använda en antonym, ett motsatsord, på samma sätt. Antonym kan du hitta på ordböcker och på Thesaurus.com

Ex: I would describe him as cheerful. Cheerful = sad

Gjorde antonymen så att du förstod ordet?

☐ Nej ∟ Ja

Kommentar: __________________________________________________________

Känner du igen det här sättet att arbeta med en text?

☐ Nej ☐ Ja

Om du svarat Ja; varifrån känner du igen sättet att arbeta? Du kan kryssa i fler alternativ.

☐ Högstadiet ☐ Gymnasiet ☐ När jag läser själv hemma

☐ Annat ställe som:

________________________________________________________

Om du känner igen det här sättet att förstå nya ord, hur ofta använder du det?

Använder aldrig  Använder alltid

1  2

3  4  5  6

På en skala mellan 1-6, vad tycker du om denna strategi?

Gillar inte alls  Gillar ganska mycket

1  2

3  4  5  6
Använda en bild

Man kan även använda en bild för att förstå ett ord

“The **European perch** (*Perca fluviatilis*) is found in Europe and Asia. (wikipedia.com)

Gjorde bilden så att du förstod ordet?

☐ Nej    ☐ Ja

Kommentar: __________________________________________

Känner du igen det här sättet att arbeta med en text?

☐ Nej    ☐ Ja

Om du svarat Ja; varifrån känner du igen sättet att arbeta? Du kan kryssa i fler alternativ.

☐ Högstadiet  ☐ Gymnasiet  ☐ När jag läser själv hemma

☐ Annat ställe som: _______________________________________

Om du känner igen det här sättet att förstå nya ord, hur ofta använder du det?

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</table>

På en skala mellan 1-6, vad tycker du om denna strategi?

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<tr>
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<th>Gillar ganska mycket</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
Här är alla de olika sätten att arbeta på en gång till. Rangordna dem. Skriv en 
etta (1) efter det sätt du helst använder, en tvåa (2) efter det sätt du näst helst 
använder och en trea (3) efter det sätt som hamnar på tredje plats.

Översättning □

Förklaring på engelska □

Förstå ordet i kontexten □

Använda en synonym □

Använda en antonym □

Använda en Bild □

Varför valde du X som ditt favoritsätt? Du får kryssa i flera svar.

□ Det är smidigast

□ Det går snabbast

□ Jag lär mig bäst på detta sätt

□ Jag har lättast att förstå på detta sätt

□ Skolan förväntar sig att jag ska använda detta sätt

□ Övrigt;

______________________________________________________________________________________________

Har du några strategier som du brukar använda som inte är med här? I så fall, vilka?

______________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________________

Har du något, som du tycker är viktigt gällande strategier, som du vill lägga till? Använd utrymmet nedanför (och baksida) för att kommentera! Tack för din medverkan! 😊